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NOTES FROM THE ROTTEN WEST,
REPORTS FROM THE BACKWARD EAST:
SOVIET AND AMERICAN FOREIGN
CORRESPONDENTS IN THE COLD WAR, 1945-1985

by

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A Dissertation submitted to the
Graduate School-New Brunswick
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in History

written under the direction of

Doctor Jochen Hellbeck and Professor David Foglesong

and approved by

New Brunswick, New Jersey

October, 2012

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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The Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States featured the media as one of the most carefully calibrated weapons. Acrimonious editorials, venomous cartoons, and scathing reports on each side proclaimed that it held the key to universal happiness and castigated the rival's ideology. This dissertation explores the contribution of Soviet and American international reporting to the production of ideology and politicization of everyday life in the Cold War era. It follows the lives and work of Soviet and American journalists who served as resident correspondents covering the rival superpower for news agencies at home between 1945 and 1985. Foreign correspondents and their reports shaped the popular imagination and the political horizons of the Cold War in important ways. As gifted storytellers, these journalists were able to relate life observed on the other side of the Iron Curtain in ways that resonated with the ideological sensibilities of their domestic audiences. Readers appreciated the professional expertise of foreign correspondents and their accessible style. As a result, ordinary people on both

sides adopted journalistic reports as guidelines for their own views of the adversary overseas.

This dissertation compares and contrasts the different ways that ideology influenced the journalists' sense of self and their writings about the rival superpower. International reporting on both sides combined a projection of Soviet or American culture onto the foreign world with the personal interests and convictions of individual journalists. Professional duty demanded that the journalists immerse themselves into their nations' ultimate "other," make that other intelligible for their compatriots, all the while resisting the "other's" ideological temptations. Foreign correspondent simultaneously occupied the position of an insider and an outsider, and travelled across boundaries of culture, customs, and worldviews on a daily basis. The ideological prism helped the journalists as they struggled to understand the Cold War adversary and to make their experience overseas meaningful. The foundational ideas of the period thus became deeply intertwined with the subjectivity of individual correspondents and their reporting.

This study is the first comparative investigation of Soviet and American international reporting and its contribution to the legitimation of Cold War ideology. Only with the end of the Cold War is it possible to see how the news media and their correspondents on each side were shaped by different sets of ideological convictions and at the same time contributed to the continued elaboration of those creeds.

Acknowledgements

One of the greatest pleasures in reaching a top of a mountain is to be able to thank all the wonderful people and the generous institutions that made the climb not just possible, but fun.

I am deeply grateful to my advisors, Jochen Hellbeck and David Foglesong, whose intellect, scholarship, and support inspired this project every step of the way. David's meticulous comments served as a constant reminder that I must pay attention to the bigger picture and at the same time stay attuned to the small details. Jochen's careful guidance helped me see what was really important in, and about my sources and inspired me to take my insights to places I never thought possible. Like good Russian parents, my mentors were extremely generous, patient, demanding, uncompromising, reassuring, and caring. I will never be able to thank them enough for their hard work and for helping me keep faith in my project and in myself.

I was also very privileged to enjoy the support of a wonderful dissertation committee. I would like to thank Ziva Galili for bringing me to Rutgers and for being so generous with her ideas, advice, and friendship ever since we first met. Jackson Lears' classes and RCHA seminars *The Question of the West* under his direction were an intellectual rollercoaster, which shaped my thinking about East and West, and modernity. David Greenberg's comments and seminars taught me a great deal about American journalism and provided a supportive environment to engage my sources for the first time. I am also grateful to David for helping arrange my interviews with Robert Kaiser and Susan Jacoby. I thank Christopher Read for his utmost generosity, expert guidance to the British academic system, and for sharing with me the insights from his own work on Western travellers to Russia over some excellent pints in London.

I owe a big debt of gratitude to my teachers and friends from Tel Aviv University, whose example, faith, and support inspired the decision to change my life and become an historian. Igal Halfin, Vera Kaplan, and Eyal Naveh opened my eyes to the wonders of Russian and American history and taught me how to work with sources and write about them. Gideon Ferber, Irit Klein, and Nimrod Tal pushed me to follow my dreams.

Meeting my protagonists was one of the greater pleasures of working on this project. I thank the Cold War correspondents Genrikh Borovik, Valentin Zorin, Melor Sturua, Hedrick Smith, Jerrold Schecter, Robert Kaiser, Peter Pringle, and Susan Jackoby for sharing with me their memories and experiences. Tatiana Strel'nikova and Vasily Strel'nikov kindly helped me to learn more about their father, Boris Strel'nikov, and let me access some of his letters and photos. I am extremely grateful to Nikolai Kondrashov for welcoming me into his family home and for trusting me with the treasure of his father's archive.

The road through Moscow would have been impossible without several wonderful people in Russia. I thank Leonid Shinkarev for the exciting private tour of the old *Izvestiia* building and for making the history of this newspaper so alive. Professor Edward Ivanian from the Institute for USA and Canada Studies and Nadezhda Azhgikhina from the Russian Journalists' Union shared their memories with me and helped me to get in touch with my Russian protagonists. Al'bert Pavlovich Nenarokov made my visits to the grey halls of RGASPI something to look forward to.

A superb cohort of fellow students, scholars, and staff at Rutgers made my graduate studies a unique and cherished experience. Paul Clemens, Melissa Feinberg, Paul Hannebrink, Al Howard, Seth Koven, and Yael Zerubavel were very generous with their advice over the years. Dawn Ruskai, Tim Alves and Mary DeMeo made my life

easier and helped me navigate through all the bureaucracy involved in being “an alien” student. It is impossible to imagine these past six years without Andrew Daily, Matt Friedman, Bridget Gurtler, Dennis Halpin, Melanie Kiechle, Yelena Kalinsky, Yvette Lane, Amir Mane, Allison Miller, Svanur Pétursson, Kris Shields, and Dora Vargha. I benefited greatly from their generous contributions to my work, their patient help with my English, and most importantly, from their friendship. These friends made me feel at home away from home. A big “thank you” goes to Brian Becker for his meticulous editing of the dissertation. I was especially fortunate to share the long road from Israel to America with Tal Zalmanovich. Her compassion, humor, wisdom, and comradely spirit helped me navigate through emotional and intellectual hurdles on many occasions. I am grateful to Tal for her presence in my life and for her friendship.

Rutgers University provided crucial financial support for my research and writing. Generous funding from the History Department allowed me to take summer trips to the Russian archives and helped me defer the costs of conference travel. In the academic year 2007-2008, Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis supported my research with funding and offered a wonderful framework to discuss my work with a fascinating group of scholars. I am thankful to Ann Fabian and Jackson Lears for this opportunity. In the summer of 2009 Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences funded my research through the Andrew W. Mellon Summer Grant. In 2011 I had the good fortune to receive Rutgers SAS Andrew W. Mellon Grant for Dissertation Completion, which allowed me to concentrate on my writing. I would also like to thank the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations for supporting my research with the Holt-Bemis-Hogan Research Award in 2009.

I am very fortunate to partake in a vibrant international cohort of scholars of Russia. I thank Artemy Kalinosvky for being a great friend, a generous colleague, and a supportive reader. I am also indebted to Sari Autio-Sarasma, Franziska Excler, Leah Goldman, Simon Huxtable, Pia Koivunen, Susan Reid, Mikhail Rozhansky, Andrei Scherbenok, and Thomas Wolfe for their comments, suggestions and intellectual insights.

Life would not be the same without my wonderful friends in Israel, the U.S. and London. Miri Refael, Michal Sapir, Renan Harari, Nurit Manor, Boris Dolin, Yael Lev, Dennis Kovalyov, Anna Vamos, Samu Láng, Lindsey Carter, Spencer E. Holtaway, and Mark Jaeckel keep brightening my life with the gift of their friendship.

Finally, I want to thank the most amazing family in the world, and its branches in Beit-Horon, Tel-Aviv, Holon, Arad, Moscow, East Brunswick, and New York. Their endless supply of love, cheer, compassion, and *kotlety* sustained me all my life. I am grateful to my parents for teaching me to love my Russian and Soviet heritage and for bringing me up the way they did. I thank Miki for being Miki and I thank Nataly for being Gezer. One could not wish for a better family and I always derive comfort from knowing that they've got my back.

Words cannot express my gratitude to Zohar for the ideas he contributed, the chapters he read, and the sacrifices he made. Zohar's patience, faith, and love kept me going every step of the way.

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Introduction: Cold War in the News – Now and Then

In 2008 I participated in the organization of a series of public events at Columbia University's Harriman Institute. Entitled *Cold War in the News: Now and Then*, the series aimed to re-tell the story of international reporting in this tumultuous period of conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. The organizers agreed that to jump-start the series, the first event would feature two stars of American reporting from Moscow: Hedrick Smith and Robert Kaiser, correspondents for the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* in the early 1970s. Smith and Kaiser were engaging and charismatic, cracked Brezhnev jokes, shared anecdotes from their Moscow period, and re-told the story of their famous interview with Soviet dissident Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in 1972.*

The second event in the series featured a Russian and an American journalist: Vladimir Posner and Phil Donahue, the hosts of the famous “spacebridges” between audiences in the Soviet Union and the U.S., which were carried via satellite in the late 1980s. The initial discussion between Posner and Donahue focused on their professional cooperation, the importance of real-life dialogue between the Soviet and the American people, and the difficulties in getting the “spacebridges” off the ground. The Q&A session that followed this amicable reunion was of a different nature. Most of the questions were directed to Posner, and members of the audience in no subtle language took him to task for spending a lion's share of his professional life working for Soviet

* Note on transliteration: Russian words, titles of publications and names have been transliterated according to the Library of Congress System, except in cases of well-known names such as Maxim Gorky or Vasily Aksyonov.

English-language broadcasters, disseminating Soviet propaganda and lying on behalf of the Communist regime. Others demanded from Posner an explanation for the current anti-democratic and pro-Putin policies of the government-owned Russian Channel One, of which he was president at the time. In what seemed like a scene from Soviet-era purges, Posner repeatedly apologized for his journalistic career and tried to justify his contemporary work in the Russian media. In vain, Donahue tried to rescue his colleague by telling the audience that only very few American journalists publicly came out against the war in Iraq in 2003. The audience was eager to indict Posner for the lack of free press in Russia, now and then.

The series at the Harriman Institute epitomizes attitudes toward Cold War-era news media that prevail in the United States and in Russia to this day. Contemporary narrative portrays American journalists as emissaries of the free press, who stood up to the Soviet regime and reported the news objectively, “without fear or favor.” This narrative also depicts Soviet journalists as cynical disseminators of Party propaganda, concealing the truth from their audiences, a truth that is often equated with the advantages of a Western way of life. Even when the post-Cold War narrative appears to feature a dialogue between the (post-) Soviet and American sides, only the former is being criticized and interrogated.

I propose to shift the approach to this story from political to historical grounds, and to introduce a critical and rigorously comparative frame to the study of Cold War-era journalism. Soviet and American news media’s contributions to the superpower conflict were shaped by the historical, cultural, and political circumstances of each country. A comparative investigation of these circumstances will reveal how different sets of

ideological convictions, or truth systems, permeated the workings of the news media and the reporting of individual journalists on each side.

My dissertation follows Soviet and American journalists who lived as resident correspondents across the Iron Curtain and covered the rival superpower for news agencies at home between 1945 and 1985. Foreign correspondents shaped the popular imagination and the political horizons of the Cold War in several ways. As gifted storytellers, these journalists were able to relate life observed on the other side of the Iron Curtain in ways that resonated with the ideological sensibilities of their domestic audiences. Readers appreciated the professional expertise of foreign correspondents and their accessible style. As a result, ordinary people on both sides of the Iron Curtain adopted journalistic reports as guidelines for their own views of the rival superpower. A comparative approach to Soviet and American practices of international reporting illuminates how media-generated discourses on foreign others contributed to the politicization of everyday life and legitimation of Cold War ideology on each side.

This dissertation focuses on the evolution of Cold War-era international reporting in the Soviet Union and the United States and the different ways that ideology influenced the journalists' sense of self and their writings about the rival superpower. My analysis shows how styles and topics of reporting changed, as one generation of correspondents succeeded another in Moscow, Leningrad, Washington, or New York. Correspondents themselves also influenced international coverage to a great deal. I examine how personal interests and backgrounds, previous assignments, preparation, and education of individual journalists informed their reporting agendas and their approaches to the Cold War adversary. I also explore the different ways that journalists on each side turned their

foreign assignments into symbolic capital and established themselves as recognized experts on international affairs through books, editorial positions, and political advising. Finally, I am interested in the international assignments' effects on individual journalists' sense of self and their understandings of themselves as members of a socialist or a liberal-capitalist society. My focus on individual correspondents and their stories fleshes out previously unnoticed differences and similarities between the Soviet and the American press and allows me to impart a personal dimension to the study of Cold War media.

A combination of Soviet and American sources and archival research on both sides of the Atlantic brings the two sides of my story into dialogue and interaction. Understanding the operation of Soviet international reporting was especially difficult, because most of the relevant materials are still classified. However, I was fortunate to meet several of my protagonists, all of whom are now in their late 80s. Genrikh Borovik, Valentin Zorin, and Melor Sturua have kindly shared with me their memories and experience and helped to fill in the gaps left after archival research. Sadly, one meeting that I had been looking forward to never took place. Stanislav Kondrashov, a prominent foreign correspondent for the Soviet daily *Izvestiia*, passed away before we could meet. Yet I was able to secure exclusive access to his private archive – a real treasure containing Kondrashov's private and professional correspondence as well as several thick notebooks of diaries, which he kept throughout his career. I was also fortunate to meet several of my American protagonists. My work on the Harriman series helped me to get in touch with Hedrick Smith, and he graciously answered my questions and gave me permission to access his papers at the Library of Congress. I was also able to interview Jerrold Schecter, Robert Kaiser and Susan Jacoby.

Personal conversations with the journalists taught me a great deal about how foreign correspondents on each side conceived of their professional duty and experience overseas. Interviews and archival research also illuminated the nuances involved in the daily routine of reporting and the assignment's effects on the private lives of the correspondents and their loved ones. Archival research, especially in the United States, revealed the dynamics of the journalists' relationship with their readers, editors, and government institutions, as well as the ways that stories and ideas were generated and developed.

The most important sources for this project are the journalists' writings from the Cold War period – lengthy articles submitted during their tenure as resident correspondents as well as the books that they authored after the assignments concluded. It was through these writings that the journalists communicated their ideas to the public and shaped the perception of the Cold War adversary at home. Foreign correspondents reached millions of readers on a daily basis. Their books sold many copies and, in the United States, often made it to national non-fiction bestseller lists. The accounts of foreign correspondents appealed to their domestic audiences for several reasons. Unlike other types of visitors, the journalists lived long periods of time in the country of their assignment and got to know it well.¹ They were not confined to the embassy walls or to the gated residences of diplomatic corps, and the very nature of their profession encouraged them to explore, travel around, and meet local people. Foreign correspondents focused on human-interest stories and everyday life, offering readers a

¹ American correspondents usually stayed three to four years, sometimes longer. Soviet correspondents often stayed five to six years and even came to a second assignment of similar length.

unique opportunity to learn about the streets, people, nature, and culture on the other side. In an age of enormous curiosity about the Cold War adversary, their reports were the closest thing to a trip across the Iron Curtain. This surrogate travel through reading was especially important in the Soviet Union, where a trip abroad was a privilege reserved only for the select few.

An exploration of the richly documented workings of Soviet and U.S. foreign reporting allows me to challenge assumptions about the Cold War news media that have shaped Western and post-Soviet Russian academic studies as well as the broader public consciousness in these countries. The Harriman series serves as only one interesting case in point. Broad surveys of American reporting from overseas often privilege the period of the Russian Revolution and Stalin's Great Break in the 1930s and choose to focus their analysis of post-war reporting on Korea, Vietnam, or China.² When these surveys do explore Cold War coverage of the Soviet Union, they often situate Moscow correspondents within the triumphalist narrative, which celebrates the journalists' ability to deliver insightful reports during periods of turmoil and to record important historical events.³

² John Hohenberg, *Foreign Correspondence: the Great Reporters and their Times* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964); Michael C. Emery, *On the Front Lines: Following America's Foreign Correspondents across the Twentieth Century* (Lanham: American University Press, 1995); Philip Knightley, *The First Casualty: the War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Kosovo* (London: Prion, 2000); John Maxwell Hamilton, *Journalism's Roving Eye: A History of American Foreign Reporting* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009).

³ Ulf Hannerz, *Foreign News: Exploring the World of Foreign Correspondents*, The Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Hamilton, *Journalism's Roving Eye*.

Excellent critical scholarship has been done on U.S. correspondents in the Soviet Union before 1945.⁴ However, for the post Second World War period, we still have mostly journalists' memoirs to rely on.⁵ Two comprehensive accounts of American reporting from the Soviet Union, which cover the Cold War, were authored by professional insiders and essentially reproduced the journalists' perspective.⁶ Whitman Bassow served as a correspondent for *United Press International* (UPI) and *Newsweek* in Moscow between 1962 and 1964; Murray Seeger was the bureau chief of the *Los Angeles Times* between 1972 and 1974. Both monographs provide a long retrospective of American reporting from Moscow and contain many valuable insights.⁷ However, the results are closer to a journalistic report than to a rigorous historical analysis. Bassow and Seeger praise Moscow correspondents for surviving the difficult assignment in Russia; for standing up to the oppressive Soviet regime; and for carrying out their reporting duties despite the absence of basic freedoms and comforts. Neither author scrutinizes the cultural and intellectual premises of American reporting from the Soviet Union or

⁴ David C. Engerman, "The Romance of Economic Development and New Histories of the Cold War," *Diplomatic History* 28 No. 1 (January 2004): 23-54; Donald E. Davis and Eugene P. Trani, *Distorted Mirrors: Americans and Their Relations with Russia and China in the Twentieth Century* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009), 58-79.

⁵ The only exception to this rule that I am aware of is Christopher Read's critical examination of accounts produced by Western travellers to Russia during and after the Cold War, which covers three important journalists, John Gunther, Robert Kaiser and Hedrick Smith. Christopher J. Read, "Peeping through the Curtain: Travellers' Accounts of the Soviet Union and Russia During and after the Cold War." Paper presented at the 9th Annual Aleksanteri Conference "Cold War Interactions Reconsidered" Helsinki, Finland, October 29-31, 2009.

⁶ Whitman Bassow, *The Moscow Correspondents: Reporting on Russia from the Revolution to Glasnost* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1988); Murray Seeger, *Discovering Russia: 200 Years of American Journalism* (Bloomington: Author House, 2005).

⁷ Bassow's book is especially interesting because it builds on dozens of interviews that he conducted with his colleagues in the late 1980s. Many of these journalists are now gone. Yet, Bassow's own critical voice rarely comes through.

investigates the biases of his colleagues.⁸ Occasionally, scholarly work also presents similar unqualified repetition of journalists' point of view. Several studies of daily life in the Soviet Union rely on the reports of American correspondents in Moscow; treat them as objective descriptions of Russian reality; and fail to acknowledge the potential problems of using these reports as a source base for historical analysis.⁹

This dissertation is the first historical and archive-based study of Soviet international reporting. It seeks to contribute to critical scholarship on post-war Soviet media, which has begun to develop only in recent years.¹⁰ In today's Russia, the dominant portrayal of Soviet foreign correspondents closely resembles their image in American Cold War imagination. Most interviews with, or items on, Soviet international correspondents explore the ways in which these journalists participated in manufacturing of propaganda lies or cooperated with the Soviet intelligence.¹¹ Bloggers and commentators on the Russian-language websites castigate Soviet-era foreign correspondents for not telling their audiences that daily life in the Western "there" was

⁸ Seeger turned his critical inquiry into one direction. He castigated the "fellow travellers," which occasionally cropped among the foreign press corps in Moscow and treated with particular venom those journalists who, in his view, were too sympathetic of the Russians.

⁹ Katherine Bliss Eaton, *Daily Life in the Soviet Union* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004). To support her assertions, Eaton often cites Hedrick Smith's *The Russians* (see especially pp. 257-278). Robert G. Wesson, *Lenin's Legacy: the Story of the CPSU* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), 257; David Holloway, "War, Militarism and the Soviet State," in *The Soviet Polity in the Modern Era*, ed. Eric P. Hoffmann and Robert F. Laird (New York: Aldine Publishing Company, 1984), 366.

¹⁰ Thomas C. Wolfe, *Governing Soviet Journalism: The Press and the Socialist Person After Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Denis Kozlov, "Naming the Social Evil: the Readers of *Novyi mir* and Vladimir Dudintsev's *Not by Bread Alone*, 1956-59 and beyond," in *Dilemmas of de-Stalinization*, ed. Polly Jones (New York: Routledge, 2006), 80-98; Kristin Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time: How The Soviet Union Built the Media Empire that Lost the Cultural Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

¹¹ Sergei Korzun's interview with Genrikh Borovik, March 15, 2007, *Radio Ekho Moskvy*, <http://www.echo.msk.ru/guests/407/>; Oleg Kashin, "Valentin Zorin, propovednik. V gostiakh u veterana kholodnoi voyny," *Russkaia zhizn'*, November 19, 2008. <http://www.rulife.ru/mode/article/1044/>

better than in the Soviet “here.”¹² Several scholars make similar arguments and suggest that if only Soviet journalists were able to speak their minds, they surely would have told their readers how wonderful America really was.¹³

According to the conventional view, Soviet journalists were restricted by Communist dogma and forced to disseminate distorted reports, whereas American correspondents remained independent from ideological pressures and provided truthful representations of Soviet reality. By contrast, my comparative reading shows that news making and international reporting on both sides was shaped by dominant ideologies – socialist and liberal-capitalist. What made the two sides different were the contrasting presuppositions about how the world was and should be governed, and the ways that ideology manifested itself in Soviet and American journalism.

The Soviet Union adopted Communist ideology as its guiding principle in the organization of society and its institutions. Soviet ideology envisioned a radical reorganization of all human relationships: a socialized economy, based on collective ownership, which would put an end to the exploitation of labor by capital; a collectivist society established on the principles of mutual responsibility; and a new type of men and women, who would attain the highest levels of enlightenment and live in harmony with each other. Soviet ideology, in Jochen Hellbeck’s words, was “deliberate and transformative, and it targeted the conscious mind, rather than a political

¹² Denis Dragunskii’s post, which explored this very point, generated 300 comments and an illuminating discussion about contemporaries’ attitudes to Soviet international correspondents. <http://clear-text.livejournal.com/281818.html?page=3#comments>

¹³ Eric Shiraev and Vladislav Zubok, *Anti-Americanism in Russia: from Stalin to Putin* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 21.

unconsciousness.”¹⁴ Communist ideology sought to encompass all spheres of existence; it offered “an open program for action, a blueprint of a world to be realized.”¹⁵ It asked individuals to “rework... subjective experience” and “worked by impelling individuals to read the world through its lens.”¹⁶ The Soviet press played an important role in this process. It was the duty of the press to deliver Marxist laws of history to the masses and to provide its readers with concrete models that would help them shape their thoughts and actions in accordance to the socialist principles. The press was to become the mouthpiece of the party, the most important source of education and enlightenment that would elevate individual and collective consciousness to new levels.¹⁷ Soviet ideologies derided the bourgeois press for its pretenses of objectivity. Lenin and others argued that the only objective press was the socialist one, because it represented the ideals of the revolutionary proletariat and reflected the experiences of the toiling masses.¹⁸

Soviet journalists understood the Cold War as a struggle between capitalism and socialism, and self-consciously employed the prism of Marxist class conflict in their analyses of American society. International correspondents took the ideological competition between the two systems very seriously and relied on their politically conscious readers to be able to see the advantages and the moral superiority of the socialist ideology. In order to illustrate how Marxist ideas manifested themselves in the daily life of capitalist USA, Soviet correspondents emphasized the plight of the working

¹⁴ Jochen Hellbeck, “Everyday Ideology: Life During Stalinism,” *Eurozine* (2010), <http://www.eurozine.com/authors/hellbeck.html>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 4-14.

¹⁸ V. I. Lenin, “Party Organization and Party Literature,” *Novaya Zhizn*, No. 12, November 13, 1905. <http://www.marx.org/archive/lenin/works/1905/nov/13.htm>.

poor and of racial minorities. The journalists described the lifestyles and commodities available in the United States, and expected their readers to understand that these things meant nothing, given the inequality inherent in capitalism. Unable to claim that the Soviet Union was superior in material terms, international correspondents focused their descriptions on the harmful effects of liberal values and market economy. In deliberately exploring ideas antithetical to the Soviet system, the journalists expected their readers to be able to decode and refute these ideas. However, this participatory reporting style had unintended subversive effects, as readers' engagements with the texts proved beyond the control of the journalists or their editors.

By contrast, American ideology promised to uphold universal laws of nature and men's unalienable rights for "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." At the heart of American ideology stood a free market economy, a community of self-reliant individuals, who elect their leaders and officers, and a mistrust of government. American news media traced their origins to these ideological notions, when in the late 19th century the press established itself as a major commercial enterprise as well as an important tool of democracy.¹⁹ On the one hand, news media saw themselves as independent businesses, which competed in a free market economy and won audiences through the quality and the interest of their product, timeliness, and professionalism. At the same time, the press in the United States positioned itself as the fourth estate, whose duty was to remain independent from government and politics, to protect the people from the powers that be,

¹⁹ Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 57-60; David T. Z. Mindich, *Just the Facts: How "Objectivity" Came to Define American Journalism* (New York University Press, 1998), 113-117.

and to provide a contextualized explanation of an increasingly complicated world.²⁰ The feasibility of this role of the press relied on a concept of journalistic objectivity – an ideal whereby the journalists approached the world as “disinterested realists,” or scientists and to the best of their knowledge, provided the public with an unbiased report on reality.²¹

The ideal of objectivity soon translated into a set of professional practices and standards, which developed to “ensure the credibility of the fourth estate.”²² These practices reflected the newspapers’ hope that they came closer to the ideal of objectivity by meticulously presenting multiple sides of an issue, by pronouncing that something was a “fact” only when it could be supported with independently verified evidence, and by separating reporting from interpretive journalism.²³ With time, these practices promoted a dispassionate and professional incarnation of news, cementing the journalists’ and the public’s faith that the press contains “essentially factual and truthful descriptions of ‘the way things are.’”²⁴ This view endured even after the turmoil of the 1960s increased the journalists’ awareness of the problems inherent in the concept of objectivity.²⁵

The growing professionalization of reporting and the emphasis on journalistic objectivity helped to obscure the ideological constructions permeating news media in the United States. The emphasis on the press as the fourth estate promoted the illusion that the press did not share the interests of those in power. However, a complex set of links bound news media and the establishment together. On the one hand, the owners of large

²⁰ Douglass Cater, *The Fourth Branch of Government* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959); Schudson, *Discovering the News*, 141-149; Phyllis Frus, *The Politics and Poetics of Journalistic Narrative: The Timely and the Timeless* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 101.

²¹ Schudson, *Discovering the News*, 154-157.

²² Frus, *Politics and Poetics*, 106.

²³ *Ibid.*, 106-107; Schudson, *Discovering the News*, 141-151;

²⁴ Frus, *Politics and Poetics*, 111.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 100; Schudson, *Discovering the News*, 193.

news media commanded enormous prestige and enjoyed unprecedented leverage, for they could build or destroy one's business or political career. On the other hand, media depended on close relationships with politicians and government officials in order to gain access to exclusive information and scoops, which enhanced sales and publicity. Thus, news coverage continued to privilege elite groups, which dominated the government, business, and other institutions of power. Compartmentalization of news into different subject sections, or hierarchical organization of information within a single column created an impression of "natural" division and obscured editorial intervention. Most important, these methods suggested that the press separated between facts, opinions, and interpretations and thus contributed to the impression of a responsible media that reflect reality, rather than selectively construct it. In other words, in the American press, ideology works through concealment and naturalization of "the mechanisms of [its] generation."²⁶

When American foreign correspondents approached Soviet society, they did so convinced that liberal democracy and market capitalism represented a superior form of social arrangement consistent with human nature. The journalists did not reflect on the source of these convictions, nor did they think that their positions were influenced by ideology. American correspondents abstained from discussion of socialist ideas, because they conceived the Cold War not as an ideological confrontation, but as a contest between

²⁶ Frus, *Politics and Poetics*, 113; Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (London: Verso, 1978), 64; Stuart Hall, "Culture, the Media and the Ideological Effect," in *Mass Communication and Society*, ed. James Curran, Michael Gurevitch and Janet Woollacott (London: Edward Arnold [for] the Open University Press, 1977), 340-346.

an oppressive regime and a natural social order.²⁷ This choice was also consistent with the journalists' professional conventions. Socialist ideology belonged to the realm of subjective opinions, whereas the duty of American correspondent was to report objective reality.

Foreign correspondents focused their coverage on Soviet everyday life and on the ways it compared to that of the United States, emphasizing the advantages of American freedoms and living standards. Although the journalists projected their cultural categories onto the Soviet society, they believed that their experiences and subsequent reports represented objective assessments of reality. In the journalists' reports, ideological notions became equated with natural principles and operated "invisibly, beneath the recesses of a conscious world."²⁸ This style of reporting had several effects. First, it reinforced the dominant notions of American anti-Communist propaganda and reassured the audiences in the superiority of the U.S. on all fronts. Second, this style of reporting obscured the fractured domestic political and cultural landscape and promoted an image of the United States as unified by liberal consensus.

The different ways that ideology operated in Soviet and American journalism also influenced the journalists' participation in their countries' propaganda efforts. The Soviet state officially incorporated news agencies, newspapers, and journalists into its large network of domestic and international propaganda. Soviet ideologists conceived the

²⁷ In the early days of the Cold War, U.S. correspondents referred to socialist ideology as a tool of brainwashing and a source of oppression of the Soviet people, which segregated them from the rest of the world. From the mid-1960s onward, though, more and more journalists began to claim that socialist ideas did not play an important role in the shaping of Soviet society.

²⁸ Hellbeck, "Everyday Ideology."

standoff with the United States and its allies as a crucial step in the struggle between socialism and capitalism, in which the media was to serve as the most carefully calibrated weapon. Until Stalin's death, journalists specializing in writing on international themes worked directly with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry articulated the positions of the state and the general direction of international coverage, which the journalists then incorporated into their reports and essays. Individual authorship was not valued. Soviet newspapers and their journalists functioned as a collective enterprise, closely linked to the ideological apparatus of the state. This does not mean however, that international correspondents uniformly engaged in the mindless reproduction of party slogans. Even in the hyper-controlled environment of the Stalin era, each news agency and newspaper exhibited its own unique tone, style, and slant.

From the mid-1950s Khrushchev's reforms ushered in new journalistic practices; introduced greater independence into the work of foreign correspondents; and encouraged journalists to pursue personal initiatives in domestic and international reporting. During this period, the amount of international items, based on the personal interests of the journalists, steadily increased. For example, having a strong background in the arts, Genrikh Borovik from *Novosti Press Agency*, dedicated a lot of attention to American culture, avant-garde theatre, and creative forms of protest against the war in Vietnam. By contrast, *Gosteleradio* correspondent Valentin Zorin, a Ph.D. in American economic history, focused his journalistic work on political economy and the relationship between U.S. government and big business. Gradually, international correspondents began to reach out to their readers as individual writers and experts on international affairs and supplemented their newspaper reporting with publications of travelogues. Even though

Soviet journalists remained bound to the official propaganda establishment, which encompassed the publishing houses and censorship of the media, they invested their work with as much personal initiative as their American colleagues.

The U.S. had no comparable institutions for regulation of the media content because officially, then as now, the First Amendment protects the press from government intervention. However, the Cold War provided an interesting example of the American press's susceptibility to external influence and how the boundaries of journalistic objectivity could be redrawn to accommodate and naturalize ideological positions. In the early days of the Cold War, most American media aligned themselves with the U.S. government, supported its standoff with the Soviet Union, and participated in the anti-Communist campaigns.²⁹ The press did not challenge the prevailing anti-Communist and anti-Soviet positions because many media professionals believed that to do so would help Soviet propaganda infiltrate the U.S. On numerous occasions, editors and reporters cooperated with government officials and acquiesced to the latter's requests to withhold certain information from publication in the interest of "national security." Despite these biases and compromises, professional journalists believed that "interpreting the news does not exclude the possibility of objectively reporting it."³⁰ Thus, Cold War reporting endowed the concept of journalistic objectivity with a new meaning, which naturalized

²⁹ Schudson, *Discovering the News*, 169; James Aronson, *The Press and the Cold War* (New York: Month Review Press, 1990), xxii; David Halberstam, *The Powers that be* (New York: Knopf, 1979), 133.

³⁰ Clifton Daniel, "Responsibility of the Reporter and Editor," in *Reporting the News. Selections from Nieman Reports*, ed. Louis M. Lyons (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 121. Daniel's article was written in 1961 and comprised part of a speech that he delivered in 1960.

anti-Communism and the government's conception of the interests of the national security state.

Quite often the tone of international reporting adjusted on an individual level. Responses from readers and colleagues, as well as editorial interventions, reminded the journalists that they should not come across as supportive of the Soviet Union. An invitation to appear before one of the numerous committees, which investigated un-American activities and Communist sympathizers, could ruin one's reputation and career. The threat of such an invitation also taught the journalists to consider their statements carefully and to follow the anti-Communist line in their reporting.

Habits adopted during the first years of the Cold War persisted even after the threat of McCarthyism no longer hovered above the journalists. Foreign correspondents realized that their professional prestige and access to lucrative opportunities, such as lecture tours or book contracts, depended on their ability to offer insightful and interesting reporting, which did not stray too far from the dominant anti-Communist conventions. When in mid-1950s American correspondents began to point out the potential advantages of the Soviet Union over the United States, they nevertheless felt compelled to accompany these observations with references to American superiority. For example, when John Gunther described how Soviet scientific and technological education had surpassed its American counterpart, he then immediately reminded his readers that despite these advantages the USSR remained a "repellent dictatorship."³¹

In the 1970s, after the War in Vietnam, the Pentagon Papers, and the Watergate scandal heightened the media's distrust of the government, foreign correspondents began

³¹ John Gunther, *Inside Russia Today* (New York: Harper, 1958), xxiv.

to openly question the conventional wisdom of the Soviet menace – a centerpiece of American Cold War ideology. One of these correspondents was Robert Kaiser, who suggested that fears of Soviet invasion were exaggerated and led to unjustified spending on the military-industrial complex.³² Yet, basic anti-Communist premises continued to inform American coverage of the Soviet Union. As late as 1983, *Washington Post* correspondent Dusko Doder began his book about Soviet politics by professing his unwavering faith in the “self-evident superiority of Western morality and way of life.”³³

Despite the persistence of the anti-Soviet approach, American correspondents took their reporting in many directions, inspired by their personal interests. Aline Mosby, one of the first female correspondents in the Soviet Union, often explored in her reports such things as fashion, beauty parlors, and celebrity culture. Jerrold Schechter from *Time Magazine* insisted that his children enroll in a Soviet school, which allowed him to write extensively on the education system. Andrew Nagorski, a Polish-American reporter for *Newsweek*, paid considerable attention to Soviet-Polish relations and the fate of Roman Catholics in the Ukraine and the Baltic republics.

Different ideological injunctions also informed Soviet and American journalists as they formed personal and professional relationships at the countries of their assignment. Soviet journalists’ conviction that capitalism fostered inequality and imperialism drew them close to American Civil Rights and Antiwar movements. Liberal democratic notions of political freedom inspired American correspondents as they

³² Robert G. Kaiser, *Russia: The People and the Power* (New York: Pelican books, 1977), 420-421.

³³ Dusko Doder, *Shadows and Whispers: Power Politics inside the Kremlin* (New York: Random House, 1986), 2.

championed the cause of Soviet dissidents in their reports. In both cases, the sense of ideological alliance with local dissidents inspired the journalists to launch media and political campaigns on behalf of such figures as Angela Davis or Alexander Solzhenitsyn. The journalists' perception that they had established ideological bonds with the dissenting groups within the rival country influenced foreign correspondents in their reporting and analysis of the rival superpower. Occasionally, this notion of affinity transformed the journalists from non-participant observers into actors in local conflicts. A case in point is Hedrick Smith and Robert Kaiser's appearance at the Harriman series. Neither journalist acknowledged that his efforts to avoid the secret police, interview Solzhenitsyn, and assist other Soviet dissidents could be perceived as incompatible with the responsibilities of objective reporting.

While foreign correspondents on both sides contributed to their country's Cold War propaganda, they personally engaged with the ideological notions that they created and reproduced. International reporting combined a projection of Soviet or American culture onto the foreign world with the personal interests and convictions of individual journalists. Professional duty demanded that the journalists immerse themselves into their nations' ultimate "other," to make that other intelligible for their compatriots, all the while resisting the "other's" ideological temptations. Foreign correspondent simultaneously occupied the position of an insider and an outsider, and travelled across boundaries of culture, customs, and worldviews on a daily basis. The ideological prism helped the journalists as they struggled to understand the Cold War adversary and to make their experience overseas meaningful. The foundational ideological claims of the

period thus became deeply intertwined with the subjectivity of individual correspondents. Only with the end of the Cold War is it possible to see how the news media and their correspondents on each side were shaped by domestic ideologies and contributed to the continued elaboration of those ideologies.

Representation of everyday life figured as a major platform for ideological confrontation in the rivalry between American-style liberal capitalism and Soviet state socialism that defined the Cold War. Each side represented an alternative view of modernity and competed for the hearts and minds of its own citizens and of the wider world, propagating its own ideology and social order as the most advantageous for humanity. For this reason Cold War propaganda often focused on such mundane things as schools, housing, home appliances, or clothing.³⁴ Similarly, it was through the portrayal of the conditions of everyday life that Soviet and American journalists sought to demonstrate the superiority of their own political and social systems and the advantages of life under socialism or a liberal democracy. The journalists' representations of the everyday transformed into icons of national identity and assumed an intensely political and ideological character.

Arguably, foreign correspondents were perfectly aware that in many cases they contrasted the rival superpower with an idealized, as opposed to "objective," version of their home country. American correspondents must have known that the living standards of the middle class, which they used a yardstick for comparisons with the USSR, were not available to all Americans. Similarly, while Soviet correspondents encouraged compassion with the deprivation of workers and minorities in the United States, they

³⁴ Reid, Susan E. "Cold War in the Kitchen: Gender and the De-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev." *Slavic Review* 61 no. 2 (2002): 211-52.

were undoubtedly aware that shortages and hardships plagued their fellow citizens. It was through their persistent reliance on these idealized notions of the home country that the journalists interpreted the Cold War contest, made sense of the rival superpower, and resisted its temptations.

Foreign correspondents invited their readers to travel along a similar intellectual path: to read their accounts from a comparative perspective and to infer the advantages of their own social order by contrasting it with the journalists' descriptions of daily life across the Iron Curtain. The journalists invited their readers to contrast the rival superpower not with the audiences' daily experience, but with an ideal country, which delivered the American dream or the socialist utopia. Such comparisons reinforced the readers' faith in the foundational principles of their country and in the promise of good life that these principles held. Comparative reading also encouraged audiences to appreciate the achievements of a socialist or a liberal-capitalist society. The journalists' accounts appealed to the cultural sensibilities of their audiences, stressing that the citizens of the rival superpower lack things that the journalists and their compatriots considered important. The descriptions of the Soviet Union encouraged American readers to appreciate their rights for suffrage, their personal liberties, lifestyles, and consumer plenty. The descriptions of the United States implicitly stressed the advantages of the Soviet system of welfare and social support, which assured employment, food, education, and opportunity for the Soviet children. In both cases, comparative reading glossed over the shortcomings of daily life in each home country and at the same time reaffirmed the readers' faith in their country and its creed.

Soviet and American journalists offer a fascinating case study of the role of “foreign other” in articulation of national identities, domestic and international policies. While reporting from and about the rival superpower, foreign correspondents were also promoting their own view of the good life and thinking about the ideal relationship between the state and its citizens in a modern world. The journalists frequently used the image of foreign other in order to demonstrate to their readers what made them unique and their country universally important.

The dissertation is divided into four chapters. Chapter One, “Trumpets of the Party,” demonstrates how Soviet ideologists, writers, and editors created and institutionalized the profession of international correspondent to match the propaganda advantages of the “bourgeois press” in the emerging superpower conflict. Whereas in Stalin’s time international coverage was a reflection of government foreign policy, with the advent of Khrushchev’s Thaw it gradually assumed the voice of individual journalists. In the Brezhnev era, when the Party purged controversial themes from the Soviet press, international reporting remained an embattled outlet for critical socialist thought. Chapter Two, “Notes from the Rotten West,” analyses the accounts of Soviet correspondents in the U.S. and demonstrates how the journalists strove for a mode of coverage that would engage and mobilize readers, and strengthen their confidence in the moral superiority of socialist values. However, readers often brushed off these educational lessons and scoured news reports for raw information about life in the U.S.

Chapter Three, “Watchdogs of the Public” contends that the pressures of McCarthyism at home and anti-Americanism abroad prompted American correspondents

in Moscow to equate “journalistic objectivity” in their coverage of Soviet affairs with opposition to communist ideology and the Soviet regime. This approach had a lasting effect on American coverage of the USSR throughout the Cold War and helped journalists establish their position as national pundits on Soviet affairs. Chapter Four, “Reports from the Backward East,” demonstrates how American reporting from Moscow in the Brezhnev era shifted the discursive focus of the superpower debate from competing worldviews to differences in culture, history and material life. This style of reporting naturalized liberal capitalism, while accentuating the gaps between the two countries and cementing Russia’s exclusion from “the West” in the minds of American readers.

Chapter 1: Trumpets of the Party

Rumor has it that during the war Stalin once said, “We need Soviet Restons.”¹ Having mobilized many of the most talented Soviet writers to cover the Russian war effort, it is unlikely that Stalin was interested in the legendary *New York Times* reporter James (Scotty) Reston for his journalistic or literary skills. Rather, Stalin was fascinated with Reston’s contribution to American propaganda around the world during his tenure as the head of the London Bureau of the U.S. Office of War Information. As he envisioned the postwar expansion of international topics in Soviet propaganda at home and abroad, Stalin realized that the success of the Soviet message would depend on the people carrying it. As in all other spheres, cadres decided everything.

In the early days of the Cold War, Soviet ideologists, writers, and editors created and institutionalized “Soviet Restons” – professional journalists specializing in writing about international affairs for domestic and foreign audiences. Whereas in Stalin’s time international coverage was first and foremost a reflection of government foreign policy, with the advent of Khrushchev’s Thaw it transformed and gradually assumed the voice of individual journalists. This process of personalization culminated in the 1960s, when journalists began to compose all-encompassing accounts about foreign life and culture outside of their newspapers and reached out to their readers as independent writers and international experts. When, following Khrushchev’s ouster, the Party leadership traded its renewed ethos of utopian Communism for a conservative stance and purged

¹ Stalin’s remark is mentioned in Aleksandr Bovin, *XX vek kak zhizn’. Vospominaniia* (Moskva: Zakharov, 2003), 265, note # 1.

controversial themes from the Soviet press, international reporting remained an embattled outlet for critical socialist thought in the tradition of the Thaw. This chapter traces the institutional history of Soviet international reporting, as well as its evolving styles, from the creation of the profession in the early postwar years through the Thaw and into the Brezhnev era.

The Making of “Soviet Restons”

The Soviet Union emerged from the war occupying a very significant position in the international arena, with new geopolitical aspirations, strategic priorities, and concerns. Also new, the Soviet leadership learned, was its former allies’ decisively negative view of its positions and interests. The New York employees of TASS (Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union) generated a weekly compendium of translations of every article in the American press that mentioned the Soviet Union. These compendiums were regularly dispatched to Moscow, where they circulated among only the senior members of the Politburo. Starting in 1946, the compendiums grew thicker, and the articles they contained became more acrimonious.² American newspapers accused the USSR of aggression and of the violation of wartime agreements, and they frequently expressed fears of, or a readiness for, a new war, this time against the Russians. Taken together, the compendiums created the impression that adverse coverage of the Soviet Union was the sole agenda of the American media.

The Soviet leadership explained the motivations of its rivals in ideological terms. What they were seeing registered as capitalist fear of the victorious socialist movement.

² GARF (State Archive of the Russian Federation) F. R-4459. Op. 38. D. 203.

Because the Soviet leaders believed the press to be the official voice of the state, they moreover assumed that publications in American newspapers reflected the existence of an organized and officially sanctioned adverse propaganda campaign against the USSR. They looked at the American press as an important strategic asset in the evolving struggle for geopolitical supremacy and international hearts and minds. The Central Committee's Agitation and Propaganda Department (Agitprop) repeatedly compiled detailed dossiers and statistics that compared the diversity and circulation of the Soviet and the foreign press. Significantly, it gathered more material on the United States than on any other country. The USSR appeared lagging far behind.³ Pressured to articulate and defend Soviet positions to the world, Communist strategists concluded that they had to expand the scope of their propaganda, and as they had already done during the war years, they enlisted renowned Soviet writers for the task.⁴

In April 1946, Konstantin Simonov, Ilia Ehrenburg, and Mikhail Galaktionov left the Soviet Union for a two-and-a-half-month tour of the United States. At the beginning of the trip they were scheduled to attend a conference of newspaper editors as guests of the State Department. Soviet Foreign minister Viacheslav Molotov briefed Simonov for the trip and told him that he and his colleagues should travel as much as possible after the conference and meet as many people as they could. The objective of the trip was "to use every opportunity to explain to everyone we meet ... that we don't want another war, that rumours saying the opposite are a ridiculous provocation, that the establishment of peace

³ RGASPI (Russian State Archive for Social and Political History) F. 17. Op. 132. D. 26. Ll. 52-53; 57-58.

⁴ Anna Krylova, "'Healers of Wounded Souls': The Crisis of Private Life in Soviet Literature, 1944-1946." *The Journal of Modern History* 73, no. 2 (2001): 312-313; Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 164-184; Louise McReynolds, "Dateline Stalingrad: Newspaper Correspondents at the Front," in *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia*, ed. Richard Stites (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 28-43.

and everything that leads to its strengthening is an axiom for us.”⁵ Although Molotov never said so directly, Simonov had the impression that the instructions for the trip and the broad conception of its goals came directly from Stalin.⁶

Stalin’s decision to send writers, rather than diplomats, to change American public opinion in Soviet favor was evidence of his continued faith in the influence they wielded. The writers were expected to reinforce the Soviet message with the personal authority and international renown they had achieved through years of war reporting. However, despite their best intentions, the members of this small delegation found that it was rather difficult to complete their mission. As the trip progressed, Ehrenburg noticed a deteriorating American attitude toward the “Red journalists” and their country:

The newspapers expressed hostility more and more often, the people we met became more watchful. ... The mood of regular Americans was changing in front of our very eyes. ... In vain we were talking about the life and culture of the Soviet people. We were asked questions about espionage, the Kremlin’s military preparations, and the forthcoming war.⁷

Thus, rather than mending the growing estrangement between the former allies, the trip reinforced the Soviet leadership’s belief in the existence of an American propaganda campaign against the USSR and the need to launch a Soviet counteroffensive.⁸

An important element of the Soviet response was an attack on the U.S. “bourgeois press” itself. As they proceeded to discredit the American press, however, Communist

⁵ Konstantin Simonov, *Glazami cheloveka moego pokoleniia: razmysleniia o I.V. Staline* (Moscow: Kniga, 1990), 81.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁷ Ilia Ehrenburg, *Liudi, gody, zhizn'* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990), Volume 3, 61-63.

⁸ The practice of sending writers as Soviet spokesmen to international events continued. In the early 1950s, Ehrenburg, Simonov, Aleksandr Fadeev, Boris Polevoi, and Iurii Zhukov frequently traveled abroad as members of Soviet delegations to such events as the International Peace Congress or International Youth Congress. The persistent selection of writers as Soviet spokesmen shows the continuous importance that the state attributed to the power of the writers’ talent in delivering its message around the world.

editors amplified its stance in Soviet cultural and political imagination. The June 1947 issue of the popular satirical journal *Krokodil* featured a comic strip, entitled, “Illustrations to the notes of a foreign correspondent’s visit to Moscow.” The strip depicted a journalist who accompanied his Soviet experiences with evidently falsifying comments that presented the USSR in a negative light. While visiting a beach the journalist is seen scribbling in his notebook: “In the Khimki area, I had an opportunity to observe that the people surrounding me had no clothes to wear.” For the entire duration of World War II, the venomous pencil of *Krokodil*’s cartoonists was focused on the Germans. The “bourgeois press” made its first postwar appearance in the issue of July 1945 as a rather comic depiction of Hearst newspapers.⁹ While for the rest of 1945 and during 1946, *Krokodil* was easy on the foreign press, 1947 saw a strong increase in anti-American cartoons in general and derision of the “bourgeois press” in particular.¹⁰ The latter’s representation was growing more and more sinister.

In one such appearance, we see the press, represented as an ugly woman holding a huge pen and dressed in vulgar yellow garments (connoting the yellow press), offering herself to the classical representation of a capitalist: a fat old man wearing a top hat, with a cigar in his mouth and a checkbook in his hand. The caption of the cartoon read: “Ready for services.”¹¹ In contrast to earlier depictions, this cartoon sought to highlight the source of the foreign journalist’s misrepresentation of the Soviet Union: the financial

⁹ In 1945, *Krokodil* carried two more cartoons targeting the American press (September 10 and December 30).

¹⁰ In 1946, three cartoons attacked the press (August 20, September 10; September 30). By contrast, in 1947, every issue carried an anti-American cartoon and about one-fourth of the issues carried an anti-American cartoon on the front page. Six cartoons in 1947 were dedicated specifically to the American press. See for example: *Krokodil*, May 30, 1947, front page, p. 3; October, 20, 1947.

¹¹ *Krokodil*, April 20, 1954, back cover.

support pumped into anti-Soviet press campaigns, and the underlying capitalist fear of the workers' revolutionary movement that such sponsoring expressed. *Krokodil* continued to portray foreign journalism in a negative light and in other instances depicted the “bourgeois press” as ugly men, spiders, or snakes, all at work constructing malignant lies about the Soviet Union.¹²

From 1947 on, the pages of *Pravda* began to reinforce *Krokodil*'s cartoons with frequent stories on the “bourgeois press's war-mongering,” its “service to capitalist bosses,” as well as the lies it was spreading about the Soviet Union and the state of labor and racial unrest in capitalist countries. References to the foreign press as “bourgeois” were prominent in prewar newspapers as well, but back then “bourgeois” was most often used to describe newspapers of political inclinations other than the left. The postwar era witnessed the appearance of negative articles dedicated to the “bourgeois press” as an *acting subject*. The number of such articles constantly increased.¹³ In news items dealing explicitly with the “bourgeois press” as well as in articles that simply mentioned it, *Pravda* most often referred to American or British newspapers, and the most common adjective attached to them was “deceitful.”

A preoccupation with the “capitalist press” was also evident in other cultural products of the early Cold War years, especially theatre and film. Yet, unlike *Pravda* and *Krokodil*, these media featured different types of protagonists. In 1947, Konstantin Simonov's play *The Russian Question* received the prestigious Stalin Prize in Literature

¹² See: *Krokodil*, January 20, 1951, pp. 8-9; September 10, 1951, p. 5; November 23, 1951, back page; *Krokodil*, March 8, 1952, front page; May 20, 1952, p. 6.

¹³ The “bourgeois press” was the central topic of discussion in 3 articles that appeared in 1947, 10 articles in 1948, 15 articles in 1949, and 29 in 1950. By contrast, the term was used only once in 1945 and in 1946, and on both occasions in historical context, featured in an article on the “Whites” during the 1920s (1945) and on pre-Soviet Estonia (1946).

and the Arts. At the heart of the play were the American press, capitalist sponsorship of anti-Soviet propaganda and the politically conscious journalist who seeks the truth. The protagonist of the play is an American journalist named Garry Smith, whose capitalist bosses send him to the USSR, expecting a negative book about it upon his return. Smith defies these expectations and instead writes a positive article. He then sets out to write a book that will tell Americans that they have been misled about the Soviet Union, which is really a wonderful place. The media magnates are incensed; Smith loses his job, his girlfriend, and his house, but he continues to stick to his story. Stalin personally endorsed the play and instructed that it be widely publicized. *Pravda* published two reviews, and *The Russian Question* was staged in five Moscow and three Leningrad theatres.¹⁴ In 1948, Mikhail Romm's film adaptation of *The Russian Question* also received the Stalin Prize, another demonstration of the importance of its political message.

Aleksandr Dovzhenko's unfinished film *Goodbye America* contrasted the honest lone journalist with her evil counterparts, who would tell any lie to please their capitalist bosses or the CIA. The protagonist is Anna, a young reporter assigned to the American Embassy in Moscow, a place depicted as controlled by warmongering industrialists and ubiquitous CIA agents. Anna grows indignant with the continuous manipulations of the positive stories she writes about the Soviet Union and eventually defects. The film was inspired by real events: the highly publicized 1948 defection of Annabelle Bucar, information clerk in the U.S. Embassy. Bucar's story was subsequently retold in a series of *Pravda* articles titled "True Confessions" and in the book, *The Truth about American*

¹⁴ Simonov, *Glazami*, 103-104; 147-148.

Diplomats, published in 1949.¹⁵ It is interesting that, although the prototype for Anna's character in the film, the real Annabelle Bucar, was an information clerk, the film turned her into a journalist.¹⁶ *Goodbye America* once more revealed the fascination that American journalism held for Soviet observers, and it also indicated their belief that an individual reporter could change the worldview of many.

As they imagined American media, Soviet commentators emphasized both the persuasive power of individual journalists and the institutional patronage of their work. This picture was shaped by the projection of Soviet ideology and practices onto American journalism. The ways in which these cultural products situated the politically conscious individual reporter who in his or her search for truth confronted the machinery of false consciousness propelled by the bourgeois press illustrated a distinctly Soviet belief in the dialectics of individual and collective, subjective and objective forces in history. On the practical level, Soviet visions of the large institutional support and material payoffs awarded to American journalists for pleasing their capitalist bosses and defaming the USSR derived from the Soviet tradition of ensuring the best possible material conditions for outstanding writers and journalists.

Conceivably it was these conceptions about the workings of American journalism and the existence of an organized press campaign against the USSR that informed the Soviet decision to launch a comparable campaign.¹⁷ Such a motivation is suggested by

¹⁵ Susan L. Carruthers, *Cold War Captives: Imprisonment, Escape and Brainwashing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 46-48.

¹⁶ Aleksandr Dovzhenko, *Kinonasledie Aleksandra Dovzhenko* (Kyiv, 2006), DVD # 7.

¹⁷ For other interpretations of the anti-American campaign see: Dzhahangir G. Nadzhafov, "The Beginging of the Cold War between East and West: The Aggravation of Ideological Confrontation," *Cold War History* 4, No. 2 (January 2004): 140-174; Vladimir Pechatnov, "Exercise in Frustration: Soviet Foreign Propaganda in the Early Cold War, 1945-1947," *Cold War History* 1, No. 2 (January 2001): 1-27.

the wording of the 1947 Agitprop “Plan of Activities for Increasing Anti-American Propaganda,” which singled out the U.S. as the principal arena for Soviet international reporting and instructed the press:

To publish systematically materials, articles, and pamphlets unmasking the aggressive plans of American imperialism and the inhuman character of the social and state order in the USA; to debunk American propaganda fables about the “flourishing” of America, and to show the deep contradictions within the US economy, the falsity of bourgeois democracy, the decay of bourgeois culture, and the customs of contemporary America.¹⁸

With the publication of the plan, “unmasking the myth of the so-called American way of life” became the central idea of the Soviet propaganda counteroffensive. It figured prominently throughout the entire plan in its prescriptions to Soviet radio, publishing houses, the Union of Soviet Writers, and the Ministry of Cinematography.¹⁹ Behind “unmasking America” as the core propaganda strategy lay the idea that pointing out the unequal distribution of wealth and resources and the “cultural degradation” of the U.S. would de-mythologize American capitalism and showcase the advantages of socialism. A propaganda strategy so conceived made sense only if the anticipated audiences of this campaign were both domestic and international. First among international audiences were the rapidly developing new People’s Republics. But also implicit in the campaign was Agitprop’s belief that at least some of the Soviet statements would be reported in the “bourgeois press” and thus would reach sympathetic readers, pundits, and policymakers in capitalist countries.

Since 1947 the messages of the anti-American campaign were reinforced in the domestic drive for vigilance against Western subversion, better known as the campaign

¹⁸ RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 132. D. 224. L. 48.

¹⁹ RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 132. D. 224. Ll. 48-52.

against “rootless cosmopolitanism.” The campaign focused substantially, but not exclusively, on Jews (euphemistically referred to as “cosmopolitans”) and sought to uproot “Western” and Jewish influences from Soviet culture. The campaign denigrated the West and the U.S., propagated Russian greatness and achievements in literature, arts, and sciences, and cautioned the Soviet public against the dangers of contacts with the West.²⁰ In this context, any suggestion that the Soviet people could learn or borrow something from the United States was purged from Soviet publications as a dangerous “kowtowing before the West.”

The evocation of negative analogy between capitalism and socialism was not new. As Aleksandr Etkind notes, “each culture has its own image of ‘the Other,’ which has a function in the system of power and meanings through which this culture defines itself.”²¹ For Soviet socialist culture, this “Other” was always capitalism, and, from the very origins of the Soviet state, the meaning of socialism was based on a “rejection of capitalism.”²² While the definition of what socialism is, remained sometimes vague, it was clear for all that it should be not capitalism.²³

With the official launch of anti-American propaganda, a new element entered this framework of comparative thinking: America became the foreign capitalist “Other,” against which Soviet socialism defined itself in negative analogy. During the 1920s and

²⁰ Peter Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 182-183.

²¹ Aleksandr Etkind, *Tolkovanie putesthestvii. Rossiia i Amerika v travelogakh i intertekstakh* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2001), 3.

²² Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 152-153.

²³ *Ibid.*, 152.

the early 1930s, “capitalism” did not have any geographic center: at different times it could refer to Europe, the United States, or fascist countries. Soviet popular images as well as cultural and official representations of America ranged from condemnation of its soullessness and cultural shallowness to admiration of its speed, technology, and efficiency.²⁴ Ilia Il’f and Evgenii Petrov’s seminal travelogue *Little Golden America* combined both of these perceptions as late as 1937. In these earlier views, America was something that the Soviet people could learn from, by applying its progress and technological sophistication for the benefit of all people under the socialist world order.²⁵

In the postwar incarnation of the comparison between socialism and capitalism, the U.S. became the primary symbol of capitalism and imperialism, while European countries were presented as mere cronies bowing before the American wealth. Virtuous aspects such as technological progress or efficiency, staples of pre-1945 writing about the U.S., were no longer mentioned. The only redeeming aspect of America was its suffering working class.

Soviet strategists believed that people with immediate experience of the U.S. would be the most effective spokesmen for the anti-American campaign. It was no coincidence that Soviet writers, the traditional bearers of the socialist message, were the first to stress the educational importance of such descriptions in literary form.²⁶ Agitprop concurred, and following a suggestion from the Union of Soviet Writers in 1948 it instructed the Soviet publishers to prepare new voluminous editions of American

²⁴ Alan M. Ball, *Imagining America: Influence and Images in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 119-140; Etkind, *Tolkovanie*, 142-165.

²⁵ Il’ia Il’f and Evgenii Petrov, *Odnoutazhnaia Amerika* (Moscow: Tekst, 2004), Ebook Edition, Chapter 46.

²⁶ Konstantin Simonov to Georgii Malenkov, “On activities proposed by the Writers’ Union for the strengthening of anti-American propaganda.” RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 132. D. 224. L. 57.

travelogues authored by the giants of Soviet literature Maxim Gorky and Vladimir Mayakovsky. Even *Without a Tongue*, written in 1895 by Vladimir Korolenko, a rather controversial figure for the Bolsheviks, was reprinted.²⁷ It is significant that ambivalent, and at times positive, accounts, such as the ones written by Il'f and Petrov or Sergei Esenin, were not included among the anti-American literature that was reprinted on a massive scale. The increase in publication of U.S. descriptions written by "progressive" (read: Communist) American writers also testified to the Soviet view that literature was the spearhead of propaganda.²⁸

To be effective however, this anti-American campaign required fresh narratives based on contemporary observations and events. In 1948, writing in his capacity as the Deputy Chairman of the Union of Soviet Writers, Konstantin Simonov asked Agitprop to authorize publication of new accounts, to be produced by employees of various Soviet agencies in the United States:

To create, in 1949-50, a series of 10-15 documentary books, written by the employees of Soviet purchasing commissions, trade delegations, TASS, AMKINO, consulates, Soviet engineers, and cultural figures, who visited the United States. [The task of the books is] to expose the so-called "American way of life" and to show the disastrous situation of the workers in the United States.²⁹

Soviet writers reoriented anti-American propaganda and put eye-witness accounts at the heart of the attack on the U.S. Simonov and his colleagues viewed this type of literature as the best way to communicate the universal differences between capitalism and socialism and, therefore, as the necessary center of the educational campaign against the

²⁷ RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 132. D. 224. L. 49.

²⁸ RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 132. D. 224. L. 50

²⁹ "On activities proposed by the Writers' Union for the strengthening of anti-American propaganda." RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 132. D. 224. L. 57.

United States. However, there was a real shortage of people who could generate these accounts.

In 1948 TASS was the only Soviet agency that had the logistics and human resources required for the creation of first-hand descriptions of the U.S., but its work fell short of the writers' expectations for wide-ranging and beautifully styled educational narratives on capitalism and socialism. TASS had bureaus in thirty countries, which, in addition to news reporting, were charged with gathering officially published information abroad – from the aforementioned compendiums of local press coverage of the USSR to TASS bulletins, which summarized the publications of the international press on variety of subjects, including scientific or agricultural developments.³⁰ All Soviet newspapers had to print TASS announcements, which were characterized by a laconic style and heavy official language. In the early days of the Cold War, TASS announcements were often written by Foreign Minister Andrei Vyshinskii or his predecessor, Viacheslav Molotov, neither of whom was famous for sparkling prose. Clearly, they were not able to compete with Gorky's or Mayakovsky's poetic indictments of America.

Correspondence between Agitprop and TASS directors acknowledged that the agency's concise style was inadequate for meeting the broad goals of anti-American propaganda. It also reiterated the need to increase the quality and spectrum of TASS coverage. Time and again, TASS directors berated their employees in New York and

³⁰ RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 132. D. 15. L. 107. TASS bulletins were distributed to top Soviet officials in the Party and in ministries, in the Academy of Sciences, the military, and Soviet industry. Bulletins were ranked by degree of secrecy and distributed according to one's status in the hierarchy. Like in any other hierarchical allocation of privilege in the USSR, one's status was partially determined by the level of secrecy of TASS bulletins one could access.

Washington for their shabby presentation style and narrow reports. In a characteristic dispatch to the New York bureau, TASS director Nikolai Pal'gunov complained:

After the conclusion of the session of the [UN] General Assembly, we were expecting an increase in the quality and the quantity of information covering the domestic life of the United States. To be more precise, we were expecting and are still expecting information pertaining to ideological questions, and information that would unmask the ideology of American imperialism. ... Your coverage of the strike movement in the U.S. was only fragmented, and one can't use it to form a full understanding of the workers' struggle for their rights. Yet, the [American] newspapers, even the very few we are receiving, write a lot about the strikes. Of insufficient coverage are also other items on American domestic problems: unemployment, exploitation at the factories, living conditions, ideological indoctrination of the population, etc.³¹

Pal'gunov was criticizing his employees for doing what he saw as a sloppy ideological job: fragmented coverage and the lack of all-encompassing picture undermined readers' understanding of the ideological issues at stake – the universal struggle between capitalism and socialism and the former's disadvantage.

The shortcomings of TASS's style became especially evident after it lost its monopoly on foreign news. Soviet writers and war correspondents, who frequently travelled abroad as members of various delegations, began to deliver features on international themes based on their impressions. For example, throughout his 1946 trip to the U.S., Ehrenburg wrote extensive articles for *Izvestiia*, in which he grappled with the significance of America in the postwar world and its potential role in the future.³² He emerged from his experience with a view of the United States as a place of contrasts and complexities, which deserved compliments as well as critique:

³¹ GARF. F. R-4459. Op. 38c. D. 457. Ll. 48-49. Pal'gunov to Beglov, October 2, 1953.

³² Ehrenburg's 1946 series, "In America," ran in *Izvestiia* on July 16, 17, 24, and 25. An additional series, "In Canada," ran on August 7, 9, and 21.

At the train station in Atlanta, I was struck by the automated closets that replace the luggage storage room. If you put a coin inside, you can store your luggage by yourself. Just as I was about to tell my American fellow traveler, “you know how to make human existence easier,” I saw the dark stinking room with the sign, “For colored people.”³³

Ehrenburg appreciated American creativity, its literature, science, and intelligentsia, and at the same time, pointed out the shallowness of other cultural products, such as the cinema. He praised America’s technological modernization, efficiency, and the affordability of its consumer goods, but he also gave a critical nod to the culture of standardization. Ehrenburg was most struck by the existence of racial segregation and racist sentiments in a country that had just helped defeat Hitler. The complexity of his published impressions surprised even *Harper Magazine*, which printed a translation of Ehrenburg’s publications and expressed astonishment that certain passages were published in the Soviet press.³⁴

The difference in the quality of information provided by TASS and traveling journalists did not go unnoticed. Soviet newspapers’ editorial boards began to entertain the benefits of having their own, on-site correspondents around the world. During a discussion of an *Izvestiia* issue featuring one of Ehrenburg’s articles, a member of the editorial board observed: “This year we have finally realized our aspiration to show everything, the people and the faces, to show our country, juxtaposing it to the capitalist world. One single man, Ehrenburg, went and saw what happens there and here. The form we used was convincing and accessible.”³⁵ As this comment suggests, the most important

³³ *Izvestiia*, July 16, 1946, p. 4.

³⁴ Ehrenburg, *Liudi*, 46-47. “Ilya Ehrenburg’s America. Translation of Six Articles Published in *Izvestiia*,” *Harper’s Magazine* 193:1159, December 1946, pp. 562-576. For editors’ comments on Ehrenburg: “Personal and Otherwise,” *Harper’s Magazine* 193:1159, December 1946, pp. 579-580.

³⁵ GARF. F. R-1244. Op. 1. D. 70. L. 20.

advantage of having someone on site in a capitalist country was the analytical horizons that this perspective opened. First-hand experience facilitated deeper ideological insights and provided a better vantage point for understanding and explaining the differences between capitalism and socialism. Although Ehrenburg's literary skills were not a small matter, for the editors of *Izvestiia*, the main achievement of his work lay in the depth of the analysis he provided.

TASS internal correspondence acknowledged that the problem often lay not with the agency's cadres but with its general style of work.³⁶ TASS was the authoritative voice of the Soviet state. To underscore this standing, no TASS announcement ever carried an individual author's name. This most de-personalized source of news had no room for individual literary skills, or for broad analysis. In a letter to Georgii Malenkov and Mikhail Suslov, TASS director Pal'gunov lamented that "journalistic egos" were a big problem for the agency. TASS correspondents, he wrote, wanted to see their names in the byline; they therefore neglected their duties for the agency and spent too much time writing articles for newspapers and magazines that gave them credit.³⁷ The developing needs of the anti-American propaganda campaign and the newspapers' growing thirst for first-hand accounts from abroad provided TASS journalists with an attractive opportunity to practice an alternative, and a more personalized, style of writing and to see their name

³⁶ An anonymous letter sent to Agitprop "on the situation at the TASS editorial board of foreign information" denounced the foreign desk for not acting to increase the qualification of young cadres joining TASS or make them like their work. Moreover, complained the letter, senior officials alienated young workers by criticizing their work without explaining their mistakes – all of which caused young talented employees to leave TASS. The second part of the letter dealt with misuse of personnel and pointed out that many employees were not working in divisions that matched their professional preparations and qualities. A glaring example was a woman who, while being fluent in Spanish and French, was working at the American division without knowing English. Since her work demanded a lot of translations, she ultimately failed, attracting the unjust scorn of her supervisors. RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 132. D. 122. Ll. 60-64.

³⁷ RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 132. D. 122. Ll. 84-85.

in print. The negative effects of sharing TASS journalists with newspapers further illuminated the need to separate the two and to allow other media have their own international correspondents.

The time was ripe for expanding the Soviet press corps in foreign countries. At the end of 1949, Agitprop confirmed *Pravda*'s list of its first resident correspondents (so called *sobkory* –“own correspondents”) around the world. The fact that the highest priority was given to reporting on the U.S. is evident from the candidates for the bureaus in Washington, D.C. and New York: they were the renowned writer and *Pravda* war correspondent Boris Polevoi and I. A. Filippov, an instructor at Agitprop.³⁸ *Izvestiia*, which began to develop a network of international correspondents at about the same time, opened its U.S. bureau in 1956.

The decision to expand Soviet coverage of the United States came in an unfavorable time. In 1951 the head of TASS bureau in New York, Beglov, reported that the anti-Communist campaign began to target Soviet journalists in the U.S. and that American authorities launched an official attack against the agency. According to Beglov, vendors refused to sell supplies to TASS bureaus and publishers cancelled the agency's subscriptions to American periodicals.³⁹ Local press attacked Soviet and American employees of TASS and the latter were called to appear before the McCarren Committee (SISS - Senate Internal Security Subcommittee).⁴⁰ Beglov also reported that the FBI conducted an inspection of TASS offices in New York in Washington and that he received numerous queries from U.S. congressmen and the State Department, which

³⁸ RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 132. D. 117. L. 92.

³⁹ GARF. F. R-4459. Op. 38c. D. 309. L. 12-14.

⁴⁰ GARF. F. R-4459. Op. 38c. D. 309. L. 75-76.

indicated that American authorities suspected that “TASS as a whole is not a news agency.”⁴¹ Beglov reported that while TASS’ Soviet correspondents “remain calm” American employees experienced a great difficulty with dealing with the persecutions and “succumb to panic.”⁴²

Beglov’s reports corroborated the need to train more Soviet cadres suitable for work in TASS’ bureaus abroad and reintroduced old concerns with the “reliability” of local employees in TASS’ American offices, which have been voiced in the agency since the beginning of the anti-American campaign.⁴³ TASS director Pal’gunov emphasized that the employees “must retain complete self-control, continue working as if nothing happens [...] and must conduct themselves in such a manner that would give no reason for [American] provocations.”⁴⁴ He worried about the resilience of American journalists working for TASS and instructed Beglov to pay “a special attention to the demeanor and the utterances of the American employees, and report your opinion on their possible actions in the future, especially in case the campaign against TASS will grow stronger.”⁴⁵

Rather than being deterred by the attacks on their journalists in the U.S., Soviet officials continued to increase the scope of anti-American propaganda and to expand their network of correspondents around the world. A 1952 resolution of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU “on measures to improve the operation of the newspaper *Pravda*” listed the names of *Pravda* journalists recently appointed to the posts of

⁴¹ GARF. F. R-4459. Op. 38c. D. 309. Ll. 67-71; Ll. 75-76; L. 90.

⁴² GARF. F. R-4459. Op. 38c. D. 309. L.90.

⁴³ RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 132. D. 15. Ll. 100-113.

⁴⁴ GARF. F. R-4459. Op. 38c. D. 309. L. 85.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

international correspondents.⁴⁶ Compared to 1949, the list of journalists departing to capitalist countries grew longer. According to the resolution, the expansion of international coverage was supposed to proceed in two parallel directions: on-site reporting from abroad, provided by a newspaper's own correspondent, and political-ideological analysis of international themes provided by a Moscow-based "international commentator."⁴⁷

These measures aimed at strengthening the ideological rigor of international coverage in the Soviet newspapers. The expansion of press corps in foreign countries sought to ensure a greater exposure of reactionary and imperialist policies of the U.S., Britain and France. International commentators supplemented these reports with a meticulous analysis, which situated the policies of the Soviet Union and its rivals in their proper ideological context. The importance attributed to international commentators was manifest in their entitlement to various nomenclature privileges, such as special health clinics and dining rooms. These benefits also reflected the emphasis that the Soviet Union placed on an individual journalist and institutional support for his work.

Soviet leaders paid a close attention to the political loyalties and ideological integrity of their international reporters and commentators. In 1952, *Pravda*'s London correspondent Maevskii was recalled from his post, because his assessment of a certain speech in the House of Commons resembled the one offered by British conservative newspapers.⁴⁸ Agitprop criticized *Pravda* editors for not spotting the ideological mistake and recommended to replace Maevskii with "a more [politically] mature employee,

⁴⁶ RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 132. D. 117. Ll. 230-250.

⁴⁷ RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 132. D. 52. Ll. 112-113.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

capable to work through the complexities of contemporary political situation in England.”⁴⁹ In the general atmosphere of campaigns against “kowtowing before the West,” concerns with ideological rigor and the scrutiny of Maevskii’s dispatches do not seem outstanding. Conversely, perhaps they had to do as much with the novelty of having resident correspondents in capitalist countries and with the general desire to establish the institutional importance of on-site international reporting during these early stages.

As Soviet ideologists orchestrated the expansion of international coverage they stipulated that the training for correspondents abroad and international commentators should include two years of study at the Party’s High School of Journalism and that only people with undergraduate degrees, work experience in the press, and exceptional professional achievements should be considered for training.⁵⁰ These provisions were rather hard to meet. An adequate staffing of the international departments and bureaus abroad also required area specialists with language proficiency, who were in constant shortage after the war.⁵¹ Quite often, newspapers preferred candidates with area expertise and chose to compromise on journalistic excellence. In 1951, Vsevolod Ovchinnikov, a third-year student in the Chinese department at the Military School of Foreign Languages, was assigned as a translator for a visiting delegation from China. During the delegation’s tour of *Pravda*’s offices, the editor was so impressed with Ovchinnikov’s language skills that he immediately offered him a place in the paper’s international department. Having no journalistic experience whatsoever, Ovchinnikov started working

⁴⁹ RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 132. D. 52. Ll. 112-113; Ll. 116-117.

⁵⁰ RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 132. D. 522. L. 245

⁵¹ RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 132. D. 108. L. 33; RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 132. D. 15. Ll. 100-113.

TASS director Pal’gunov requested to assign to the agency ten graduates of the High School of Diplomacy and ten to fifteen graduates of MGIMO and stated the need to train professionals with wide language proficiency, including Persian or Scandinavian languages. RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 132. D. 294. Ll. 30-34.

for the most important Soviet newspaper. Area expertise, he learned, was crucial in matters of foreign coverage:

Among the new international journalists [mezhdunaroniki] there were almost no graduates from departments of journalism. The newspapers preferred to take country experts, that is, people who knew languages and regions. For example, I, a Sinologist who then became a Japanologist, also had to cover the Far East. ... We also had professional Indologists, Germanologists, and Americanists.⁵²

One of the most sought-after sources of new professionals for the expanding international departments was MGIMO, the Moscow State Institute of International Relations.

MGIMO was established in 1944 as an outgrowth of the Moscow State University (MGU) Department of International Relations. MGIMO was entrusted with the academic preparation of Soviet cadres for work abroad and was central to the postwar efforts to cultivate Soviet professionals in international relations. While in its early days the institute did not have a department of journalism, aspiring students who wanted to try their luck with the pen could do so by joining *Mezhdunarodnik*, the institute's highly popular wallpaper, which later converted into a printed newspaper. Many of the most famous names in Cold War-era international reporting graduated from MGIMO in these early years: Valentin Zorin (graduated in 1948); Melor Sturua (1950); Evgenii Blinov, Leonid Kamynin, Nikolai Kurdiumov, Stanislav Kondrashov, and Gennady Shishkin (all graduated in 1951); and Genrikh Borovik and Vitalii Kobysh (1952).

As the newspapers' international departments expanded they needed to recruit more personnel. As a result, a new cohort of young graduates from prestigious universities joined the ranks of Soviet journalists in the early 1950s. Before departing to work abroad the recruits had to spend a few years gaining experience and learning their

⁵² Vsevolod Ovchinnikov, *Kaleidoskop zhizni* (Moscow: Rossiiskaia gazeta, 2003), 3.

new trade. They had to become familiar with every step in the process of newspaper production: to learn how to organize the international news section and to master the writing of general commentary articles on international themes.⁵³ Melor Sturua, assigned to *Izvestiia* upon graduating from MGIMO in 1950, remembers the pressing sense of responsibility in these early days:

At this time [in 1950, D.F.], there were only three of us in the [international] department. Therefore, although I was still very young and inexperienced, I immediately joined the main activities. And then, *Izvestiia* was the official newspaper of the Soviet Union. ... Therefore, it didn't matter that someone as young as I wrote the material, it was examined through a magnifying glass, and diplomats and employees of intelligence services were trying to find there what Soviet government wanted to say. It placed a lot of responsibility on our shoulders.⁵⁴

Sturua's comments reveal the objectives of Soviet international coverage and the very important duties bestowed on the journalist. He was the voice of the Soviet state, communicating its official positions to foreign countries.

The great significance attributed to international items explains the elaborate structure of checks and monitors that governed Soviet news making on international themes. In the major newspapers, *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, international departments were divided into four sections, which reflected the developing bipolar world: a general information section, a section devoted to socialist countries, one on Asia and Africa, and one on capitalist countries, the latter was considered the most important. Each section was headed by its own editor. Together, the editors worked under the direction of the international department's general editor and the newspaper's deputy editor in charge of

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁴ Melor Georgievich Sturua, interviewed by Dina Fainberg, February 4, 2011, Moscow.

international coverage.⁵⁵ International departments were supervised directly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MID). Thus, an average international news item traveled from the journalist to the section editor, from there to the international department editor, and finally to two MID officials: one with expertise on the item's particular subject, and one who scanned it for its more general political meaning.⁵⁶

Items on foreign affairs usually came from one of three sources: the newspaper's correspondent abroad, TASS, or a Moscow-based political commentator. All the sources were connected through an intricate scheme of verifications: if a correspondent's article lacked something that was reported by TASS on a similar subject, the appropriate passage was inserted into his item. Each article by a political commentator, often an analysis of the international situation or a particular affair, was sent to the MID for comments or corrections.⁵⁷ This sophisticated supervisory structure shows the importance the Soviet leadership attributed to international news. Each publication was meticulously measured and calculated, and journalists often worked immediately with the most official source on international issues: the Foreign Ministry. As Melor Sturua recalled,

Usually they invited three of us: *Pravda*, *Izvestiia* and TASS. We sat in Molotov's cabinet, later Gromyko's, sometimes in Vyshinskii's ... and he [the current Minister] would talk to us. As if he was thinking out loud – “this is how I think this issue should be covered,” or “this is how I think that question could be resolved.” And we, naturally, wrote everything down. Thus, we knew from the most important source what the state needed. It made it easy for us to navigate. The most important thing was to have two or three such postulates; the rest was up to us. ... Since *Pravda* was the Party newspaper it could discuss international affairs in a sharper tone than *Izvestiia*, because *Izvestiia* was the official newspaper. Sometimes a *Pravda* journalist and I would write an article on a similar topic, but mine would come out harsher, and his would be softer. So my

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ The practice was discontinued after Stalin's death.

article was sent to *Pravda* and published under his name and his article came to *Izvestiia* and was published under my name.⁵⁸

As evident from these recollections, news making was a collaborative project, with the Party articulating the content and journalists contributing the form. Individual authorship was not valued; writing was de-personalized, and Sturua saw the essence of his work as the articulation of the postulates given to him. The journalists' most important function was to be the official voice of the state and to communicate its positions. Further evidence of the non-existence of individual journalistic voices was that general editorial articles on international relations usually appeared without any indication of individual authorship. The depersonalized signatures "observer" (*Izvestiia*) or "commentator" (*Pravda*), at the bottom of an article were a clear sign that the texts in question reflected the official position of the government or the Party.⁵⁹

While young and seasoned journalists wrote the newspapers' international commentaries, their most senior colleagues covered the foreign countries on-site. And yet, although more articles based on first-hand impressions were being printed, the newspaper was not an ideal format for exploring in depth the differences between capitalism and socialism, as envisioned by Simonov and other advocates of literary accounts based on first-hand experience. The constraints of space took their toll on narrative breadth and depth. Newspapers were obliged to carry every item on international issues provided by TASS. News from "brotherly countries," foreign communist parties, and reports from UN sessions took precedence, leaving little room for anything else.

⁵⁸ Sturua, interviewed on February 4, 2011.

⁵⁹ This practice, too, was discontinued after Stalin's death.

The most crucial factor, however, was the newspapers' general style of writing on international themes, which made it difficult to fit in more personalized narratives and individual impressions. Even when journalists ventured into formats other than newspapers, the de-personalized journalistic style took its toll. The first two books published by Soviet journalists about the U.S., Iurii Zhukov's *The West after the War* (1948) and Daniil Kraminov's *American Encounters* (1954) closely resembled each other and the general tone of Soviet newspapers' coverage of America. Although six years separated the accounts, each contained long statements representing Soviet foreign policy and addressed all the topics on Agitprop's list for anti-American propaganda. Each account focused on "the aggressive plans of American imperialism and the inhuman character of the social and state order in the USA; debunking American propaganda fables on the 'flourishing' of America and showing the deep contradictions of the USA's economy, the falsity of bourgeoisie democracy, and the decay of bourgeoisie culture and of the customs of contemporary America."⁶⁰ While both accounts emphasized the "oppression of the average American by monopolies," they seldom featured individual characters and most often used abstract aggregates such as the "American masses" or "progressive Americans." U.S. cities formed a vague, grayish backdrop to the narrators' statements, with few actual descriptions of the places in which American people lived or the conditions they faced. Most importantly, each account contained long passages on the "warmongering American foreign policy in the service of monopolies," such as this one:

Everywhere we look, whatever country of the capitalist world we examine, we see the same picture – the dollar trumping over its partners, the dollar striving to secure for itself global domination. The concrete manifestation of this program

⁶⁰ RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 132. D. 224. Ll. 48-52.

consists of the “Truman Doctrine” and the “Marshall Plan” – representing two sides of the same political coin – policies striving to establish the domination of American monopolies over the entire globe.⁶¹

In both Zhukov’s and Kraminov’s accounts, the narrator’s voice was reduced to a minimum. Neither of them conveyed any emotions or presented any personal impressions. Instead, the narrator acted as an authoritative voice of Soviet foreign policy. Thus, even where the journalists were not constrained by the medium of the newspaper they remained strongly affected by the de-personalized style of postwar international reporting and the ideological imperative to infuse their perspective with the voice of the state.

Children of the Twentieth Congress

In 1955, a delegation of seven Soviet journalists left Paris on board of a New York-bound ship. All the members felt a mixture of excitement and anxiety, as theirs was the first delegation of journalists to be hosted by the U.S. State Department since 1946. The group combined representatives of the old generation of wartime correspondents, such as Boris Polevoi and Nikolai Gribachev, and members of a younger, postwar journalistic cohort, such as Aleksei Adzhubei, a graduate of the first class of MGU’s Department of Journalism, the newly appointed editor of *Komsomol’skaia Pravda* and Nikita Khrushchev’s son-in-law. The very existence of the delegation, an outcome of the 1955 Geneva Conference, pointed to the changing tides in the Cold War. The delegation traveled across the United States and met with American colleagues, sympathizers, and people who were simply curious to see flesh-and-blood Russians. They visited

⁶¹ Iurii Zhukov, *Na Zapade posle voiny. Zapiski korrespondenta* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1948), 282.

newspapers' offices, cultural and historic sites, and even attended a Hollywood party, where they rubbed elbows with Marilyn Monroe, Grace Kelly, and a young politician, previously unknown to them, named John F. Kennedy.

Each journalist filed accounts of the trip with his newspaper, and, for the first time in many years, the Soviet public was able to read about a different America. This America was friendlier to the Soviet Union; it was no longer an abstract citadel of capitalism and monopolies but a place of sites, sounds, and different people. The most notable development in these accounts was the changing representation of the "average American." A quite faceless entity in journalistic writings of the late Stalin era, the term was now imbued with the names, faces, voices, professions, and home interiors of the people whom the Soviet journalists had met during their trip. Another theme, the growing convergence between Soviet and American people, was promoted after the journalists' return in numerous lectures, public appearances, and in three books published by different members of the delegation.⁶²

The altered image of America and Soviet-American relations the delegation delivered, was part of the larger transformation that occurred in the Soviet press after Stalin's death and especially after Khrushchev's address to the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party, "On the Cult of Personality," better known as the Secret Speech. The set of drastic changes that took place between Khrushchev's Secret Speech in 1956 and his removal from the post of the General Secretary in 1964 gave rise to a distinct generation: *shestidesiatniki*, the "people of the 1960s."

⁶² See for example: Boris Polevoi, *Amerikanskii dnevnik* (Moscow: Gos. Izdatel'stvo detskoi literatury, 1957).

The *shestidesiatniki* came of age amidst the hardships and depravations of the war, and all were touched by it either as young adults or young soldiers. They enthusiastically joined in the postwar reconstruction of their country and sought to contribute to its remaking. Khrushchev's revelations and denunciation of old dogmas spurred them to search for their own voices and opinions. New art forms, film, poetry and literature, clubs and discussion groups sprang up everywhere.⁶³ While reared in a spirit of critical appraisal of the Stalinist past, the *shestidesiatniki* continued to believe in the superiority of socialist ideas and saw the Twentieth Party Congress as the dawn of a new era, marked by a return to true socialism, to the Leninist values that had shaped the Soviet state before their "deformation" and "corruption" at the hands of Stalin. The activist spirit also extended into the Soviet establishment. Under Khrushchev, younger cadres, characterized by critical thinking and reformist intentions, rose in the state and Party bureaucracies.⁶⁴ In 1961, the XXII CPSU Congress adopted the Party's Third Program, which set the tasks of expanding the material and technical foundations of the Soviet state, and of educating the New Man of socialist society.⁶⁵ The regime's avowal to achieve communism by 1980 further spurred the reformist enthusiasm on the part of the young generation.

Explaining his reforms as a return to true Leninist principles, Khrushchev revamped the means and practices used to build socialism during Stalin's time. The new

⁶³ Elena Zubkova, *Obshchestvo i reformy, 1945-1964* (Moscow: Rossiia molodaia, 1993), 137-145, 169-179.

⁶⁴ Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 177. During the Perestroika years, these people moved to the center of political and cultural life and became influential in Soviet policymaking.

⁶⁵ Peter Vail' and Aleksandr Genis, *60-ye. Mir sovetskogo cheloveka* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1996), 14.

trends emphasized non-coercive, voluntarist practices. Mobilization, reasoning, and engagement with the public became the favored modes of action. These changes also spurred discussions of the press' role in the Soviet society and the ways in which Soviet journalists and writers were to assist the Party in the construction of communism.

The new definition of journalism's function in Soviet society elaborated numerous tasks. To begin with, the press was to become a platform for coming to terms with the Stalinist past and thinking about the future. Secondly, journalists were expected to assist in the revolutionary transformation "by supplying the texts and images that would make Soviet readers part of the process through which their society would realize socialism."⁶⁶ By calling readers' attention to their conduct and providing proper background information, Soviet reporters were to foster the self-education of their readers and to help bring about the New Man of socialist society.⁶⁷ New journalistic practices were put forth to achieve these vaunted goals. Instead of lecturing, newspapers began to engage their readers, to convince them through arguments and examples rather than crushing them with the weight of authority. An important innovation was the increasing emphasis on "people's journalism" – whereby stories about individual persons were seen as crucial for understanding larger phenomena.⁶⁸ Newspapers' interaction with their readers expanded significantly: they ran opinion surveys and staged "debates" by inviting readers' letters on a certain topic and publishing them. Editors geared more and more materials toward the readers' interests and sought to be responsive to their experiences and concerns. Departments dealing with readers' letters significantly expanded. *Izvestiia*

⁶⁶ Wolfe, *Governing*, 18.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 18-34.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 34-36.

editors rewarded their journalists for “feeling a letter” – identifying a case that could lead to a good and interesting story. In many cases, the newspaper took it upon itself to “protect the small person” from injustice and ran journalistic investigations or follow-ups on a reader’s letter.⁶⁹

One of the primary figures of the journalistic renovation was Khrushchev’s son-in-law, Aleksei Adzhubei. As editor-in-chief of *Komsomol’skaia Pravda* and later *Izvestiia*, he introduced many of the abovementioned journalistic practices, making “people’s journalism” a brand closely associated with his name and turning the newspapers under his leadership into symbols of the Thaw.⁷⁰ Aleksandr Volkov, the *Izvestiia* correspondent in Altai, defined the “five principles of Aleksei Adzhubei” as follows:

1. A newspaper is an interlocutor; it should not force its opinion upon readers but inspire them to think independently
2. Each issue of the newspaper must have “a bomb,” “a nail.”
3. A journalist must write about what is interesting to him, and therefore [it will be interesting] to the reader.
4. It’s important to listen to what the people are debating or talking about and respond immediately.
5. The address of the material and the address of the publication should be precise.⁷¹

One of the most striking aspects of these five principles is the degree to which their conception of the journalist’s role differs from the practices of the early 1950s described by Sturua. A new relationship between the journalists and their materials was one of the most important innovations of Adzhubei. The emphasis on “people’s journalism” led to a growing realization that the journalist’s unique style and interests were assets that

⁶⁹ Eduard Polianovskii, “Piat’ printsipov Alekseia Adzhubeia,” *Izvestiia*, January 6, 2004. <http://www.izvestia.ru/news/285551>. Accessed on September 10, 2011; Iurii Feofanov, “Pervaia Planerka,” in *Aleksei Adzhubei v koridorakh chetvertoi vlasti*, ed. Dmitrii Mamleev (Moscow: *Izvestiia*, 2003), 109-110.

⁷⁰ Wolfe, *Governing*, 38-45.

⁷¹ Polianovskii, “Piat’ printsipov.”

enhanced the newspaper's position as an interlocutor and made it more interesting. The new style emphasized personalization and engagement – journalists could reach other people through their writing only if they cared about what they wrote.

The concept of “people’s journalism” facilitated an activist and more personalized approach to reporting, and reemphasized the importance of the journalist as an educator. It also affected the corner stone of the Soviet press – collectively referred to as *publitsistika* – a sort of op-ed, intellectual journalism with an ideological edge. The Great Soviet Encyclopedia defined *publitsistika* as “literary creations dedicated to questions and phenomena relevant to the life of the society, and including factual information of its various aspects, evaluation from the viewpoint of author’s social ideals, including conceptions of the ways to achieve set targets.”⁷² Soviet editors and ideologists saw in *publitsistika* the primary literary means to demonstrate how the universal laws of history operated in reality. An ideal work of *publitsistika* was the presentation of facts, accompanied by commentaries, which explained their larger ideological or social significance. In fact, Soviet definitions of journalism and *publitsistika* were closely connected. The Great Soviet Encyclopedia referred to both as a “sharp weapon in ideological struggle, a means for public education, agitation, and propaganda,” and as a means to convey “socially relevant” information.⁷³ Like Soviet journalism, Soviet *publitsistika* claimed its origins in the works of such writers as, Radishchev and Belinsky, as well as in the works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin.

⁷² E.P. Prokhorov, “Publitsistika,” *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopedia*, Vol. 21, 3rd ed. (Moscow: 1975), 214-215.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 9, 252-253.

In the spirit of “journalism of the person,” Soviet editors believed that *publitsistika* based on the experience of “ordinary people” would be more engaging and therefore more effective in calling readers’ attention to phenomena and ideas of universal significance. Many hopes concentrated on the *ocherk* – a journalistic essay – as a genre that would help create engaging and relevant *publitsistika*. The value of the *ocherk* rested on its ability to identify global aspects in episodic detail: to use the story of a “small man” to convey universal social truths in a concise and accessible form. The *ocherk* became the model genre for communicating universal ideas and the flagship of Thaw journalism.⁷⁴ Established writers and journalists emphasized its importance and repeatedly encouraged their younger colleagues to practice and perfect their skills in this genre.⁷⁵

The *ocherk* increased the importance of the role played by the individual journalist in the collective endeavor of the Soviet press. Personal matters, insights, interests, and inclinations, informed one’s selection of a random episode as a vantage point on larger issues. Literary skill and individual writing style also determined the degree to which an *ocherk* resonated with readers. The *ocherk* reemphasized the role of a journalist as an educator and shifted the source of educational authority from the Party to the journalist’s personality. Adzhubei’s explanation of what constitutes a good *ocherk* underlined the importance of the journalist’s educating role:

⁷⁴ N. L. Volkovskii, *Otechestvennaia zhurnalistika. 1950-2000*. Vol. 1. (St. Petersburg: Sankt-Peterburgskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2006), 84-85; 140-149.

⁷⁵ “The writer of an *ocherk* ... most often moves from interesting particularities to generalizations. A good *ocherk* has all the attributes of a purely journalistic genre: it is concrete and recreates actual facts. [...] On the other hand, when written by a master, an *ocherk* has all attributes of a short story, a novel. [...] The most important thing for the *ocherk* writer is to present a phenomenon, rather than talking about it.” Boris Polevoi, *Ocherk v gazete* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo vyshei partiinoi shkoly pri TsK KPSS, 1953), 26-30.

Reporting a fact is not enough. Newspapermen must offer commentaries [on the fact], supply it with additional details, in order to generalize more. ... For example, a small article relates that in one of our cities someone underwent a complicated heart surgery. And that's it. But if we add that the five months of treatment, the surgery, the medical supplies cost 700 rubles, all funded by the government, and that the removal of an appendix in the United States costs 500 dollars, to be paid by the patient himself – and that not everyone has this money! – A small fact will shine thanks to a sharp publicistic edge.⁷⁶

It was revealing that Adzhubei chose the difference between socialism and capitalism as an example of the universally important truths that an *ocherk* should aim to convey.

International news in general, and information about the U.S. in particular, occupied a very significant place in the cultural, ideological, and journalistic transformations of the Thaw, for a set of reasons.

First, a significant marker of the Khrushchev era was an increasing openness in foreign policy: a reaching out to other countries and a gradual decline in the Soviet Union's isolation. Diplomatic relations were restored with China and Yugoslavia, cultural and scientific exchanges were initiated, and foreign tourists were allowed into the USSR in larger numbers. The beacons of the new agenda were the Moscow Youth Festival and Khrushchev's visit to the United States. This tendency culminated with Gagarin's flight into space, which changed the Soviet people's sense of space and time and allowed them to imagine the world as a unified civilization.⁷⁷ The rest of the world was no longer perceived as an unavoidable, even undesirable, addition to the Soviet world, but as an inseparable and necessary part of a domestic culture. There was an increasing need for

⁷⁶ Quoted in Volkovskii, *Otechestvennaia zhurnalistika*, 84-85.

⁷⁷ Vail' and Genis, *60-ye*, 15.

information about the world, both in terms of general knowledge and reports on explicit matters.⁷⁸

Second, international news coverage was essential for publicizing the advent of socialism in the world. The Party considered the construction of communism in the Soviet Union to be a project of universal human significance – “a great international task, reflecting the interests of all humankind.”⁷⁹ It was therefore important to chronicle the unfolding of this universal task on the international arena, especially in the new European socialist countries and the de-colonizing Third World. By highlighting the achievements of socialist countries and presenting the gains that socialist ideas were making around the world, the Soviet press stressed the significance of the socialist project, its universal appeal and moral superiority.⁸⁰

Third, due to their unique ability to provide first-hand information necessary for the comparison between capitalism and socialism, international news were crucial contribution to the education of the new socialist person during the Thaw. Khrushchev’s slogan, “Reach and surpass America,” built on the Soviet tradition of such comparisons and on the equation between the United States and capitalism, which had developed during the early postwar years. In many respects, however, Khrushchev’s conception of the United States was a significant departure from the previous image of the Cold War adversary. Khrushchev’s slogan reintroduced the 1920s idea that America had something to teach the Soviet Union, for it provided an example of what the communist future could bring in terms of material-technological achievement. At the official opening of the

⁷⁸ Zubkova, *Obshchestvo i reformy*, 157-167.

⁷⁹ Vail’ and Genis, *60-ye*, 15.

⁸⁰ Wolfe, *Governing*, 58-61.

American Exhibition in Moscow in 1959, Khrushchev pointed out the other country's instructive potential: "we look at the American exhibition as an exhibition of our own achievements in the near future."⁸¹ As Susan Reid explains, Soviet authorities saw great educational value in the American exhibition and expected that it would help the construction of socialism:

The Soviet authorities expected ANEM to promote the Soviet project of catching up and overtaking America in two main ways. It would serve as an incentive by making manifest concretely and vividly the rewards that awaited Soviet people's continued efforts, a method familiar to the Soviet public in the form of Socialist Realism. Furthermore, the exhibition was to speed the Soviet Union toward the attainment of the radiant future of communism in direct, practical ways, offering a vital opportunity to learn from the Cold War adversary."⁸²

Thus, in Khrushchev's articulation, America became a place that could offer vital knowledge for the Soviet Union to emulate and improve by applying American technologies and innovations in accordance to socialist principles. At the same time, Khrushchev-era comparisons between the USSR and the U.S. illustrated in encouraging ways socialist achievements that had already been made. Recall the aforementioned statement by Adzhubei, in which he emphasized that such a comparison was the core of the universal and educational value of foreign news.

An educational comparison between socialism and capitalism was also at the heart of Adzhubei's pet project – a revival of Maxim Gorky's idea of *Den' Mira* (A Day in the World). *Den' Mira* was an outsized coffee table book recording the events of a single day – September 27, 1960. The book chronicled what happened on that day in every country

⁸¹ "My peregonim Ameriku! Rech' Predsedatelia Soveta ministrov SSSR N. S. Khrushcheva pri otkrytii vystavki Soedinennykh Shtatov Ameriki v Moskve," *Trud*, July 25, 1959. Quoted in Susan E. Reid, "Who Will Beat Whom? Soviet Popular Receptions of the American National Exhibition in Moscow, 1959." *Kritika* 9, no. 4 (2008): 863.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 863-864.

in the world by publishing hundreds of news items and photos, written and collected by Soviet correspondents at home and abroad and by journalists worldwide. The first chapters of the book described life under socialism, showing items from the Soviet Union, socialist Europe, and Asia. The remaining countries were presented by continent, with Western Europe and North America depicted as entangled in a struggle between capital and labor.⁸³ A comparison between the socialist chapters and the capitalist chapters underscored the difference between the experiences of the people in each social system. While the socialist pages presented forward-looking societies engaged in the construction of a bright future, the chapters on capitalist countries, especially the United States, showed racial oppression, criminality, and labor conflicts, leaving the reader with the impression that America was “consumed by what Soviet society left behind forty-three years earlier.”⁸⁴

International and domestic news reports, cultural products, and high profile events such as the American exhibition and *Den' Mira* encouraged the Soviet people to read information about life abroad, and especially about the U.S., from a comparative perspective. Comparative reading taught audiences that the Soviet Union, as the superior social system, had already overcome America in the areas of welfare and communality. At the same time, the comparative approach encouraged Soviet readers to look ahead to the horizons of communism and to remember that American technological and material progress would soon arrive to the Soviet Union, to be used for the benefit of all. Behind the encouragement to compare between socialism and capitalism stood the Soviet press's

⁸³ Wolfe, *Governing*, 48-53.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 65-66. Wolfe's analysis of *Den' Mira* points out that the comparison between socialism and capitalism was also an important aspect in the education of socialist personalities.

conception of its readers as conscious Marxists, “who understand that the greatest good of the largest number of people lay not in capitalist self-interest and acquisitiveness but in the alternative vision of collective well-being offered by socialism.”⁸⁵

In the context of the growing educational importance of news from abroad and the increasing relevance of socialist-capitalist comparison, new challenges faced Soviet press corps around the world, especially in the United States. In the general spirit of learning from the rival superpower, Soviet editors and Agitprop ideologists adopted lessons from the American press, and, unlike in Stalin’s days, admitted their emulation.

Winds of change started to blow already in 1955, when the aforementioned editors’ delegation to America submitted to Agitprop a list of suggestions for improving the conduct of the Soviet press corps in the U.S.⁸⁶ During its visit, the delegation toured the editorial rooms of national and regional newspapers and met with American colleagues. Inspired by this acquaintance with the workings of the American press, the delegation examined the operations of the TASS bureau in Washington, D.C., and the latter emerged unfavorably from the comparison.

The report, submitted to Agitprop by the renown writer and journalist, Boris Polevoi, compared the work of TASS with that of American and other foreign news agencies in Washington, D.C., and criticized Soviet correspondents for being too timid to take advantage of the journalistic opportunities the capital had to offer: press conferences, journalistic clubs, sessions of the U.S. Congress, and various committees.⁸⁷ The report claimed that Soviet correspondents did not travel enough in the U.S., barely engaged with

⁸⁵ Reid, “Soviet Popular Receptions,” 864.

⁸⁶ RGANI (Russian State Archive of Newest History). F. 5. Op. 16. D. 734. Ll. 131-146.

⁸⁷ RGANI. F. 5. Op. 16. D. 734. Ll. 148-149.

American colleagues, and insufficiently explored the local culture. As a result, wrote Polevoi, Soviet journalists in America missed valuable opportunities for covering interesting stories and for advancing the Soviet viewpoint.⁸⁸

The delegation also suggested far-reaching changes in the treatment of foreign journalists in the Soviet Union, which “would increase our influence abroad.” Foreign correspondents, Polevoi argued, should be granted better access to Soviet cultural figures and officials and social and cultural institutions; they should be allowed to travel around the Soviet Union, and censorship of their dispatches should be abolished.⁸⁹ Overall, the delegation’s recommendations urged Soviet authorities to build a system of cooperation with foreign new media, the U.S. included.⁹⁰ Similar recommendations were repeated in front of the members of the Union of Soviet Writers, many of whom, occupied prominent positions as journalists or editors. Agitprop and the Central Committee decided to adopt most of delegation’s recommendations, and, in the months following the delivery of the report, various ministries, the Soviet Embassy in Washington, D.C., and TASS were instructed to introduce changes and plans for improvement in the spirit of the recommendations. The rapid implementation of these changes reflected both the importance Soviet leadership attributed to the journalists’ opinion and a growing admittance of the willingness to learn from American techniques, methods, and experience.

Lessons learned on that trip to the United States continued to reverberate throughout the world of Soviet newspapers over the course of the entire Khrushchev

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ RGANI. F. 5. Op. 16. D. 734. L. 135.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

period. One of the first things Adzhubei did after becoming editor-in-chief of *Izvestiia* was to undertake a major repair and reorganization of the newspaper's work space:

I visited the United States twice, saw how journalistic work is organized in their newspapers and tried to utilize their experience. Instead of the dingy offices, in which the reporters hid like in rabbit-holes, we made a few general halls, where all reporters were visible; we acquired new efficiency technologies, encouraged usage of the typewriter and even introduced typing classes. In the fashion of those years, we painted the walls in different colors, to make for a happier work environment.⁹¹

The American example also inspired changes in the newspaper's operational style. A weekly magazine addition to *Izvestiia* – *Nedelia* – was introduced and it swiftly gained popularity. Adzhubei also intensified the competition between *Izvestiia* and *Pravda* and introduced the idea of beating the rival newspaper to a scoop. One *Izvestiia* legend is telling:

Another cosmonaut landed. The *Pravda* correspondent beat us – he picked up the cosmonaut and drove him to Moscow in his car. Adzhubei was beside himself with fury: “Take over!” And a journalist raced to the cosmonaut's house. He put his wife and daughter in an *Izvestiia* car and set out to meet the procession. Somewhere on Lenin prospekt the cars were parallel to each other and the cosmonaut's daughter waved to her father. He got out and went into the *Izvestiia* car. We won.⁹²

As the Thaw years progressed, newspapers implemented other changes, in order to meet the increasing demand for international news and to reflect their importance. The amount of space allocated to foreign items constantly increased. From a meager half-page in 1955, the foreign news section expanded to occupy one and a half or two pages of the four pages of every *Izvestiia* issue in 1958. In the same year, a newly introduced rubric “everyday life and culture abroad” occasionally featured more general discussions of

⁹¹ Aleksei Adzhubei, *Te desiat' let* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1989), 9.

⁹² Polianovskii, “Piat' printsipov.”

cultural events around the world. In all the newspapers, foreign news sections were upgraded in importance and moved from the last pages of an issue to the second and third pages in *Izvestiia* and to pages three and four in *Pravda*. Whereas front pages had previously been dedicated strictly to domestic news or Party statements, from the late 1950s onward, they occasionally featured international items from the newspapers' correspondents around the world. In 1962, the *Izvestiia* editorial board agreed that if its own correspondent provided better coverage of an event than TASS, its correspondent's story should receive the higher priority.⁹³ The number of TASS announcements in foreign news sections gradually decreased, while the articles from newspapers' own international correspondents and commentators became more prominent.

Journalists and writers continued to lead the expansion of Soviet international news coverage. In 1961 the Union of Soviet Journalists, the Union of Soviet Writers, and the Union of Soviet Councils for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries established Novosti Press Agency (APN), which replaced Sovinformburo. APN's charter stated that the agency's mission was "spreading truthful information about the USSR abroad and introducing the Soviet public to the lives of people in foreign countries."⁹⁴ Unlike TASS, which in addition to its foreign posts also had an extensive domestic network, APN explicitly focused on international news and exchanges with foreign wire services. It soon established itself as an important source of news from abroad (and a convenient cover for the foreign operations of the KGB, which was not

⁹³ *Izvestiia* Meeting of Editorial Board (Letuchka), October 8, 1962. Quoted in Ela Maksimova, "Nachalo," in *Aleksei Adzhubei*, ed. Mamleev, 123.

⁹⁴ "Agency History," The website of RIA Novosti (APN's successor): <http://www.ria.ru/docs/about/history.html>

allowed to recruit in *Pravda* and was discouraged from approaching *Izvestiia* journalists.)⁹⁵

It was not long before the topics of news items with American datelines began to change. The international departments of the newspapers sought, in Genrich Borovik's words, "a fresh spirit," thus facilitating a swift promotion of young journalists from the 1960s generation, who had joined the international departments only a few years earlier, to the strategically important posts in New York, Washington, Paris, or London.⁹⁶ In 1956, Boris Strel'nikov, a junior editor in the international department of *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, was appointed as *Pravda*'s New York correspondent. The assignment of a young and rather inexperienced journalist, who barely knew English, to a post of such importance, reflects the newspaper's commitment to promote fresh approaches and new voices in its coverage of the U.S. In another example, Stanislav Kondrashov, a 1952 MGIMO graduate, was appointed to be *Izvestiia*'s first resident correspondent in Egypt, Africa, and the Middle East, after his impressive coverage of the 1956 crisis in the Suez Canal. In 1961, Kondrashov became *Izvestiia*'s resident correspondent in New York, replacing Nikolai Karev, who, unlike the young Kondrashov, had thirteen years of experience working in the U.S. for TASS and *Izvestiia*.

The changes in the press and in the journalistic cohort manning the American bureaus of Soviet newspapers were soon reflected in the style and content of dispatches from the U.S. Articles now included descriptions of American cities and conversations with American people, an occasional review of a movie or a book, or a journey-based

⁹⁵ Oleg Kalugin, *Spymaster: My Thirty-Two Years in Intelligence and Espionage against the West* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 33.

⁹⁶ Genrikh Aviezerovich Borovik, interviewed by Dina Fainberg, June 25, 2007, Moscow.

essay. Even TASS was moving with the flow of the changing tides in international reporting, as is evident from the following letter Pal'gunov sent in 1957 to the chief of the New York bureau, Velichanskii:

The decline of American morals should be demonstrated through vivid facts that would attract the reader's attention, that would interest him and give him a special understanding of what in reality constitutes the American way of life. As you gather this information don't go for the sensationalist announcements in American newspapers, but mention those facts that are typical of this or that side of American life. Carefully use union newspapers, literary supplements to newspapers, books published in America and other sources. [...] There is no need to stress that the reports of the aforementioned topics must be flawless from a literary perspective. Each item on these themes should attract attention, on the strength of the importance of the facts they use but also through literary liveliness and brilliance.⁹⁷

Pal'gunov's objectives remained unchanged: he still wanted his people to tell the universal truth about capitalism and the problematic sides of "the American way of life," but the means he recommended were significantly different. He now encouraged the journalists to apply their personal judgment and to identify episodic events that would help illustrate broad American phenomena. The potential source of material now expanded to include the "bourgeois press and culture," and the journalists had to rely on their ideological compass to separate the simply "sensational" from the potentially instructive. Another novelty was Pal'gunov's emphasis on the importance of the report's stylistic presentation, and his insistence on "literary liveliness and brilliance," attracting the readers attention, and making the materials interesting. In fact, Pal'gunov's instructions read like a guide for writing an *ocherk* on international theme, and bear a strong resemblance to Adzhubei's explanation of the genre. If the director of the most official Soviet news organization was now encouraging his journalists to produce more

⁹⁷ GARF. F. R-4479. Op. 38c. D. 740. Ll. 1-3.

personalized and polished reports, the tides were really changing. At the same time, the imperative to maintain an ideological perspective remained. The first and foremost mission of Soviet journalists in the U.S. was to provide critical appraisal of American capitalism and the kind of people and society that it fostered.

Does “Developed Socialism” need Capitalism?

Nikita Khrushchev was ousted from his post in an intra-party coup in 1964 and sent to early retirement. Leonid Brezhnev and the new leadership implemented increasingly conservative politics in an attempt to calm down and dismantle, what they saw as, the cultural turmoil of the Thaw and to reinstall “ideological rigor.” The new leaders abandoned the revolutionary horizon of the Khrushchev era – the inspirational slogans of the Twentieth and Twenty-Second Party Congresses or the Third Program of the CPSU disappeared from their statements. The Party no longer posited itself as the leader of the movement toward the realization of communism by 1980 and instead focused on attempts to deliver a modest welfare state for all citizens. Soviet tanks rolling into Prague to crack down on Czechoslovakia’s attempt to introduce “socialism with a human face” made the leadership’s position on reform loud and clear and convinced the *shestidesiatniki* that the era of change and excitement was over.⁹⁸ The party’s declaration that the Soviet Union had reached the era of “developed socialism” in fact meant that the revolutionary movement that had characterized the Soviet regime under Stalin and Khrushchev had ended:

⁹⁸ Vail’ and Genis, *60-ye*, 284-285, 291; Robert D. English, *Russia and the Idea of the West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 118.

A focus on the triumphs of the known past displaced any kind of mobilization for an unknown and therefore risky future; instead of promoting the party's commitment to the process of "achieving communism," Brezhnev and his colleagues substituted the idea of living in a "developed socialist society," one characterized not by "becoming" but by "being".⁹⁹

In the absence of prospects for an impending communist future, the idea of competing and striving to surpass the U.S. was no longer viable.¹⁰⁰ The ambition for strategic parity in arms and a pragmatic détente between the superpowers quietly replaced the commitment to "reach and surpass" America in all spheres of life.¹⁰¹ "Developed" socialism did not require "capitalism" as an inspiration for future achievements.

In Alexei Yurchak's view, late Soviet culture was characterized by "deterritorialization": component parts of the Soviet authoritative discourse were preserved, but acquired new meanings when applied in new settings.¹⁰² A similar shift occurred with references to America. Slogans celebrating socialism's overcoming of capitalism and promising to "reach and surpass" continued to appear in the Soviet media, but the audience no longer saw these proclamations as tangible plans for things to come. Having greater access to information about the U.S. through foreign radio broadcasts and films, conversations with travellers, and occasionally, the state's press, Soviet people began to realize that their country is not getting closer to "reaching and surpassing" the material advantages of the United States.

While the Soviet leaders could not argue that "developed socialism" had matched the United States in technology and material culture, they continued to use capitalism as

⁹⁹ Wolfe, *Governing*, 110.

¹⁰⁰ English, *Russia*, 119-123; Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 194-222.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 114-116.

the defining “other,” and emphasized that unlike capitalism, socialism allowed the people a superior “lifestyle” – welfare, time for leisure with friends and family, and cultural activities.¹⁰³ Thus, additional evidence of the diminishing revolutionary horizons in the Brezhnev era was a change in the articulation of the unique nature of the socialist project. Whereas previously the distinction from capitalism resided in the assumption that all citizens become history makers and infuse their lives with the state project of building socialism, according to the new argument, socialism was better because it allowed a richer personal life.

A “tightening of the screws” proceeded in all areas of Soviet culture: controversial themes seldom made it into literature, previous newspaper editors and commentators were replaced with more conservative figures, and many of the brightest thinkers of the Thaw departed to research centers or to diplomatic posts abroad.¹⁰⁴ The language of the newspapers grew increasingly formulaic; the human-interest stories gradually lost their edge. In Thomas Wolfe’s view, the Brezhnev era was the period when the press and the political leadership were constantly locked in an implicit wrestling match. The press, which since the Thaw had seen itself as an active agent of the education of socialist persons, now had to repeat orthodoxies and transmit “the myths that constructed the leadership’s own version of itself.”¹⁰⁵

The growing public access to foreign radio, which developed with the advancement of shortwave technology in the 1960s, introduced new challenges to the

¹⁰³ Paulina Bren, “Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall ... Is the West the Fairest of Them All? Czechoslovak Normalization and Its (Dis)Contents,” *Kritika* 9, no. 4 (2008): 846-847.

¹⁰⁴ English, *Russia*, 109, 118.

¹⁰⁵ Wolfe, *Governing*, 111, 126.

Soviet press. First, foreign radio broadcasts exposed listeners to information about domestic events, such as accidents or dissident activities, which was unavailable elsewhere. Second, these radio stations delivered information faster than the Soviet channels, because they did not have to wait for censorship clearance or official TASS announcement. Finally, foreign radio's stories about life abroad were much more diverse than the ones presented in Soviet newspapers, thus undermining the latter's position as a primary source of information about the world.¹⁰⁶ Interestingly, Soviet specialists with expertise in media and foreign affairs: international correspondents and commentators felt the problem most acutely. In a 1970 letter to Agitprop, Sergei Zykov, *Izvestiia* correspondent in France, drew attention to the changing media situation and to the fact that the Soviet press was falling behind other domestic and foreign sources of information, both in terms of relevance and sharpness:

Today the reader gets something else, he finds in the paper a scattering of reporting about events he has already heard about, and the very minimum explanation. ... *Izvestiia* has the potential to solve the problems, to respond to the contemporary situation. But its editors are only able to publish but a small part of the correspondence that it receives, its offices use material irrationally, without tapping into its full strength.¹⁰⁷

Zykov warned that Soviet newspapers were inefficient, failed to realize their full educational potential, and were therefore losing touch with their readers. The decline in the relevance of Soviet journalism, he said, was outright dangerous and would come at a high ideological cost. Relying on his experience abroad, Zykov pointed out that the "bourgeois press" used the arrival of new media to buttress its ideological positions:

¹⁰⁶ For an interesting analysis of foreign radio broadcasts see: Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time*, 131-175.

¹⁰⁷ RGANI. F. 5. Op. 62. Ed. Khr. 39, 237. Quoted in Wolfe, *Governing*, 130.

The newspapers are increasing their size: being unable to compete with radio and television in the speed of supplying information, they are seeking to take revenge on these other media by strengthening their analyses of international events and by intensifying anti-communist and anti-Soviet slander.¹⁰⁸

By contrast, he pointed out, *Izvestiia* was unable to realize its analytical potential, thus losing its relevance and efficiency. Ultimately, Zykov warned, the Soviet newspapers' failure to learn from the bourgeois press how to adapt to the changing media landscape allowed the latter to score propaganda points off the Soviet Union.

Two challenges, then, faced Brezhnev era journalists: increasing orthodox control over newspapers on the one hand, and the loss of their position as the only source of information for Soviet readers on the other. As Zykov suggested, many journalists felt that it was the first challenge— the growing conservatism of the editors and the leadership — that prevented them from effectively responding to the second and to maintain their role as the educators of Soviet society.¹⁰⁹ The editor-in-chief of *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, Aleksandr Chakovskii, said as much in a letter addressed to Leonid Brezhnev:

It is necessary to look the truth in the eye: bourgeois programs in Russian are listened to by not a small part of the Soviet population. ... The more boring and formal our newspapers, radio, television, and oral propaganda are, the more thoughtlessly they follow those forms which were developed in the 30s and the 40s, that is, in circumstances in many ways different from today's; the more infrequently they address the difficult questions of everyday life, the more our people turn — and unfortunately will turn — to means of information accessible to them. No matter what kind of healthy biases Soviet people have against the bourgeois radio programs, the information they contain does not proceed and cannot proceed without cost to the listeners' spiritual health.¹¹⁰

Chakovskii voiced concern about the potential effects of foreign broadcasts on Soviet listeners as well as about the reasons for their appeal. In his view, the blame lay with the

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ For examples of the cultivation of nuances in official language by Central Committee members, see Yurchak, *Everything*, 37-76. Also see Sergei Dovlatov, *Kompromiss* (New York: Serebriannyi vek, 1981).

¹¹⁰ RGANI. F. 5. Op. 62. Ed. Khr. 39, 237. Quoted in Wolfe, *Governing*, 130.

Soviet media and its failure to be what it was during the Thaw – engaging and relevant for its audiences. For those journalists who had the opportunity to experience the days of the Thaw and to work with more daring editors during the 1960s, the new conditions were particularly difficult.

How did journalists cope with the increasingly conservative cultural and media landscape? Contemporary memoirs and scholarly studies of the intelligentsia during the Brezhnev era reveal several patterns. The most radical was to openly challenge the system by means of dissidence and emigration. Those who chose not to withdraw from the scene moved into various think tanks and study centers or remained at their posts, trying to influence the aging, conservative leadership to the best of their abilities. In fact, as Robert English points out, the limited-circulation studies produced at these think tanks discussed the country's "problems and the necessary remedies ... in much starker terms" than other, widely available publications, creating important intellectual foundations for Perestroika thought.¹¹¹ Brezhnev's political advisers, such as Georgii Arbatov, Anatolii Cherniaev, and Aleksander Bovin, often tried to appeal personally to General Secretary on behalf of an individual writer, a film, or a play, and described the period as a "struggle for Brezhnev's soul."¹¹²

Journalists pursued slightly different avenues. One option was just to submit controversial materials for publication.¹¹³ Editors sometimes backed these efforts, with all involved hoping they would pass the censors or not attract the wrath of superiors. One

¹¹¹ English, *Russia*, 135.

¹¹² Bovin, *XX vek*, 145-146; Grigorii Arbatov, *Zatianuvsheesia vyzdorovlenie, 1953-1985 gg.: svidetel'stvo sovremennika* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1991), 125-126; Zubok, *Failed Empire*, 214.

¹¹³ Wolfe, *Governing*, 112- 124.

such case involved the interview Genrikh Borovik conducted in New York in 1967 with Alexander Kerensky, the exiled leader of Russia's Provisional Government in 1917. The editors cleared the interview for publication, but the censoring agency, GLAVLIT, took it off the printing press at the very last minute.¹¹⁴ In other cases, unwilling to abandon their standards of good journalism, correspondents tried to sneak controversial ideas into their articles and their broadcasts, or, when possible, "to smuggle into the text commentary that could be readable as a sign of independent, critical thought."¹¹⁵ In another well-known incident, Valentin Zorin's television program *9th Studio* attracted the wrath of the Politburo when Evgenii Chazov, a Nobel laureate and member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, said on the program, "the radioactive ash of socialism won't differ from the radioactive ash of capitalism."¹¹⁶ Chazov's statement contradicted the official thesis that unlike the capitalist West, the socialist world would survive a nuclear war. As a consequence, chief party ideologist Mikhail Suslov ordered the program discontinued for several months.¹¹⁷

Unlike journalists who covered domestic events, international correspondents had a unique way of coping with the Soviet media landscape in the late 1960s and the 1970s. They proceeded to publish books about foreign countries. It is not a coincidence that a lion's share of Soviet foreign correspondents' books about life abroad appeared after 1965. In the context of the Brezhnev era press, the book offered an excellent format for

¹¹⁴ Genrikh Borovik, interviewed on June 25, 2007; "Spravka GLAVLITA o zamechaniakh k materialam, podgotovlennym k opublikovaniu v 1966 g.," in *Istoriia sovetskoi politicheskoi tsenzury: dokumenty i kommentarii*, ed. T. M. Goriaeva and Z. K. Vodop'ianova (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1997), 556-559.

¹¹⁵ Valentin Sergeevich Zorin, interviewed by Dina Fainberg, October 12, 2009, Moscow; Bovin, *XX vek*, 265-268; Wolfe, *Governing*, 105, 125.

¹¹⁶ Valentin Zorin, *Neizvestnoe ob izvestnom* (Moscow: Vagrius, 2000), 148-149.

¹¹⁷ Suslov originally cancelled the program. Zorin writes that it took months to convince the authorities to allow its return to the screens. Zorin, *Neizvestnoe*, 150.

reporters to continue to practice the kind of journalism that was characteristic of the formative period of their careers: to exercise their role as writers and educators and to provide their audiences with information about the world, which they deemed important for a better understanding of socialism and its construction at home.

Despite the regime's turn away from its commitment to "reach and surpass America," information about the world, and particularly about the primary Cold War adversary of the Soviet Union, remained in high demand. Due to the internationalist principles at the heart of socialist ideology, the Soviet leadership did not exclude curiosity about the world altogether; it even encouraged such interest, as long as it did not amount to "kowtowing before the West" or "extreme manifestations of bourgeois influences."¹¹⁸ Within this logic, a journalist's book was a perfect avenue to expand one's knowledge about foreign countries because it taught the right information and did so while maintaining healthy socialist criticism of things foreign. For international correspondents, however, books were an opportunity to continue working within the traditions of Thaw journalism.

Explaining their turn to the book format, they pointed out that one of the advantages of the book was its wide scope. Unlike newspaper articles, which were constrained by considerations of relevance to current affairs, books allowed a more detailed discussion of life abroad and provided an opportunity to engage in a deeper analysis of foreign culture and national character. While a newspaper story offered a mere glance at a foreign country, a book allowed the presentation of a wholesome picture and as such, was better suited for conveying the universal differences between capitalism

¹¹⁸ Yurchak, *Everything*, 165-169.

and socialism. In his introduction to *Americans in America*, published in 1970,

Stanislav Kondrashov wrote:

This book is something like an account of a man who worked as an *Izvestiia* correspondent in New York from the end of 1961 to 1968 and is used to submitting accounts on the pages of the newspaper. They are, as is known, dense, and I have accumulated many impressions as well as the desire to relate them in greater detail. ... The selected materials are chronologically arranged, and through this chronological rumble, sometimes a dramatic and menacing one, come through the events and phenomena in America “of the explosive 1960s.” In general, this is a book about Americans [set] against the backdrop of their country, their society, and their problems. About Americans in America.¹¹⁹

Kondrashov wrote about Americans in America by knitting a series of small stories about the people and situations he encountered. In fact, most of his colleagues covering the U.S. deployed similar tactic. Rather than presenting their readers with an impersonal analysis of the country as a whole, the books featured numerous small stories about the people journalists met or their encounters with a particular phenomenon in American society. In so doing, Soviet journalists upheld one of the key principles of Thaw journalism – the focus on single individuals. At the same time, the bigger picture came through narrators' commentaries and explanations of how a small episode fit into social and cultural tendencies in general. Moreover, they deliberately focused their books on social and cultural themes, to counterpoise the newspapers with their near exclusive emphasis on politics and diplomatic relations. Melor Sturua made this connection very clear:

It was important for me to distance myself from [writing on] foreign policy, which was dry and didn't interest me. I was more interested in life. Second, it showed the people here that there were people there, too. Man is a man, regardless of where he lives. And this is the most important thing connecting us. And more.

¹¹⁹ Stanislav N. Kondrashov, *Amerikantsy v Amerike* (Moscow: *Izvestiia*, 1970), 1.

Here [in the book] one could really philosophize on the development of the West. Where it was going.¹²⁰

Sturua's recollection suggests how committed he remained to the educational ethos of Thaw journalism well into the Brezhnev era. He maintained his interest in the lives of regular people; the aspiration to talk about universal ideas and values and continued to educate his readers by simultaneously showing shared human interests as well as the differences between the Soviet Union and the West:

Then, questions of loneliness in the West. We are more communal people. Why? History. Here, until recently, people lived in communal apartments. In the communal apartment, four families lived in four rooms. They had one lavatory and one kitchen. And they fought each other all the time. But, when something went wrong, they helped each other. And from there, the most familial thing started. They didn't have it in the West, of course. And therefore individualism is more developed in the West than in the East. And thus, philosophizing on these themes, I distanced myself from politics and was able to touch on the questions that equally interested the West and us. Where are we going? Who are we?¹²¹

It is significant that Sturua believed that an examination of the West was necessarily a comparative endeavor. Thinking about the West advanced his understanding of "us" – Soviet society and culture.

In writing books about "Americans in America," Kondrashov, Sturua and other Soviet foreign correspondents thus acted on a set of important commitments that in part stemmed from the tradition of the Thaw, and in part had a longer prehistory. These included the expert desire to share knowledge and offer deep analysis, the writer's mission to educate and convey universal truths, and the proclivity to think comparatively about competing worldviews and Russia's place in the world. Many of these commitments harked back to the ethos of critical realism imparted by the Russian

¹²⁰ Melor Georgievich Sturua, interviewed on February 4, 2011.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

intelligentsia in the 19th century and rephrased by subsequent Russian and Soviet generations.¹²² They could be summed up as a shared responsibility by any critical thinker, whether a writer, or a journalist, to enlighten his or her readers, to engineer their souls.

¹²² Isaiah Berlin, *Russian Thinkers* (New York: Pelican Books, 1979); Irina Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior* (Stanford University Press, 1988).

Chapter 2: Notes from the Rotten West

The study of Soviet travelogues in America remains relatively unexplored terrain, particularly where Cold War accounts are concerned.¹ It is often assumed that Soviet accounts about the United States, especially the ones written after 1945, intended to promote Soviet propaganda and were dictated by Party ideologists “from above.” For example, in *Daily Life in the Soviet Union, 1917-1991*, the historian Katherine Bliss Eaton contends that Soviet journalists “were not encouraged to be objective in their reporting; their jobs depended on presenting the official point of view and on following Party policies.”² Glossing over the question of what constitutes objectivity, Eaton simply derides Soviet journalists for lacking it and for reporting only what they were allowed. Other scholars argue that if only Soviet journalists could express their true opinions, they certainly would have told the Soviet people how desirable was the life in the United States. Vladislav Zubok and Eric Shiraev explained Soviet journalists’ critiques of the United States as deriving from a “deep-seated envy and a sense of humiliation over their country’s poverty and backwardness.”³

These views of Soviet journalists’ descriptions of the U.S. often go hand in hand with American-centric and triumphalist narratives of late Soviet socialism and the Cold War. Not only do some scholars take for granted the assertions of American superiority, they also claim that this superiority automatically rendered Soviet critiques of the U.S.

¹ For a good analysis of pre-Cold War writings see: Etkind, *Tolkovanie Puteshestvii*.

² Bliss Eaton, *Daily Life*, 273.

³ Shiraev and Zubok, *Anti-Americanism*, 21.

irrelevant. Similar assumptions were promoted by a large portion of the writings of American journalists in the USSR. In contrast to their Soviet counterparts, these accounts are often treated as objective historical sources devoid of Cold War propaganda.

Taking a different approach from the accounts outlined above, this chapter conducts a close reading of Soviet journalists' accounts of the United States. The chapter will situate the journalistic texts about America in their historical context and the ways that context influenced the content of these accounts. Early Soviet writings about America, changes in Soviet perceptions of the U.S. in the aftermath of World War II, and developments in Soviet journalism were important components of this evolving historical context. Another significant influence was journalists' knowledge that their books had to pass the censor's desk and that a negative reception in censorship administration (Glavlit) or the Propaganda Department could have damaging results – from the loss of travel privileges to the loss of one's job.⁴ With years of experience in the system, journalists had a good sense of what would not pass, which ensured that controversial themes did not make it even into their manuscript drafts.⁵ The presence of this “inner censor” did not necessarily mean that journalists were consciously lying, however. Instead, it steered them into a selective presentation of opinions and observations. Censorship, I contend, was not the most important factor shaping Soviet journalistic coverage of the United States. Much more influential were the personal interests of individual journalists and

⁴ GLAVLIT - The General Directorate for the Protection of Secrets of the State – was the censoring body in the Soviet Union. Glavlit censors had an office in every Soviet newspaper. Nothing appeared in Soviet print before the clearance of Glavlit's censors.

On Soviet censorship see: Lev Losev, *Zakrytyi Raspredelitel'* (Ann Arbor: Hermitage, 1984), 98-138; Arlen Blium, *Kak eto delalos' v Leningrade. Tsenzura v gody ottepli, zastoia i perestroiki* (St. Petersburg: Akademicheskii Proekt, 2005).

⁵ This notion came up in my interviews with Genrikh Borovik and Melor Sturua. Also see: Losev, *Zakrytyi Raspredelitel'*, 137.

their understanding that their duty as writers and educators consisted of revealing the systemic differences between capitalism and socialism and explaining the advantages of the latter. Ideology was important in the journalists' accounts about the U.S., not in the sense of a depersonalized party dogma, nor in the form of a shield hiding ulterior motives or insecurities. A socialist critique of capitalist modernity was deeply ingrained in virtually all Soviet journalists' interpretation of American society. The socialist structure of thought gave them a prism to understand the United States and themselves, and it was through this prism that their experiences and observations became meaningful. Seen from this perspective, journalists' accounts of the United States were thus as much products as they were creators of socialist ideology.

From the City of the Yellow Devil to Little Golden America

Russian and Soviet pre-war accounts of the U.S. were ultimately focused on American technological advancement. All were fascinated with the bridges, the skyscrapers, the transportations systems, the speed, and rationality in America. Maxim Gorky or Boris Pilnyak, viewed these as suspicious and repugnant manifestation of “a culture of the dollar.” Gorky explained that such uniquely American sights, as the subway and the skyscraper, in fact robbed the man from the fruits of his creative labor, and perpetuated human slavery. Describing New York as “the City of the Yellow Devil” (Gold) Gorky conjured a frightful image of humans devoured by capitalist greed:

From a distance the city seems like a huge jaw with uneven black teeth. It breathes clouds of smoke into the sky and wheezes like a glutton suffering from obesity. On entering it you feel as if you have landed in a stomach made of stone and iron – a stomach that has swallowed several million people and is grinding and digesting them. The street a slippery, greedy throat; along it, dark chunks of the city's food – living people – float somewhere into its depth. Everywhere [...]

iron lives and rumbles, celebrating its victories. Called into life by the power of Gold, animated by it, it surrounds man with its web, suffocates him, sucks his blood and marrow, devours his muscles and nerves, and grows and grows, supported by speechless stone, spreading the links of its chain even wide.⁶

Writing in 1906, Gorky expressed views, similar to those of other critics of capitalist modernity and wrote about it in hostile terms, which conveyed a sense of danger and imminent decline of human creativity. Gorky displayed disdain toward the technological innovations and claimed that when powered by greed, technology robs man of his humanity, taking an irreversible toll on his soul.

Soviet writers visiting the U.S. in the 1920s and the early 1930s did not share Gorky's horror and disdain with modern technology. Influenced by Proletkul't, constructivism and the belief in mechanization as a solution to all the problems in life, writers, like Vladimir Mayakovsky, Sergei Esenin, and Ilia Il'f and Evgenii Petrov, were able to differentiate between the culture of capitalism and American technological achievements, and to celebrate the latter as a testament of human genius and creativity. Mayakovsky's famous poem, *Brooklyn Bridge*, expressed plain and unreserved admiration of American industrial urban modernity:

As a crazed believer
enters
a church,
retreats
into a monastery cell,
austere, and plain;
so I,
in greying evening
haze,
humbly set foot
on Brooklyn Bridge.

⁶ Maxim Gorky, "The City of the Yellow Devil" in: *America through Russian Eyes, 1874-1926*, ed. Olga Peters Hasty and Susanne Fusso (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 133.

[...]
 I am proud
 of just this
 mile of steel;
 Upon it,
 my visions come to life, erect –
 here's a fight
 for construction
 instead of style,
 An austere disposition
 of bolts
 and steel.⁷

Mayakovsky wrote this poem in 1925 and it reflected the fascination with modern construction, technological advancement, transportation and machines, which were characteristic of his contemporaries. In other places however, Mayakovsky repeated Gorky's critique of the dire state of the American workingman and the toll capitalism takes on the human spirit.⁸

All early Soviet observers shared the view that the biggest problem in the U.S. was class and racial inequality, the striking differences between the rich and the poor and the exclusion of the latter from the benefits of modern industry and technology. Soviet writers attributed these ills of American capitalist modernity to the “instinct of individual acquisition,” or simply put, greed. Soviet observers explained that, when turned toward personal profit making rather than betterment of all mankind, technological modernization robs man of the fruit of his labor and perpetuates his enslavement in the endless pursuit of acquisition. Early Soviet examinations of America were strongly informed by the socialist promise of transformation of man into a new and higher form of

⁷ Vladimir Mayakovsky, “Brooklyn Bridge,” 1925. Translation from CUNY website: <http://macaulay.cuny.edu/eportfolios/smonte10/files/2010/08/Mayakovsky.pdf>. Last accessed July 19, 2012.

⁸ Vladimir Mayakovsky, “My Discovery of America,” in: *America through Russian Eyes*, ed. Peters Hasty and Fusso, 163-209.

social being, engaged in a new relationship with his world. As Il'f and Petrov's concluding remarks in their 1937 book, *Little Golden America*, demonstrate, even those writers, who claimed that the Soviet Union still had to learn from American industry and technology, saw themselves as the envoys of the new "New World":

You must see the capitalist world in order to appreciate the socialist world anew. All the advantages of our socialist society, which we cease to notice after our continuous everyday encounters with them, seem especially significant from afar. [...] What can we say about America, which is simultaneously horrifying, awe-inspiring, pitiful, and gives examples worthy of emulation, of a country rich and destitute, talented and ungifted? We can say honestly, that it is interesting to observe this country, but we don't want to live in it.⁹

Il'f and Petrov appreciated American transport, factories, and technological achievements. They also admired the level and efficiency of amenities and services, such as cold and hot water, gas stations, and quality of roads. Yet despite this appreciation, they saw their own country, not America, as the model for the future. The Soviet Union, they wrote, was striding toward a combination of technological development with social equality; their country was the site of the ultimate liberation of human potential.¹⁰ Despite its most advanced technology, America was "horrifying" and "pitiful" because it was still riddled with class conflict and inequality; the American man was not yet free and remained enslaved by his petit-bourgeois instincts. Such approaches to the United States turned all early Soviet accounts into exercises in comparison. Soviet observers sought to explain the problems with capitalist modernity that needed to be resolved through a socialist order. Thus, in describing American capitalism, Soviet writers kept refining the meaning of socialism and articulating what a socialist alternative to capitalism ought to be like.

⁹ Il'f and Petrov, *Odnoetazhnaia Amerika*, Chapter 46.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

This comparative and inherently self-reflective stance carried over into the Cold War. Neither in the 1920s nor in the 1970s could Soviet observers claim that their society had actually matched America's technological modernization or material achievements. But as long as socialism aspired to provide an alternative to capitalism, they could claim moral superiority for themselves and dismiss the American project as inherently flawed.

Another legacy from early Soviet writings about the U.S. was the imaginary geography of the United States. New York loomed large in every Soviet account of America. Pre- and post-revolutionary writers viewed New York as the "city of contrasts," as an exhibition of all the achievements of American capitalism as well as its faults. New York embodied the impressive construction projects and conspicuous consumerism, decadent advertising and advanced electricity, rationalization and chaos, modernization and enormous wealth as well as racial and class segregation and unimaginable poverty. Although Cold War-era journalists resided in New York for the pragmatic reasons of proximity to the UN headquarters, they inherited the ideas of its importance as well as the notion of "New York – city of contrasts" and made it one of the central locations in their examinations.

I'lf and Petrov's famous travelogue *Little Golden America*, which begins with the authors' arrival by boat into Manhattan harbor, expanded the boundaries of the Soviet imagination beyond New York. The places the two writers visited on their coast-to-coast trip became essential destinations for all subsequent travelers, especially the Cold War journalists: the home of General Electric in Schenectady, Ford's motor city in Dearborn, the skyscrapers of Chicago, Oklahoma, Texas, Mark Twain's hometown in Missouri, Native American reservations in Arizona and the Grand Canyon, Las Vegas and Boulder

(Hoover) Dam, California (particularly San Francisco, Los Angeles and the village of Russian Molokan), New Orleans, and Washington, DC. Taken together, these sites reflected America's contrasts; they allowed a glimpse at technological achievements, such as the Golden Gate Bridge or Ford cars, and by the same token demonstrated the prevalence of oppression and inequality, found in abundance in Native American reservations or the Jim Crow South. Although the successors of Il'f and Petrov occasionally expanded this imaginary map of the U.S., they often made a point of visiting many of the sites first described in *Little Golden America*. Most important, Il'f and Petrov introduced the notion that one could not understand the U.S. without seeing the small-town America – life far away from the big cities, the America of the periphery.

Early Soviet writers thus established the moral standard and geographic template for the study of the United States, both of which would shape subsequent generations of writers as well as their readers. While writing about contemporary cultural and political developments, Cold War journalists maintained their predecessors' critiques of American capitalism. Khrushchev-era observers imagined their country on the verge of becoming a leader in the superpower race, close to ushering in a system that would beat America in terms of moral justice and universal achievement. While Brezhnev-era writers could not argue that the Soviet Union would lead over American economy and material culture, they perpetuated the notion of American social and political backwardness, stressing its enduring class and racial conflict, and indicting what they viewed as a degeneration of culture and morals. Cold War journalists showed that, despite capitalism's insistence on constant progress, the predicament of America remained unchanged, because this predicament was rooted in injustice and exploitation inherent in the system. The

continuity of critical insights and imaginary geography perpetuated the view that despite America's continuous economic and technological development, it was still plagued by class and racial conflict, which in Russia had been resolved by the Soviet revolution.

However, Soviet journalists' views of American society were not monolithic. Each correspondent was interested in different things and focused on distinct topics and areas in his writing. If pressed to point out the biggest problem plaguing American society, each journalist would have identified a different one. For example, in his diary, Stanislav Kondrashov disagreed with Genrikh Borovik on what is the largest social evil in America. Borovik named racism, while Kondrashov chose the instinct toward "petty private ownership." Coming from a small town in the heart of the Russian republic, Stanislav Kondrashov was often attracted to the American periphery and sought America's essence in its rural small towns. Genrikh Borovik by contrast, was raised by a Jewish father and a Russian mother, both theatre workers, and moved a lot during his childhood. This rather cosmopolitan and intellectual upbringing was later evident in Borovik's career: he was the only Soviet journalist in America to explore the world of avant-garde art and theatre and to rub elbows with left-wing writers and intelligentsia.

Valentin Zorin, a PhD in American economic history, pursued in his books and documentaries themes similar to the ones that preoccupied him in his scholarly life – American monopolies and the connection between government and capital in the United States. While researching his dissertation, Zorin sought to interview many of the subjects of his work, and his accounts feature encounters with notorious American businessmen, including Paul Getty. The latter even helped arrange Zorin's interview with Robert

Shelton, “the Grand Wizard” of the Ku-Klux-Klan.¹¹ Zorin’s interest in high politics and connections with the Soviet state bureaucracy also helped him secure interviews with high-ranking U.S. politicians; he interviewed every American president from Dwight Eisenhower to George W. Bush.

Racism and its manifestations in American life fascinated *Pravda*’s Boris Strel’nikov, a veteran of both World War II and the Soviet press corps in the United States. Strel’nikov’s war experience was very influential on his approach to American society and he was particularly interested in what he saw as American fascism – right wing and neo-Nazi organizations. At the same time, Strel’nikov was an avid traveler and in fact revived the genre of Soviet travelogue around the United States. He was the first journalist to repeat Il’f and Petrov’s famous coast-to-coast journey; many of his books were based on road trips he took with a colleague or with his family.

Despite the differences among them, Soviet journalists nevertheless brought into their work an ethos, which was characteristic to their generation and profession: the view of themselves as writers and educators, a shared ideological perspective, and a commitment to carrying to their audiences the universal truths of the differences between capitalism and socialism.

The Rotten West

Soviet correspondents viewed the United States through the prism of socialist ideology. The journalists treated American characters as inspired by capitalism and sought to explain how capitalist ideology informed the attitudes, patterns of thought, and

¹¹ Valentin Zorin, *Neizvestnoe ob izvestnom* (Moscow: Vagrius, 2000), 36.

everyday experiences of Americans from all walks of life. Soviet journalists conceived of American society as a matrix of conflicts between classes, races, and rival capitalist interests and divided the concept “the American” into categories of class and race. Thus in the Soviet accounts there was the hardship of “the typical farmer,” “the typical worker,” or “the typical experience” of ethnic minorities.

Although the breach between the classes and the races in the US often became the driving force of their narratives, Soviet correspondents seldom ventured into overreaching abstract declarations about “all Americans” when discussing this issue. Following the Thaw principles of Soviet “journalism of the person,” they showed how class struggle manifested itself in the lives of regular Americans by narrating the stories of the people they met. These narratives were usually accompanied by the journalist’s commentary, which explained how the story related to a broader American phenomenon or how it represented the traits of capitalist social order. While the journalists avoided lumping the American people into broad universal categories, they universalized the socio-economic system of American capitalism. The advantages of socialism were seldom mentioned. It was up to Soviet readers, who were expected to read such narratives comparatively, and to deduce the advantages of the socialist system from the tale a worker who lost his job, a disenfranchised person of color, or a hungry immigrant child.

One story that appears in most accounts is that of American workers (usually miners) who have lost their jobs because of the arrival of a new technology. Boris Strel’nikov told the story of an abandoned mining town by focusing on one character he met:

He was born in that town and went to school here. Got married. Here he worked 40 years in the mine [...] Eight years ago he was among those who stood here and

silently watched the trucks parked near the police department. “The electric miner” was brought into the neighboring mine. And one year after Schumeit’s mine closed, unable to sustain the competition. Three hundred Stotesbury miners got fired. The town received a death warrant. Three hundred miners lived in that town. Now only one left – 56 year old Russell Schumeit, who was entrusted with guarding the mine.¹²

Russell Schumeit’s tragedy represented the honest workingman’s plight in America.

Through Schumeit’s story, Boris Strel’nikov told his readers how Marxian narrative played itself out in the life of an ordinary American person. The capitalist owners were trying to save money by introducing laborsaving machines and reducing manpower. The workers, driven to desperation by the prospect of hunger and unemployment, turned their wrath on the machines that were about to replace them. At the end of this story most of the workers lost their jobs. Since the readers shared with Strel’nikov the frame of Marxian analysis, they were expected to interpret this story as an example of how class struggle unfolded in one place in the US. They were also implicitly invited to compare the lives of Stotesbury miners with their own and to deduce that the socialist system was more advantageous for workers.

Stories about the lives of children in the U.S. emblemized the problems of American capitalism as a whole. The journalists wrote about the children of the working poor, of immigrants or the children of the black ghettos with a mixture of sorrow and indignation. They told the readers how American children encounter injustice and hunger, how these children were forced to leave schools and go to work in order to support their families, or how children lived in environments of crime and drug abuse. These stories served as the ultimate indictment of the capitalist system, which the journalists depicted

¹² Boris Strel’nikov, *Tysiacha mil’ v poiskakh dushi* (Moscow: Pravda, 1979), 76.

as deaf to the plights and the needs of its children. The stories of children were a way to expose American hypocrisy and backwardness, for they contradicted U.S. claims to be a beacon of freedom.

The journalists stressed that the contrast between the races and the classes derived from the very nature of the capitalist system. The importance that American society attributed to financial gain rather than to solidarity, explained the journalists, accounted for the misfortunes of the American poor:

The state spending on the social needs is trifling. [...] The authorities are more willing to spend the budget-money on all kinds of services for the 'middle class', than on the life-crucial needs of the poor to have work, food, and home. Ironically, this attitude has moral justification: the 'middle classes' pay more taxes than the poor and thus deserve to see their 'tax dollars' spent on satisfaction of their needs.¹³

In this passage, Kondrashov did not merely label American social system as wrong; he also explained how and why it made sense to the people who lived in it. According to Kondrashov, the plight of the poor in a capitalist society derived from the corruption of values, which underlined the system. Kondrashov explained that American attitudes toward welfare had their own internal logic. The educational mission of Soviet journalists made it important to communicate this logic to the Soviet audiences and to explain how capitalist thinking worked.

The conscious socialist reader was to see that capitalist society did not operate upon a whim of mindless actors. Instead, the reader was to identify the rationale behind this welfare policy and to condemn its moral flaws, based on comparison with his own country, which had a universally accessible welfare state. A comparative reading of these

¹³ Stanislav Kondrashov, *Svidanie s Kaliforniei* (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1975), 26.

accounts was perpetuated by Soviet traditions of contrasting socialism and capitalism and cultural promotion of competition with the US.

In the stories of Soviet journalists America came across as plagued with the troubles that the Soviet Union had left behind long ago: class and racial rift, child poverty and illiteracy. These narratives indicted the American system and challenged American definitions of the meaning of modernity. In the worldview of Soviet journalists, social welfare and help for the weak were more important markers of modernization than technology and material standards. The journalists' reports implied that a society has no right to call itself modern if it still featured the most outrageous plights of the previous century: neglect toward children and workers and prejudice toward racial others.

Soviet correspondents explained that the divisions between the classes and the races were perpetuated by the American political system, the sum total of which was subjugation of the lower classes by the propertied classes:

The White House and the Congress are occupied by the people of the same class. And they also serve their own class – the class of capitalists. [...] If a candidate to an office doesn't have enough money, his campaign is paid by the rich, or the 'fat cats'. And as you know, those who pay get to order the music.¹⁴

Projecting the ideas of class analysis onto American politicians, Soviet journalists represented the American political system as exclusively driven by class interests. The journalists depicted property owners as ideologically conscious actors, concentrated on protecting their interests and increasing their profits. Therefore, Soviet correspondents pointed out, American democracy was an empty vessel, which masked the uneven

¹⁴ Strel'nikov, *Tysiacha Mil'*, 325-236.

distribution of political power in the U.S., for the rich had plenty of means to influence and manipulate the votes of the poor.

Many American towns belong to these kinds of “kings”. Sometimes you are driving on the main road, read the billboards and surprised to see: ‘Miller’s bank’, ‘Miller’s Restaurant’, ‘Miller’s Department Store’, almost everything belongs to some Miller. Out of curiosity you ask who is the town’s mayor and you discover that it is the same Miller. These towns must be a good introduction to the basics of political economy of capitalism. Many of the things described by Karl Marx in ‘Das Kapital’ appear in vivid and real form.¹⁵

How could you not elect Miller as a mayor if he was your employer and also the one who sold you food and gas? – concluded Srel’nikov. The Miller example positioned class conflict at the heart of all aspects of American life, as affecting not just the election results, but also the very minute details of one’s daily activities. The discussions of politics in the U.S. represented the American people as the victims of capitalism: the “small man” could be crushed by capitalist interests without expecting any protection. The capitalist political system, the journalists explained, could not be improved by any means, for the control of the rich precludes any change from within. The biggest tragedy, suggested Soviet correspondents, was that “average Americans” suffered from false consciousness: they believed that they lived in freedom and democracy and remained unaware of their subjugation by the propertied class.

Moreover, Soviet correspondents argued, capitalist self-interest infiltrated all of American society; this was what created the racial conflict and precluded cross-racial unity of the poor. Capitalist interest enabled racism and racist politics. Genrikh Borovik’s concluding analysis of George Wallace’s election rally and its success explained how capitalism was at the root of one of the most important problems in the US – racism:

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 166.

They say that Wallace is a racist who skillfully appeals to the element of irrationality present in every person. But, first of all, racism is carefully nourished by the entire system of life in a capitalist country. Second, the racism to which Wallace appeals, is not a zoological, unconscious racism. It is based on the rather concrete economic foundations created by capitalist America. [...] When Wallace promises that Negroes won't have same entitlement for jobs as the whites will, he does not appeal to the irrational. He means a very concrete threat of unemployment, which he promises to eliminate at the expense of the Negroes if he becomes the president. The most important thing that Wallace plays on is not racism. The most important – is the sensibility of a petty private owner. And this is also a dangerous feeling. Quite often, racism derives from it.¹⁶

Borovik projected patterns of class struggle on racial divisions and presented racism as a logical outcome of capitalism. He in fact excluded the possibility of non-ideological racism and showed his readers that in the capitalist context, racism was a natural choice.¹⁷ This is another example of a journalist's explanation of the rationale behind the patterns of thought characteristic of American society. The segment concluded a long description of Wallace's election rally, in which Borovik also presented in detail Wallace's views and political platform. In fact, Borovik's account gave stage to the views of the staunchest critics of socialism and the Soviet Union – George Wallace and his supporters. In so doing, Borovik exposed his readers to ideological position radically different from their own. While Borovik gently guided his socialist reader toward a repudiation of Wallace's ideas, he did not label these positions as irrational, illogical, or untenable. Therefore, the textual presentation of Wallace's opinions did not structurally exclude a potential identification of the reader not with Borovik, but with Wallace. The choice of a

¹⁶ Genrikh Borovik, *Prolog: Roman-Esse* (Moscow: Pravda, 1984), 309-310.

¹⁷ For more on this topic see: Kate Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters between Black and Red, 1922-1963* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002), 1-24, 202-263; Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Joy Gleason Carew, *Blacks, Reds, and Russians: Sojourners in Search of the Soviet Promise* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008).

morally appropriate position depended on the level of political awareness of the readers themselves.

It is important to stress that in line with the Marxist view that individuals were the products of their societies, journalists' accounts laid the blame not on the people, but on the capitalist system as a whole, and particularly on the upper-class which, they believed, controlled American politics. American people came across as either the victims of the system, or as its unconscious perpetrators. Making an independent moral choice was difficult in the capitalist system, the journalists purported to show. Even if the small man was able to transcend his instincts of property acquisition and rise to challenge the system, he would be crushed by the power of capitalism.

Projecting the prism of Marxian theory of alienation on American society, journalists' analyses emphasized that the capitalist instinct was the main source of estrangement between classes and races and even between individuals of the same class or race.¹⁸ The capitalist system, they insisted, robbed people of their ability to care for one another and created social alienation. Genrikh Borovik used the story of a hitchhiker he picked up to demonstrate that loneliness was the ultimate American experience:

Slowly he told us his story. Nothing outstanding. Simply, a man worked as a clerk in some small firm. Suddenly he got sick. [...] Whatever he managed to save during his long life disappeared in the first four months of the disease. Finally he got better. Went back to his work and was not accepted. [...] And he suddenly realized that nobody cares about him, and that nobody needs him. His wife died a few years earlier. Friends from his own circle avoided him: they couldn't help

¹⁸ In his analysis of Marx's concept of alienation the philosopher Bertell Ollman explains that its meaning reached beyond a separation between the worker and his product. In Marx's writings, alienation also occurs between people, when "competition and class hostility made cooperation impossible." Alienation is experienced by members of the same class as well as by members of antagonistic classes. Thus, in capitalism, a worker was alienated both from fellow workers and from members of other classes. Bertell Ollman, *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in a Capitalist Society* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 133-134.

him and moreover, he scared them as a prophecy of their own possible future. He remembered that he had a friend in Los Angeles, whom he hasn't seen thirty years. Wrote to him. The friend was not better off: he was also old and nobody cared about him, even admitted that he is so miserable that he is considering suicide. So the two are clinging to each other. Decided to live together. It's cheaper. And they would try to die at the same time. So there he is, going to Los Angeles. Although they haven't seen each other for thirty years and he doesn't know whether they are still friends, he is going. At least they will know that nearby there is someone who is not completely indifferent of you. This he told us, wiping the sweat off his face from time to time. '– Everyone lives on their own. Each is by himself and cares only for himself. All around they are chasing after money. And after people – nobody chases.'¹⁹

Stories about lonely Americans, with no adequate network of social and financial support, featured in the writings of all Soviet correspondents. Conceivably, these examples preoccupied Soviet journalists because in their view, lonely people represented the most frightful aspect of American society. It is no coincidence that in our interview Melor Sturua mentioned the contrast between American loneliness and Russian communality as the most important difference between the Soviet Union and the U.S., which he chose to explore as international correspondent. It is also possible that stories about lonely individuals had a special resonance with the specific experience of Soviet correspondents in the United States. Although the journalists brought their families along and participated in the social world of Soviet diplomatic community, they spent many days travelling alone and feeling strangers in a strange land.

Soviet journalists emphasized that atomization and selfishness in the U.S. were exacerbated by the culture of conspicuous consumption. It was in the journalists' treatment of American consumer culture that demonstrated most vividly their self-understanding as socialist educators. For many Soviet citizens in the period of late

¹⁹ Borovik, *Prolog*, 225-226.

socialism, foreign consumer goods were an object of constant desire and aspiration.²⁰

According to Susan Reid, “The ethos of competition between capitalism and socialism in the realm of material culture locked the Soviet system “in comparison with the symbols of prosperity set by the west.”²¹ Therefore the enthusiasm displayed by the Soviet public for foreign goods was the biggest thorn in the arguments for socialist superiority. Soviet newspapers regularly published critiques of interest in foreign goods.²²

At the same time, as Alexei Yurchak points out, Soviet newspapers and officially sanctioned cultural products did not represent interest in foreign commodities as an entirely negative phenomenon. Official attacks on “‘extreme’ manifestations of Western cultural influences as bourgeois” coincided with a tolerance of “more common and less conspicuous tendencies among wider groups of ‘normal’ citizens as good internationalists or aesthetic pursuits.”²³ However, Soviet ideological proclamations rarely spelled out the boundaries between “extreme” and acceptable interest in Western commodities, nor did it elaborate on the dangers of Western bourgeois influences. The result was paradoxical: the official ideology simultaneously encouraged internationalism and labeled interest in foreign culture as dangerous.

Soviet correspondents in the U.S. took it upon themselves to explain these nuances, especially the potential dangers of consumerism. None of the journalists denied that American stores surpassed the Soviet ones in abundance or variety. Yet, most

²⁰ Natalya Chernyshova, “Consumption and Gender under Late Socialism” (paper presented at the Annual Conference of Economic History Society, University of Nottingham, March 28-30, 2008.)

²¹ Reid, “Soviet Popular Receptions,” 865.

²² Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 42. Examples of this theme’s recurrence in Soviet press can be seen in: *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, January 5, 1956; *Krokodil*, No. 2, January 1968; *Krokodil*, No. 7, March, 1974; V. Fomin, “Posporili Synov'ia,” *Pravda*, March 31, 1969, p. 4.

²³ Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 168.

references to American stores were accompanied by discussions of atomization, selfishness, and the lack of social justice in the United States.

For example, Stanislav Kondrashov, probably the staunchest critic of American consumerism among the Soviet press corps, contrasted between the bounty of consumer goods and the paucity of interpersonal relations:

The main street of the town spread out in front of me. A symbol of abundance. The teasing triumph of shiny store windows showing off the might, the flexibility and, unimaginable for us, the sophistication of American industry; its multitude of brands and international economic relations. [...] What didn't they have? And the symbol of spiritual emptiness. Everything available, but what's next? The street is empty and silent. [...] The silent, longing people, blocking their hearts and souls and waiting to pour them out in front of an open human soul. But where could you find that open human soul?²⁴

Kondrashov's discussion of material abundance in conjuncture with spiritual emptiness established a link of cause and effect between the two. Kondrashov created the impression that atomization was the natural outcome of consumerism and suggested that interest in commodities was alien to the human spirit. Other correspondents exposed the glowing streets of Broadway as veneers covering over consumerism's exploitation of the worst aspects of human nature: lust, violence, and greed. Soviet correspondents pointed out that while the marker of humanity was the ability to master these dangerous instincts, consumer culture fed and encouraged them. In another episode, this time describing an excursion into a strip-club, Kondrashov demonstrated how American consumerism turned everything, including sex, into a commodity:

Topless girls were trying to justify the high prices charged for the beer. On a small stage, a small black girl clumsily danced and waved her unattractive breasts. She was working – and this word is the most appropriate here – without

²⁴ Stanislav Kondrashov, *Liudi za okeanom: amerikanskii ocherki raznykh let* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1987), 32.

inspiration, accompanied by music from a record machine. At another small stage, right at the entrance, dutifully and unwillingly, a very young blonde jumped from leg to leg. The whole bar is organized in the most rational and economically efficient way: a music machine (instead of a jazz band), the dancers are constantly changing to allow the clients a wider choice of products and the opportunity to examine them from all directions. [...] Topless dancing became just another commodity for mass consumption. The mechanized, rationally organized sale of sex, accessible to all, just like the cheap Woolworth stores.²⁵

Kondrashov's description of the strip bar was a warning against his compatriots' view of American consumer culture; yes, it was attractive and shiny on the outside, but under close scrutiny it would turn out to be dull and desperate, and would not deliver its promise of fulfilling the soul. Consumer culture, explained the journalists, de-humanized and commodified everything: "all relations, even the most intimate and the most sublime, eventually end up being property relations," observed Melor Sturua.²⁶

In their attempts to show the pernicious effects of consumerism, Soviet journalists also turned to gendered language and imagery. This in itself was not surprising, for in Soviet and American Cold War discourse consumption was represented as primarily a female realm.²⁷ Soviet journalists depicted American middle class consumers in terms usually associated with unstable women: superficial, irrational in their needs, and beguiled by the changing fashions. American shoppers often appeared in the journalists' accounts as conspicuously consuming American women. These descriptions suggested that the very interest in commodities and fashion was essentially a female disposition,

²⁵ Kondrashov, *Svidanie*, 103-104.

²⁶ Melor Sturua, *Brozhenie* (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1971), 106.

Note: first name Melor, is an acronym for Marx Engels Lenin October Revolution.

²⁷ Susan Reid, "The Cold War in the Kitchen: Gender and the de-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev," *Slavic Review*, 61/2 (2002): 212-214; Chernyshova, "Consumption and Gender."

which emasculated American men. Sturua reported that the following lament came from “a middle aged businessman” that he had met:

Want the truth? I hate women. All women. Women in the US have accumulated incredible fortunes. Statistics testify that 60% of the money and valuable papers are the property of women. They just sit and wait for us to die and then inherit everything that we had. The crazy pursuit of success stimulates early deaths among American men.²⁸

Although in the next paragraph Sturua warned that, “generalizations could be dangerous,” he nevertheless agreed that “there was a significant part of truth in his words; an everyday truth, applicable to the privileged layers and those attracted to them.”²⁹ In contrast to the lion’s share of Soviet literature on consumerism, which tended to see women as its primary audience, Sturua and his colleagues also sought to address Soviet men. The aforementioned fragment, demonstrating how bourgeois women’s insatiable appetite for consumption often spelled the ruin of American men, was a cautionary tale for readers of both sexes.

The American people who put such faith into consumer goods and commodities were presented as the victims of the system: they were brainwashed by consumer culture and experienced artificial needs, spurred by the dictates of fashion, and advertising. In this instance American people also appeared to be victims of capitalist false consciousness: consumption was not their choice but a result of the system-fostered faith that commodities would solve their problems. Thus, another emasculating effect of capitalism was that it pushed the people toward the weakness and submission of shopping and away from society-changing action. Soviet journalists stressed that commodities

²⁸ Sturua, *Brozhenie*, 102-106.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 106.

could not solve the real problems of American society – loneliness, atomization, and alienation.

The relationship between Soviet correspondents and American consumer goods was, and continues to be, a source of public as well as scholarly argument. Already during the Cold War several American observers charged that Soviet journalists' critiques of American consumerism contradicted these journalists' own predilection for Western goods. "His words were pure party line, but his clothes were Oxford Street in London, where he spent four years as *Pravda* correspondent," wrote David K. Willis about Vsevolod Ovchinnikov in 1985.³⁰ More than twenty years later, Nadezhda Azhgikhina, a famous journalist and a member of the Secretariat of the Union of Russian Journalists, echoed this view. Talking in an interview, she said: "What do you expect? They were holding dear to their jobs, afraid to lose the ability to travel to the West, which allowed them to get themselves and their children jeans and other goods that no one had."³¹

Soviet journalists were well aware of these accusations, yet they did not see their own purchase of American products as contradicting their writings. As the following passage from Kondrashov's book, written during Perestroika, suggests, what was at issue were not Western commodities *per se*, but rather the consumer culture that glorified commodities and turned consumption into the pinnacle of one's existence:

How can we adopt this service and quality, but keep our cheap apartment prices or the high earnings of the Americans – and, more important without the inherent flaws of capitalism, without rat races in which the strong triumph and the weak perish. Hooray to abundance of products, but down with consumer bacchanalia

³⁰ David K. Willis, *Klass: How Russians Really Live* (New York: Avon Books, 1987), 274.

³¹ Nadezhda Ilinichna Azhgikhina, interviewed by Dina Fainberg, October 10, 2009, Moscow.

which cripples and empties people in these cruel contests of life, where the strongest emerge victorious.³²

Soviet authorities and publications tacitly acknowledged the superiority of American consumer products already during Khrushchev period. The official rhetoric did not object to consumption in itself, but criticized the unequal distribution of goods under capitalism and berated excessive shopping for its own sake. Soviet descriptions of American consumers emphasized their irrationality and excess, and thus reinforced the ideal of a responsible and “rational” Soviet consumer, which began to appear in the Soviet press since the late 1950s.³³

Soviet journalists who covered the United States in the late 1960s found their critiques of American society reinforced by the myriad of social and youth movements that characterized this turbulent period. Soviet correspondents contended that American youth’s turn against the norms and values of capitalism revealed crisis in the American social structure. The mass conversion of bourgeois American youth into hippies, Soviet journalists explained, reflected the youngsters’ desperate need for supportive community and a desire to escape the commoditization inherent in consumerism. However, Genrikh Borovik, who explored the hippie movement in great length, discovered on his trip to San Francisco that it was impossible to escape the soul-wrecking effects of capitalism. Borovik described how fast the capitalist American turned the naïve symbols of the hippies such as, flowers, beards, and colorful garments into marketable (and expensive)

³² Stanislav Kondrashov, *Puteshevstvie amerikanista* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1986), 390.

³³ Susan Reid, “The Cold War in the Kitchen: Gender and the de-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev,” *Slavic Review*, 61/2 (2002): 219-220.

commodities. “Racketeers are already fighting each other to death over the ownership of the market of flowers, love, and kindness,” he observed.³⁴ The difficulty of breaking the vicious circle of alienation and conspicuous consumption, explained the journalists, is what led many young Americans into drug abuse. “How powerfully hateful this society must be if so many young men are prepared to factually kill themselves only to stop the ticking clock of a meaningless, yet safe life?”³⁵ – asked Stanislav Kondrashov, after quoting the statistics on drug-use among the youth.

However, in the 1960s, journalists argued that drugs were not the only choice for people who didn't want to participate in this society. A viable alternative was the dedication of many young Americans to what the Soviet journalists saw as essentially socialist causes of justice and social equality – the Civil Rights and antiwar movements. Soviet correspondents explored the movements in great length, stressing the courage and commitment of their participants. Melor Sturua, whose accounts about the 1960s turned the youth movements into their central theme, declared that the members of the protests represented the only remnants of social consciousness in America:

Oh, Yankees-Puritans, who look with disgust on mini-skirts and jeans! Bend your heads before them! They are covered with blood and torn into pieces by the Gestapo from Chicago! They are – your conscience, wide awake in Lincoln Park, while you sleep in your warm, habitable, bought-on-credit nests!³⁶

Soviet journalists viewed American youth protest as the only alternative available for those who wanted to rescue their souls from the corrupting effects of capitalist culture.

³⁴ Borovik, *Prolog*, 24.

³⁵ Kondrashov, *Svidanie*, 136-137.

³⁶ Sturua, *Brozhenie*, 93.

Sturua dedicated the first two chapters of his book to the student movements and the riots at Harvard and Kent State Universities and two other chapters to the events of the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago.

Projecting patterns of class analysis on American domestic turmoil, Soviet journalists presented the war in Vietnam and racial segregation as the ultimate outcomes of capitalist greed. While racism was described as a resulting from the threat of unemployment in capitalist economy, the Vietnam War was depicted as a perpetuated by the financial interests of the military-industrial complex in the United States. As the journalists inscribed patterns of class struggle onto racial segregation and the war in Vietnam, they also cast the protests against these two evils in ideological terms: the participants in American counterculture appeared as ideological subjects, sometimes even groping toward the Marxist light:

Of course, among the protesting students one could find a large diversity of ideologies, perspectives and temperaments. And although everyone considered themselves Marxists, only a minority were Marxists in reality. [...] But here I would like to point out one thing: the unique renaissance in Marx's popularity among the new generation of the New World. Marx is attracting and fascinating [people]. Marx is read over and over. For some it's a necessity, for others it's a fashion. But fashion is very telling, isn't it?³⁷

The journalists' discussions of the counter culture were prompted by the counter culture's growing appeal to Soviet youth.³⁸ Descriptions such as Sturua's, stressed that the American protest culture, in which the Soviet youth were so interested, actually derived its influence from socialist values and criticized the U.S. in terms similar to those deployed by the Soviet state. Journalists' descriptions of young American bourgeois converting to Marxism and protesting against the evils of capitalism demonstrated how socialism conquered hearts and minds around the world. The coverage of counter cultural

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁸ Alexei Yurchak and Vladislav Zubok discuss Soviet youth's fascination with American music and counter culture. Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 158-238; Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 44.

movements also reinforced the idea that socialist ideology provided the sole ground for effective moral action.

Discussions of American counter culture also tapped into the domestic public debate on the youth and the nature of the contemporary hero. In 1956 *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* asked its readers who they thought was better positioned to do a heroic deed: a disciplined man who has a high sense of responsibility for his actions, or an energetic person who is fearless? The discussion continued into the early 1960s, evolving into a debate on the nature of the hero in Soviet literature. In question was the nature of the young Soviet generation and the ways that it differed from earlier generations.³⁹ As the 1960s progressed the debate evolved into a critique of the youth: the older generation charged it with ideological disengagement and self-centeredness. Journalists contributed to the discussion by presenting two sides of American counter culture, in which each suggested a different prototype of a young person. While the antiwar and Civil Rights activists were lauded for their courage and commitment to high ideals, the hippies and the avant-garde artists were presented as decadent, escapist, and commercially oriented. In applauding the ideological engagement of the protest movements and criticizing the escapism of the hippies, the journalists' narratives offered to the Soviet youth a positive

³⁹ Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 206-208.

For the hero debate in the Soviet press see: *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, Jan. 8, 1956; Iu. Barabash, "Cherty sovremennika", *Izvestiia*, September 9, 1959, p. 3; L. Aleksandrovskaiia, "V etom i nasha vina," *Izvestiia*, November 11, 1959, p. 4; L. Skorino, "Tak li prost prostoi chelovek," *Voprosy Literatury* 6 (1960): 9-34; A. Petrosian, "K otsenke geroia", *Voprosy Literatury* 9 (1960): 47-61.

For later examples of the press' discussions of Soviet youth see: A. Protopopova, "Roditel'skaia 'pedagogika'," *Pravda*, March 5, 1969.

Another example is the short debate on the impact of "adventure literature" on fashioning the personalities of young Soviet people: Vsevolod Revich, "Priklucheniia radi," *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, February 19, 1969, p. 5; Ivan Efremov, "Da, radi priklucheniia!", *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, March 12, 1969, p. 5.

path for self-modeling and tried to channel their admiration of American radicals in a proper, socialist direction.

Presented through the prism of Marxian analysis, American society came across as preoccupied with greed and ridden by constant conflicts between classes and races. Soviet journalists saw capitalist principles operating on all levels of American social and political structure and presented their American protagonists as rational and ideologically inspired actors. This in turn necessitated an explanation of protagonists' worldview and opinions. Therefore, even the most racist and conservative Americans could be found on the pages of journalists' books, along with detailed explanations about what they thought and why they identified with their system. Perhaps ironically, the Soviet accounts, usually perceived as "tightly controlled" and "unfree", exposed the readers to a variety of political doctrines, different from the one advanced by Soviet dominant ideology. A "correct understanding" of these accounts demanded intellectual work: as the Brezhnev era progressed, the superiority of socialism was not a given, and was more difficult to substantiate with tangible evidence in the realm of material culture. The books invited their readers to appreciate the commitments of the socialist state through the narratives of the hardships experienced by many Americans. The readers were required to exercise their judgment and take a leap of faith, familiar to them from socialist realist art: to deduce the benefits of socialism from contrasting the descriptions of capitalist America with the ideal state that would be introduced by the triumph of socialism.

America and the Late Socialist Reader

How did Soviet readers understand and interpret these accounts? Did the intended readers, conscious Marxists who embraced the journalists' critiques of American society, constitute the majority of their audience? Did the readers indeed grow even more appreciative of their own system after reading the journalists' accounts? The questions of readership and of authors' intentions are closely connected. Based on post-factum readers' explanations of how they interpreted the books, an author today could claim intentions that were not necessarily there when he wrote it. Unfortunately, there are no documents that would allow us to study how these accounts were read by contemporaries. Furthermore, other than the journalists' introductions to the books, no documents could reveal the original intentions of their authors. In what follows, I will rely on the cultural context of late socialism and outline historically contextualized ways of reading and interpreting these journalists' accounts.

As Alexei Yurchak points out, people who grew up and matured in late socialism developed numerous strategies of interaction with the official discourse, which fell in the gray area between acceptance and rejection of its literary meaning. According to Yurchak, among these strategies were reproduction of ideological discourse while finding alternative meaning to it; investment in cultural milieus and networks of friends; or filtering the official proclamations through the prism of irony, humor, or the absurd.⁴⁰ In Yurchak's view, these interactions with official discourse allowed the last Soviet generation to invent its own meanings, aspirations and lifestyles and yet, "did not

⁴⁰ Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 34-35.

preclude one from feeling personal affinity to many values that were explicitly and implicitly central to the socialist system.”⁴¹

It is highly possible that one of the myriad forms of engagement with the Soviet correspondents’ writings about the U.S. was straightforward adoption of the journalists’ message and affirmation of leaders’ belief that they were fortunate to live in a socialist country. In the opening shots of *My Perestroika*, a recent documentary on the Soviet collapse, one of the film’s protagonists Luyba Meyerson remembers that she felt fortunate to live in the Soviet Union, and not “there” – in the capitalist countries – “with all their problems.” At the same time, the accounts themselves as well as the cultural context of late socialism created a potential for other types of engagement, such as ignoring the educational message of the books and Aesopian reading.

“I watch Zorin’s documentaries about America with the sound off” was a popular Soviet statement.⁴² It refers to the series of documentaries about the U.S. produced by the journalist Valentin Zorin. Watching “with the sound off” meant that audiences sought the visual sights from the U.S., but were not interested in the ideological interpretation of those sights. For travel-starved Soviet viewers, the lens of Zorin’s camera was the only way to see America, the closest thing most of them would ever get to a firsthand experience of the U.S. and the only way to satisfy an enormous curiosity about how things were on the other side of the Iron Curtain. The journalists’ books performed a similar function. Soviet libraries did not have picture albums or travel guides of the United States. The circulation of the informational magazine “America” was heavily

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁴² Bovin, *XX vek*, 327.

restricted, and could not be purchased simply in a kiosk.⁴³ At the same time, constant references to America in the official culture and rhetoric further fueled enormous curiosity about it. In the Soviet informational context, the accounts of international correspondents offered an important avenue of learning about American cities, culture, and everyday life.

Many readers brushed off the educational lessons, what they called “ideological noise,” and scouted the writings of international correspondents as a source of raw information about life in the United States. An interesting example of such reading appeared in the 2001 memoir of Andrey Makarevich, the leader of the band *Mashina Vremeni* and one of the founding fathers of the Soviet rock n’ roll scene. One of the key moments in this retrospective account of his transformation from a regular Soviet boy to the national rock legend, was Makarevich’s growing awareness of Western youth culture:

By the 1970s the hippies became the center of our world. It was an article in a journal "Around the World" (*Vokrug Sveta*) that opened our eyes to reality. The essay was called “A Journey to the Hippieland”. We [...] copied quotes from the article of hippies declaring their program (I, for instance remembered everything by heart). The hippie platform was adopted in its entirety.⁴⁴

The essay “*A Journey to the Hippieland*” was Genrikh Borovik’s account of his trip to San Francisco. The article was originally published in the journal *Vokrug Sveta* (Around the World) and was later included in Borovik’s book about the U.S., *One Year of a Restless Sun*. Borovik’s article treated the hippie culture in a rather humorous manner and described the hippies and their aspirations as naive and at times ridiculous. The part of

⁴³ See for example the letter from the Central Committee to local party organizations “On the dissemination of the journal ‘America’ in the USSR.” Vladimir Bukovsky’s Soviet Archive: <http://bukovsky-archives.net/pdfs/usa/us56-6.pdf>. Accessed on October 20, 2011.

⁴⁴ Andrei Makarevich, *Sam Ovtisa* (Moscow: Zakharov, 2005) EBook edition.

the story where Borovik asked a hippie about his program actually showed that hippies didn't have a program at all; it provided another layer in Borovik's gentle mockery of hippies' lack of any ideology whatsoever.

Oblivious to Borovik's sarcastic tone, or perhaps dismissing it as a sign of official position, Makarevich's interpretation of the article was completely the opposite: he adopted the hippie platform as his own. Did Borovik mean for his article to be actually a source of information for his young readers, fascinated with American hippie culture? Was the critique of the hippies' lack of ideological rigor only a veil that would allow the account to pass the censors? We cannot say. But Makarevich is clearly an example of a Soviet reader who searched in a journalistic report from the U.S. "raw" information about America, while brushing off the educational lessons of the text and silencing the "ideological noise".

Present day interviews with some of these journalists reveal that coverage of American youth and popular culture is a particularly memorable aspect of their long careers. Genrikh Borovik proudly told me that he was the only Soviet journalist to write extensively about avant-garde art. Melor Sturua remembers that he kept his young audiences in mind particularly when discussing youth culture and protest movements. It is clear that these contemporary recollections might have been influenced by the journalists' post-factum knowledge about readers' interpretations of their accounts. However, it is possible to say with certainty that these journalists were trying to expand the boundaries of the topics discussed in reference to the U.S. and to introduce even such controversial aspects as rock music and hippie culture. In their attempts to broaden the readers' perspectives the journalists were not necessarily trying to deliver a subversive

message. As Alexei Yurchak points out, late Soviet contemporaries saw no contradiction in a simultaneous appreciation of socialism and Western culture:

All those articles, stories and pronouncements [officially sanctioned descriptions of life in the West] fed the imagination of Soviet readers, suggesting that a well-rounded Soviet person should be able to admire Western cultural forms as long as he or she looked at them critically, distinguishing between the creativity and imagination of the working people and the materialism and philistinism of the bourgeois classes. Ultimately, it became apparent that there was nothing intrinsically wrong with being a fan of western jazz, a follower of western fashion, or a person interested in the foreign press if one was also a Soviet patriot.⁴⁵

The ethos of Thaw journalism emphasized the importance of information about life abroad in the development of a well-rounded socialist personality. The educational aspects of this information were delivered in the journalistic commentary, which suggested how a Soviet reader should interpret it. Although both Borovik and Sturua discussed youth culture, their respective analyses signaled that each phenomenon should be treated differently. While Borovik's discussion of the hippies explained their misguidedness and presented the whole movement in a rather comical light, Sturua's descriptions of antiwar movements emphasized the ideological rigor of the demonstrators and cast them as brave and worthy of admiration. What the journalists, and those who approved their accounts for publication, perhaps did not foresee was that this commentary would be altogether ignored, that their descriptions and images would be de-contextualized and read in isolation from their analysis, "with the sound off."

"Turning off the ideological noise" sometimes involved a dismissal of all the critical views of the accounts about the U.S., simply because they were relayed by official media. Upon immigrating to the U.S. in the late 1970s, the writer Vasily Aksyonov

⁴⁵ Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 170.

commented that Soviet readers tended to ignore Soviet discussions of American shortcomings and problems, only to learn how many of these observations resonated with them upon immigrating to the United States:

Soviet propaganda has piled up so many lies in its lifetime that it now gives reverse results: a certain brand of “critically thinking” Soviet citizen – and most of the new émigrés fall into the pattern – no longer believes a word of it; the critically thinking Soviet rejects both the lies of Soviet propaganda and the scraps of truth the propaganda machine needs to make the lies to appear true. [...] As a direct result of anti-American propaganda the CTS [critically thinking Soviet] forms a picture of America as an ideal society, prosperous and romantic. [...] Thousands of Soviet émigrés were cruelly disappointed with what they found instead.⁴⁶

In this case, “turning off the ideological noise” promoted an explicitly subversive reading of the texts in question. Ironically, this mode of engagement was similar to the one intended by the journalists, for it too, imagined America as an inverted mirror of socialist society and distilled readers’ perceptions of the U.S. from a comparison with the Soviet Union. What differed was the readers’ initial negative attitude to the Soviet state, which caused them to endow the United States with an a-priori image of perfection.

It was one of the greater paradoxical effects of late Soviet propaganda that despite the abundance of anti-American rhetoric, it fueled further the popular curiosity about the United States. One explanation for this paradox resides in the internal dynamics of officially sanctioned accounts described in this chapter. Soviet publications encouraged interest in and appreciation of certain aspects of foreign cultures and at the same time denounced other aspects for their “bourgeois values.” As we have seen the accounts of foreign correspondents explored opinions that contradicted the dominant Soviet ideology and combined admiration for American working class and freedom fighters with critiques

⁴⁶ Vasily Aksyonov, *In a Search of Melancholy Baby* (New York: Random House, 1985), 30-31.

of U.S. consumerism and the instincts of “petty private owners.” According to Alexei Yurchak, this ambiguity of official attitude to foreign cultures led to the development of a new meaning for the concept “abroad,” which Yurchak calls the “Imaginary West.” Far from any concrete country or place, the “Imaginary West” was a vision comprised of “diverse array of discourses, statements, products, objects, visual images, musical expressions, and linguistic constructions that were linked to the West by theme or by virtue of their origin of reference, and that circulated widely in late socialism, gradually shaped a coherent and shared object of imagination.”⁴⁷ The Imaginary West was a cultural construct, which represented an “elsewhere” to the Soviet “here.” It appealed to late Soviet generation because it allowed it to transcend the Soviet reality and to adopt new “worldly identities and imagination”.⁴⁸

Yurchak views the Imaginary West as a discursive phenomenon, which belonged primarily to the realm of late Soviet imagination. I would like to point out that the appeal of the Imaginary West as the Soviet “elsewhere” derived from concrete experiences of daily life in late socialism. Memoirs about the late Soviet period, such as Makarevich’s, explain that American music, fashion, and film provided an exciting alternative to the restrictions of mainstream Soviet culture, which many young people found frozen and old. American consumer goods became desirable not only because they allowed one to connect to an imaginary “elsewhere,” but also because of the daily difficulties and frustrations of Soviet consumers. Yurchak is right in a sense that the seductions of the Imaginary West did not make socialist ideas irrelevant. But these seductions offered a

⁴⁷ Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 161.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 170.

powerful contrast to the Soviet daily experience and made it difficult to follow international correspondents when they urged readers to transcend the strains of their everyday life and to ignore the appeal of foreign cultures or objects of desire. The Imaginary West not only derived from official representations of foreign life, but also competed with these representations for appeal to the popular imagination.

Another potentially subversive engagement with the journalists' accounts was Aesopian Reading, widely practiced in educated circles. Coined after the Greek writer Aesop who was notorious for substituting human characters with animals, endowing the latter with human traits, and using these metaphoric animals to criticize human nature. Aesopian language is a form of cryptography; it masks the author's ideas through the use of allegory, paraphrase, irony, or allusion. Writing in the early 1980s, former Soviet journalist, émigré, and scholar of Russian literature Lev Losev defined Aesopian language as "a special literary system, one whose structure allows interaction between author and reader at the same time that it conceals inadmissible content from the censor."⁴⁹ Intimately familiar with the inner workings of the Soviet press, Losev argued that the use of Aesopian language emerges under conditions of state censorship in literature. In the Russian context it was part and parcel of a literary tradition going back to the nineteenth century.⁵⁰ Essentially, using an Aesopian language meant writing or reading between the lines, an assumption that the actual meaning of the text was different from the literary one. Similar to socialist-realist writing, Aesopian writing presupposed

⁴⁹ Lev Losev, *On the Beneficence of Censorship: Aesopian Language in Modern Russian Literature* (Munich: O. Sagner in Kommission, 1984), x.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 2-4.

the audience of conscious, thinking readers. While the former imagined its critical reader engaging with the literal meaning of the text, the latter invited critical, and at times cynical, reading between the lines. Indeed, many of the Soviet Aesopian texts Losev analyzed in his work were authored by officially recognized, though on the fringe of the establishment, writers like Yevgeny Yevtushenko, or Bella Akhmadulina.

Moreover, almost any text had the potential to be read through an Aesopian lens. As Korney Chukovskii pointed out, the attribution of Aesopian meaning to a text could occur independently of the intentions of its author.⁵¹ In the context of Russia's longstanding tradition of critical reading, which could easily lead to reading between the lines, if readers were so inclined, they could find hidden message in almost any given text.

Using Losev's extensive analysis of Russian and Soviet Aesopian language I argue that journalists' accounts about the U.S. were especially susceptible to Aesopian reading. First, as Losev points out, the official language of Soviet newspapers was often an Aesopian text in itself.

Because the straightforward or uncountered publication of certain information is ideologically taboo, the Soviet press employs the complete range of tropes and rhetorical figures in order that the reader be made aware of this information. Such is the reason for countless euphemisms in government pronouncements: a bloody reign of terror is termed "a personality cult," the military occupation of a neighboring state "brotherly assistance," and economic collapse "occasional failings." A deliberately euphemistic style usually conceals a warning signal of possible danger. [...] Semi-official texts are rhetorically coded solely in order to feed the reader specific information.⁵²

The constant use of euphemisms in official newspapers endowed every journalistic text with a potential hidden message, and fostered a tradition of reading newspapers with an

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 56-57.

eye for sub-textual meanings. Soviet editors and censors were acutely aware of this potential and paid close attention to every detail in newspaper publications, seeking and finding subversive meaning in many apparently innocent instances, and expressing constant concern with texts' ability to evoke "uncontrollable associations."⁵³

At the core of all Aesopian devices, according to Losev, is the principle of metonymicity – a substitution of one thing for another. In the context of Russian political writing, one of the manifestations of this principle is using discussion of foreign countries as a way to comment on domestic phenomena or events. ("The attribution of properly Russian concerns to realms, which are geographically far removed.")⁵⁴ Fedor Burlatskii, Khrushchev's speechwriter and later, a *Pravda* commentator, also referred to this as a prominent tactic among political and international commentators. Burlatskii once wrote a brochure about the status of Mao Tse Tung in Communist China as a way to criticize Soviet fascination with the "cult of personality" in the Brezhnev era. In his memoirs Burlatskii described his brochure as a conscious decision to "use Aesopian language" in order to make his critiques publishable.⁵⁵ Mikhail Suslov's personally intervened against the publication of Burlatskii's brochure, thus only underscoring how aware Soviet establishment was of the Aesopian potential of texts dealing with foreign countries.

Within this tradition, as texts explicitly dealing with a foreign culture, journalists' accounts potentially invited reading between the lines. This Aesopian potential of reports from the U.S. was further enhanced in the context of Khrushchev's call "to reach and

⁵³ See for example: Dovlatov, *Kompromiss*; Losev, *Zakryti Raspredelitel'*.

⁵⁴ Losev, *Beneficence of Censorship*, 60, 64.

⁵⁵ Fedor Burlatskii, *Vozhdi i sovetniki: o Khrushcheve, Andropove i ne tol'ko o nikh* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1990), EBook edition.

surpass America,” as well as Soviet journalistic culture’s encouragement of the public to read information about life in the West with a comparative eye. However, the conclusion that socialism was more advantageous than capitalism was not the only available outcome of a comparative reading and those who were so minded could read the journalists’ accounts as a negative commentary on the Soviet Union.

For example, Mikhail Barschevskii, Russian legal expert, journalist, and former politician remembered gleaning an unfavorable picture of the Soviet Union from reports on events abroad:

I have no idea how it could have happened in the Soviet times (we had firm censorship, the censors were not stupid and filtered the available information well). I remember reading in one of our Soviet newspapers, *Pravda* or *Izvestiia*, an item that left me literary in a state of shock. The article discussed a strike in one of the Danish prisons. Naturally, everything was presented as an example of rotten, collapsing capitalism, “their” customs, and so on. Danish prisoners started a strike, or perhaps even a hunger strike, demanding to replace black-and-white TV sets in their cameras, with color ones. And when this was announced in the Soviet press (and we knew what’s going on in our [penal] system), it sounded like a mockery.⁵⁶

Barschevskii realized that the article in question intended him to criticize the penal system of capitalist countries. Yet, upon reading it, and conducting an almost inevitable comparison with the Soviet Union, he took an entirely different lesson from this article and saw it as evidence of the backwardness of the Soviet penal system, and of contradictions between the socialist state’s proclamation of its humane principles and the reality he was familiar with.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Mikhail Barschevskii, *Osoboe Mnenie*, Radio Ekho Moskv, October 18, 2011. <http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/personalno/821419-echo/#element-text>. Accessed on October 20, 2011.

⁵⁷ Even if Barschevsky “invented” this particular memory, the invention is nevertheless suggestive of the patterns of engagement with information about life abroad.

Soviet media were full of indictments of “capitalist customs,” which could have contradicted readers’ experiences of or knowledge about the reality at home, and cast Soviet life in a negative light. For example, on August 26, 1968 Soviet correspondents in the U.S. witnessed how Chicago police violently cracked down a large antiwar rally, held outside of the walls of the Democratic National Convention. Only a few days earlier, on August 21, 1968, back home, the Warsaw Pact forces invaded Czechoslovakia to trump down the reforms of Prague Spring. The August 29, 1968 front page of *Izvestiia* featured, side by side, an article praising “Soviet brotherly help to Czechoslovakia” and an account of “brutal reprisal of demonstrators who spoke up against the Vietnam venture.”⁵⁸ The proximity of the two events, not just in terms of time, but also in terms of content – a violent suppression of demonstrations opposing superpowers’ foreign intervention and calling for reform and change – made it highly possible to read the descriptions of Chicago as an allegory for Prague. The highly emotional language of the second article, its detailed descriptions of Chicago police brutality, and the ultimate sympathy it expressed toward the Chicago activists, could be read as an indictment of the Soviet intervention and a call for support of the Czechoslovakian people. The combination of Soviet aspirations to present the readers with a moral indictment of capitalism and the desire to situate domestic repressive policies in an appropriate ideological framework, created the potential for subversive reading.

In other occasions, the Soviet journalistic practice of comparing and contrasting “capitalist” and “socialist” ways of life could produce outright unfavorable views of Soviet policies. The text of the following passage from Borovik’s account of an antiwar

⁵⁸ *Izvestiia*, August 29, 1968, p.1.

demonstration in New York's Central Park shows thousands of Americans branding their country's policy in Vietnam as shameful and unjust:

Dozens of thousands of men are on the enormous field of Central Park in New York are standing closely pressed next to each other. [...] This is New Yorkers' demonstration against the war in Vietnam. In 1966 people also met in Central Park for a demonstration against the war in Vietnam. What has changed in the last two years? First of all, there are more people now. Two years ago police counted 22,000 participants. This year, the *New York Times*, correspondents equipped with special "counters," evaluated the demonstration as 87,000 men and women. The organizers themselves argue there were 100,000-150,000. [...] Back then the predominant mood among the protesters was one of victimization. Now they are feeling their own power. This is not that speaking out against the war is less dangerous today. [...] The sense of power came not because the authorities have "softened". It came because the most important thing was achieved – the American conscience has awoken, and it is becoming more tangible. [...] Of course, the American conscience was stirred first and foremost by the Vietnamese patriots, their courage and amazing fortitude. [...] But apparently, those lonely individuals who stood silently on Times Square two years ago with posters, 'Stop the shameful war!' have achieved surprisingly large results.⁵⁹

The information-gathering Aesopian reader of the passage could have taken a mental note of the fact that such a large-scale demonstration against American government policies was allowed to happen at the heart of one of the most important American cities – something that, everyone knew, would not have been allowed to happen in the Soviet Union. The potential Aesopian understanding of this passage could run counter to the claims of Soviet official rhetoric, which praised the USSR as the land of freedom while declaring that America is oppressive and undemocratic. Finally, the very last statement of the passage, celebrating the power of the few to change the viewpoint of many, could have been read as an outright praise of dissidence. It is important to note that Aesopian readership was practiced among certain segments of the population: most often the intelligentsia who frequently had access to other sources of information that could enable

⁵⁹ Borovik, *Prolog*, 121-124.

these comparisons. Such a reading would require a familiarity with the dissident milieu or with the fate of attempts to stage public protests in the USSR.

“Socialism-affirming,” “informational,” and Aesopian readings were not necessarily separated. One could read the abovementioned passage on anti-war demonstration as a source of information on American dealing with public protest, as a critical comment on Soviet suppression of those who speak up against the state, and at the same time, one could remain convinced of socialist superiority over capitalism and share the journalists’ critiques of the United States. In fact, the official sanctioning of the journalists’ accounts in itself relied on expectations of Aesopian reading of sorts, whereby the conscious Marxists audiences were to extrapolate the advantages of socialism from the descriptions of the evils of American capitalism. While the journalists applied the prism of socialist modernity to present a critical appraisal of American system, the structure of their accounts did not forestall other conclusions, including the ones that could undermine the official proclamations of the Soviet state or the literary meaning of the texts. In opening the prism, and allowing their readers to think and form the conclusions for themselves, the Soviet correspondents may have unintentionally opened the gates for subversive interpretation.

Chapter 3: Watchdogs of the Public

At the end of the Second World War ended, American correspondents in Moscow found themselves caught in the crossfire of Soviet anti-Americanism and American anti-Communism. As the superpowers' concern with foreign and domestic enemies peaked, American journalists fell victim to new regulations and political campaigns against enemy subversion on both sides of the Iron Curtain. The Soviet regime treated American journalists as agents of hostile propaganda and circumscribed their copy through censorship. In the United States anti-Communists questioned the loyalty of foreign correspondents and scrutinized their copy for signs of pro-Soviet sentiments. In response to Soviet attacks and suspicions at home, American journalists strengthened their anti-Soviet positions and stressed their loyalty to the United States. Domestic vigilantes accused American correspondents in Moscow of trumpeting Soviet fabrications instead of reporting factual news. In response, the journalists emphasized their unique ability to refute Soviet propaganda with objective facts and highlighted their contribution to America's battle against international Communism.

By the mid-1950s Soviet-American relations thawed and the scope of anti-Communist campaign decreased. Although American reporting began to feature new themes and became more nuanced in its portrayal of the Soviet Union, journalists and editors seldom departed from the conventional anti-Communist approach to Soviet affairs. The tropes of reporting from Russia set in the early Cold War years shaped the attitudes of subsequent generations of correspondents dispatched to Moscow and had a lasting influence on American coverage of the Soviet Union.

“Enemy Agents” at Home and Abroad

During World War II there were around twenty American correspondents in the Soviet Union, representing ten media outlets. Soviet leaders needed the Allies’ aid and were eager to showcase the victories of the Red Army. The Soviet Union opened its gates to foreign correspondents and tried to accommodate their requests for coverage. The Press Department of Soviet Foreign Ministry supervised and coordinated the work of foreign correspondents. The Press Department held press conferences, organized tours of the battlefields, provided military guides and interpreters, and furnished access to military staff.¹ Foreign correspondents travelled widely around the country, lived in Moscow and Tashkent, visited Leningrad immediately after the blockade, and toured Stalingrad in the aftermath of the great battle. Journalists from overseas mingled with Soviet war correspondents, met regional leaders and military personnel. The Press Department was also responsible for the censorship of international press corps, but the interventions were not too heavy handed. The censors met the journalists face to face, tended to explain why certain parts of a dispatch were forbidden for transmission, and occasionally surrendered to the journalists’ arguments and allowed the copy to go unaltered.

The working conditions of foreign correspondents in Moscow were among the first casualties of the acrimony that developed between former allies soon after the war. By the end of 1945 the Press Department of the Foreign Ministry abolished press

¹ On occasion, the journalists were allowed to see some actual fighting. For example, Henry Shapiro received special permission to travel to the Stalingrad front. He toured the battle lines just before the Red Army closed in on the German forces, and he was able to conduct interviews with soldiers and commissars. Bassow, *Moscow Correspondents*, 107-108.

conferences and special trips for the foreign press; and tightened the censorship. It became more difficult to obtain permission to travel around the Soviet Union.

In 1946, Soviet authorities introduced new censorship rules that radically altered the working conditions of foreign journalists. The Soviet domestic censoring body - The General Directorate for the Protection of Secrets of the State (Glavlit) – took over the Press Department’s responsibilities of censoring foreign correspondents.² Unlike the employees of the Press Department, Glavlit censors worked according to a strict set of regulations. The new rules mandated that all journalists file their dispatches from one place – the Central Telegraph Building. The new provisions prohibited any interactions between censors and journalists. The censors worked in a closed special room, had the power to alter the journalists’ copy however they saw fit, and remained invisible to the journalists and deaf to their pleas.³ Another set of rules prohibited foreign correspondents from filing analyses or assessments, especially concerning Soviet politics, the economy, or foreign relations.⁴ Thus, the new rules reduced the journalists’ dispatches to

² “Resolution of Politburo TsK VKP(b) on censorship of outgoing information from the Soviet Union,” 25.02.1946. RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 3. D. 1056. Ll. 25-26. Accessed via the Internet Archive of Alexander Yakovlev Foundation: <http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/69274>. Last accessed on 4.26.2012.

³ Bassow, *Moscow Correspondents*, 123. According to the original provisions, adopted in February 1946, the journalists were not allowed to revisit their dispatches after the censors’ interventions and had no way of knowing whether and how the items were altered. Similarly, the censors were not required to notify the journalists in case the dispatch was blocked entirely and not transmitted at all. The Politburo updated the rules in March 1946. The new additions permitted the journalists to see the censors’ interventions and allowed the journalists to decide whether or not to file their dispatches in an altered form. With the introduction of the new rules the journalists were also notified in case the entire dispatch was blocked. RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 3. D. 1057. L. 18. Accessed via Internet archive of Alexander Yakovlev Foundation: <http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/69274>. Last accessed 4.26.2012.

⁴ RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 3. D. 1056.

contextualized quotes from TASS or the Soviet press. Even these were sometimes censored.⁵

Foreign correspondents found the new rules extremely frustrating and believed that the Soviet authorities were preventing them from doing their jobs. The restrictions on travel confined the journalists to Moscow. The new censorship regulations prevented them from speaking their minds, obscured their reporting, and encumbered their work with complicated red tape. The censors' decisions remained unpredictable and often unintelligible. A correspondent could not trust that even a direct quote from *Pravda* would be cleared. Although the journalists' private correspondence and communication with the editors moved through the diplomatic pouch, they were not allowed to use it for transmission of copy. Any correspondent caught doing so would face immediate deportation from the Soviet Union, so very few journalists took the risk.⁶

Soviet leadership used censorship to exercise control, however limited, on the production of Soviet image abroad. Stalin personally insisted on close monitoring of outgoing copy because he believed that the dispatches of foreign journalists could have

⁵ Harrison Salisbury to Edwin L. James, March 28, 1949. Harrison Salisbury Papers. Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Columbia University. Box 187.

⁶ The letters designated to the diplomatic pouch travelled to the U.S. Embassy in Helsinki, where they were sealed in a specially marked bag and sent to the embassy in Moscow. Although international conventions prohibited Soviet authorities from opening and scrutinizing the contents of these bags, the bags were sometimes reported as lost or mislabeled, which made their use for transfer of copy rather risky. Nevertheless, foreign correspondents occasionally broke the rules. For example, Harrison Salisbury used the pouch to transmit examples of Soviet censorship of his copy by attaching both the original item and the censored result. He analyzed the censor's interventions for clues to domestic developments within the Soviet Union, which were not reported in the official newspapers, as well as Soviet attitudes toward international development and the United States. These and other analyses of Soviet current affairs, which Salisbury sent via the pouch were incorporated into the articles of the *New York Times*' resident specialist on Soviet affairs, Harry Schwartz, and published under Schwartz's name and New York dateline. Harrison Salisbury to Emanuel Freedman, July 9, 1949 and September 2, 1949, Box 187, Salisbury Papers; Bassow, *Moscow Correspondents*, 124-125; Seeger, *Discovering Russia*, 336.

an adverse effect on the prestige of the Soviet Union and weaken its positions vis-à-vis the British and the Americans.⁷ As far as the Soviet leaders were concerned, censorship ensured that the copy from Moscow communicated no interpretations or assessment – only the facts, as the leaders saw them.⁸

U.S. civil servants and publishers interpreted the establishment of these new rules on censorship as a calculated attempt to manipulate American public opinion. They perceived it as a dangerous method that used the dispatches of American journalists to beam Soviet propaganda into the U.S. George Kennan, the chargé d'affaires at the U.S. embassy, stressed in a telegram to the State Department that the new rules could have dangerous effects: “the present system gives Soviet censors possibility of completely distorting sense of any story filed by an American correspondent in this city.”⁹ The U.S. State Department and American news agencies agreed. Secretary of State James Byrnes wrote to Kennan that the heads of news organizations that still had correspondents in Moscow “feel that as protection to themselves and public the new system must be publicized, that readers may know that they can place no confidence in what they read from Moscow.”¹⁰

The ranks of foreign correspondents in Moscow dwindled in direct proportion with the deterioration of relationships between the former allies. In December 1946 the

⁷ O.V. Khlevniuk et. al. (comps.), *Politburo TsK VKP(b) i Soviet Ministrov SSSR, 1945-1953* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2002), 195, 197, 201-202.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ The Chargé in the Soviet Union (Kennan) to the Secretary of State, March 4, 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1946*, Volume VI: *Eastern Europe, The Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), 711.

¹⁰ The Secretary of State to the Chargé in the Soviet Union (Kennan), March 13, 1946, *FRUS 1946*, VI, 715.

Press Department banned all direct broadcasting from Moscow, a move which caused the departure of CBS correspondent Richard Hottelet.¹¹ The bureau of the *New York Times* closed in 1947 when its correspondent, Drew Middleton, was refused a re-entry visa after a vacation abroad.

Robert Magidoff, a Russian-born American, had worked in Moscow since 1935 for NBC, British Exchange Telegraph Agency and the publishing house McGraw-Hill.¹² On April 16, 1948, the Soviet daily *Izvestiia* carried a statement by Magidoff's secretary Cecilia Nelson, who was born in America but by 1948 was a Soviet citizen. Nelson accused Magidoff of spying on behalf of U.S. military authorities and sending his espionage reports via the diplomatic pouch.¹³ Magidoff denied the accusations and left Russia within two days.¹⁴ In 1949 the Soviet authorities arrested Anna Louise Strong, a member of the U.S. Communist Party and staunch supporter of the Soviet regime, who spent several years in Moscow, working for Soviet publications in foreign languages. Strong was charged with espionage and deported.

The same year, *The New York Herald Tribune* closed its Moscow bureau after the Soviet authorities refused a return visa to bureau chief Joseph Newman.¹⁵ A few months later, *The Christian Science Monitor* recalled Edmund Stevens, who had lived in Moscow

¹¹ The Acting Secretary of State to the Chargé in the Soviet Union (Durbrov), November 10, 1946. *FRUS 1946*, VI, 804.

¹² Bassow, *Moscow Correspondents*, 124-125; "Expelled Reporter Quits Russia; Spy Charge Trumped Up, He says," *The New York Times*, April 19, 1948, p. 8.

¹³ Bassow, *Moscow Correspondents*, 124-125; Seeger, *Discovering Russia*, 336; "Soviet Ousts NBC Reporter; Russian Aide Calls Him Spy" *The New York Times*, April 16, 1948, p. 1.

¹⁴ In his interview with the American press in Berlin, Magidoff stated that prior to the publication of Nelson's accusation, he and his wife were constantly followed by the secret police. "Expelled Reporter Quits Russia; Spy Charge Trumped Up, He says," *The New York Times*, April 19, 1948, p. 8.

¹⁵ Newman had worked in the Soviet Union since 1946.

since 1934 and worked for various American and British newspapers. The *Monitor* closed its Moscow bureau because it was unsatisfied with the reduced amount and quality of coverage it got after the tightening of the censorship. Reuters also closed its bureau in 1949 and its American correspondent, Andrew Steiger, remained in Moscow as free-lance journalist.¹⁶

The *New York Times* resumed its Moscow coverage in 1949. Having declined visa requests of several *Times*' candidates, the Soviet authorities finally agreed to issue a visa to Harrison Salisbury. With Salisbury's arrival, the entire American press corps in Moscow consisted of five people.¹⁷ In addition to the *New York Times*, only the wire services the *United Press* (UP) and the *Associated Press* (AP) retained their bureaus.¹⁸ The remaining journalists – Thomas Whitney and Eddy Gilmore of the AP, Henry Shapiro of the UP, and Steiger – were prisoners of sorts. Their wives were Soviet citizens denied exit visas by the Soviet authorities. These journalists believed that they could protect their wives from arrest or deportation only by staying in the Soviet Union. Even though Salisbury did not have a Russian wife, he was not free to leave as he pleased. After the bitter experience of 1947, the editors of the *New York Times* were concerned

¹⁶ Bassow, *Moscow Correspondents*, 125, 133.

¹⁷ *The Daily Worker* sent a new Moscow correspondent in 1952. The political allegiances of *The Worker*, and the privileged treatment it was given by the Soviet authorities, set its correspondent apart from the rest.

¹⁸ Bassow, *Moscow Correspondents*, 124-125.

that if Salisbury left for a vacation, his visa would not be renewed and the *Times* would lose its Moscow bureau again.¹⁹

Soviet mistrust of foreigners and fears of subversion continued to escalate. In 1947 a new law on “the revelation of state secrets” effectively criminalized interactions between Soviet citizens and foreigners.²⁰ Nineteen forty-eight saw the launch of Soviet “campaign against cosmopolitanism” a euphemism for a purge in the world of arts, politics, culture and science, which focused primarily on Soviet Jews. The campaign targeted “Western sympathizers” and attacked “kowtowing before the West.” The amorphous definition of these categories meant that Soviet print featured only utterly negative references to the West. The escalation of anti-American propaganda campaign paralleled the campaign against domestic “Western sympathizers.” Both propaganda initiatives completed the isolation of journalists and other foreigners. U.S. embassy personnel and correspondents found that Russians eschewed any contact and regarded them with suspicion.²¹ In 1949, Salisbury reported to his editors that both campaigns visibly increased the Soviet public’s antagonism toward the United States:

The Soviet people are being not only taught to hate and fear America; they are being taught to despise the very word American. [...] I do not think it can any

¹⁹ In response to Salisbury’s pleas to leave for vacation, the editors reminded him that if he failed to get a re-entry visa, they wouldn’t be able to find a new assignment for him and his employment with the *Times* would effectively cease. Salisbury was able to leave without the threat of losing his job in June 1950. Harrison Salisbury to Edwin L. James and to C. L. Sulzberger, November 19, 1949; Edwin L. James to C. L. Sulzberger, February 13, 1950. Salisbury Papers. Box 187.

²⁰ Directive of the Supreme soviet of the USSR “on the responsibility for revealing state secret and losing documents, containing state secret,” *Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Sovieta Soiuza Sovetskikh Sotrsialisticheskikh Respublic*. No. 20 (474). 16 June 1947. For American interpretations of the law see: The Chargé in the Soviet Union (Durbrow) to the Secretary of State, November 29, 1947, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1947*, Volume IV: *Eastern Europe, The Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), 622-623.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 623-624.

longer be said that "the people are friendly to Americans." [...] If you compare the propaganda campaign against the United States with the propaganda against Hitler in Germany you will find that the Soviet press never conducted a drive of this magnitude against the Nazis before the outbreak of war. [...] The whole American press corps would disappear from here in a moment, if it could.²²

Anti-American propaganda alarmed the journalists in particular because of the central stage the campaign gave to attacks against the American press. Salisbury's letters home stressed that the general atmosphere in Moscow suggested that the Soviet state marked American journalists as its enemies. Correspondents encountered signs of special hostility toward them almost on a daily basis:

Serving as an American correspondent in Moscow in these times is very much like living under siege behind enemy lines. The idea is constantly hammered into the mind of the public that we are spies. Going to the theatre and the movies you get the impression that Russia is swarming with American correspondents, all of the equipped with camel's hair coats, snap-brim hats and leicas, peering through their dark glasses at "military secrets". I don't believe there is a single anti-American play on the boards here - and there are more than 20 on the repertoire - which hasn't got an American journalist spy in the cast of characters.²³

Salisbury explained that in light of these venomous portrayals of American journalists, he and other correspondents felt that they would be the likeliest targets of the next "spy" fabrication by the Soviet secret police. "Correspondents here feel quite literally as though they were living in a powder-house which may explode at any moment," he concluded his letter.²⁴

Increasing Soviet hostility prompted the journalists to reduce their social contacts to the company of other foreigners. Fears of Soviet entrapment added to the pressures of life within narrow confines of a small community. The defections of Annabelle Buccar

²² Harrison Salisbury to C. L. Sulzberger, May 23, 1949. Salisbury Papers. Box 187.

²³ Harrison Salisbury to Edwin L. James, September 22, 1949. Salisbury Papers. Box 187.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

and of another U.S. embassy worker, James McMillin, reverberated through the foreigner circles. Correspondents and embassy personnel believed that in both cases, Soviet secret police exploited love affairs between Russians and Americans and orchestrated the defections for propaganda purposes.²⁵ Several members of the expat community grew so fearful of Soviet entrapment, that they eschewed Russians and foreigners alike. Others worried that Americans married to Russian women might become the next trump card of Soviet propaganda. Soon after his arrival to Moscow, Salisbury wrote to his editors that the *AP* correspondent Thomas Whitney seemed like a potential liability to the American press corps:

He [Whitney] is quite unstable and considerably under the influence of his Russian girl. [...] Were he to “go native” he might very well turn up with something on the order to Annabelle Bucar’s book, possibly ‘The Truth About American Correspondents.’ Or he might be used as evidence in some concocted proceedings against the AP or other members of the press corps. This might sound fantastic but those are the kind of possibilities which one must think of in Moscow these days.”²⁶

Later Salisbury regretted this assessment, for he and Whitney went on to become very close friends. This initial response shows the emotional toll of the anti-American campaign on social interactions of journalists and other foreigners in Moscow and how strained and ridden with suspicion these interactions became.

Journalists, who were expelled or pulled out of the Soviet Union, confirmed that American correspondents in Moscow lived under a constant threat. In 1948, Edmund

²⁵ Robert Magidoff, *In Anger and Pity: A Report on Russia* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1949), 53-54. In each case U.S. Embassy version of the events pointed out that Buccar’s as well as McMillin’s love interests were explicitly instructed to fraternize with foreigners and try to lure any embassy worker into romantic attachment. Carruthers, *Cold War Captives*, 46-47.

²⁶ Harrison Salisbury to A.H. Sulzberger, April 15, 1949. Salisbury Papers. Box 187.

Stevens warned the readers of *The Christian Science Monitor* that since journalists lacked diplomatic immunity, they were “sitting targets for any reprisals or frame-ups the Soviet may wish to organize.”²⁷ To illustrate the potential dangers to American journalists in Moscow, Magidoff alluded to the suspicious circumstances of Buccar’s and McMillin’s defections, whereas Stevens referred to the espionage accusations against Magidoff and Anna Louise Strong. The latter case, according to Stevens, demonstrated that even “fellow travellers” were not immune to the secret police.²⁸

As the Cold War escalated and mutual antagonism increased, the number of people who could convey first-hand information about the rival superpower steadily declined. Out of about twenty American journalists who were in Moscow in 1945 only five remained in 1949; these remaining journalists regarded their assignment as a mission behind enemy lines. The growing isolation from the Soviet scene and withdrawal into insular expatriate communities reduced the scope and quality of reporting from Moscow. The journalists’ sense of entrapment and insecurity informed their post-assignment descriptions of life in the Soviet Union and passed on to their American readers.

However, it was not long before foreign correspondents realized that the American public underestimated the dangers and sacrifices involved in reporting the news. In Moscow, the journalists entered into daily battles with Soviet censors and were

²⁷ Edmund Stevens, “This is Russia Uncensored: Triple Squeeze Ousts Foreign Reporters,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 24, 1950, p.1. Robert Magidoff wrote that long before his own case broke up, he had foreseen that there would be intimidations or frame-ups involving American or British journalists. Magidoff, *In Anger and Pity*, 47-49; 57.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 53-54; Edmund Stevens, “This is Russia Uncensored: Triple Squeeze Ousts Foreign Reporters,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 24, 1950, p.1.

denounced as capitalist propagandists and American spies. At home, pundits and readers regarded the journalists as vehicles of Communist propaganda, questioned their loyalties to the United States, and wondered whether their work had any value at all.

In the United States, fears of Soviet subversion escalated and anti-Communists cast a worried gaze upon the national newsrooms.²⁹ In February 1950, the *New York Journal-American* warned its readers that Communists infiltrated U.S. Radio Networks.³⁰ That same year, CBS introduced a loyalty oath for its employers in order to “assure people that its broadcasts were not being influenced by subversives.”³¹ The American Newspaper Guild, the largest journalists’ labor union, declared its support for “the fight against the proved Communist conspiracy at home” and purged Communists from the ranks of its national and local leadership.³² Nevertheless, the FBI continued to monitor the guild members and in 1950 produced a report that listed dozens of journalists as communists. Although a full fledged investigation into Communist infiltration of the press did not begin before 1955, the Newspaper guild, along with selected journalists and editors, appeared periodically in the discussions of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), Joseph McCarthy’s investigative subcommittee, and the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee (SISS).³³ As the investigation of Communists in the press gained momentum, a simple mentioning of a journalist’s name “in the context of the

²⁹ On Cold War hysteria in American press see Aronson, *The Press and the Cold War*, 51-63; Edward Alwood, *Dark Days in the Newsroom. McCarthyism Aimed at the Press* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 7.

³⁰ Edwin R. Bayley, *Joe McCarthy and the Press* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), 3.

³¹ Alwood, *Dark Days*, 63.

³² *Ibid.*, 53.

³³ Aronson, *The Press and the Cold War*, 87-102; 127-152; Alwood, *Dark Days*, 67-75; 82-107;

Communist party” before one of the committees often led to that journalist’s firing from the newspaper.³⁴

The working conditions of Moscow correspondents fueled concerns with Communist infiltration of American press and gave rise to two competing scenarios, which imagined the journalists as potentially dangerous to national interests. In the first scenario, professional journalists, readers, and anti-Communist vigilantes pointed out that in publishing censored copy or quoting Soviet leaders and press American media gave stage to the Soviet positions and helped enemy propaganda infiltrate the United States.³⁵ The second scenario suggested that prolonged presence in the Soviet Union and marriage to Russian women compromised the loyalties of American correspondents. Did the journalists develop pro-Communist sympathies? Did they water down their copy in order to protect their families? Could their reporting still be trusted?³⁶ As the following letter to

³⁴ Alwood, *Dark Days*, 61.

³⁵ See for example, “Passed by Censor,” *Time Magazine*, June 19, 1950, Vol. 55, Issue 25, p. 76; “Censored,” *Time Magazine*, February 27, 1950, Vol. 55, Issue 9, p. 28. “Does Stalin Mean It?,” *The New Leader*, January 5, 1953, p. 30; Counterattack, Undated. NYT. Foreign Desk. Box 82. Folder 3. Between 1951 and 1952 a research project at UC Berkeley’s Department of Journalism investigated the potential exploitation of U.S. news media by Soviet propagandists. The research proposal warned U.S. news organizations that foreign governments might use the rules of objectivity to manipulate American public opinion by planting deliberate distortions in the press. Research methodology consisted of series of questionnaires, which asked the editors of U.S. news organizations to assess the effects of reporting Soviet statements in American press. News organizations, which had Moscow bureaus, were asked how did they distinguish between hard-core facts and Soviet propaganda in their Moscow copy. NYT. Foreign Desk. Box 78. Folder 5.

³⁶ An interesting example of these anxieties emerged in Salisbury’s first letter to the publisher of the *New York Times*, Arthur Hays Sulzberger. It is evident from the letter that before Salisbury departed to Moscow, Sulzberger asked him to assess whether the AP correspondents in Moscow tuned down their copy in order to protect their Russian spouses. After “a close study of the situation in the AP bureau,” Salisbury reported that Eddy Gilmore “is certainly not trying to curry [sic] favor with the Russians by writing dispatches which he think might please them.” By contrast, Salisbury got the impression that Whitney was “quite unstable and considerably under the influence of his Russian girl” and “fairly consistently reflects the ‘brighter side of Soviet affairs.’” This letter demonstrates yet again how prominently the Russian wives figured in concerns with the loyalty of Moscow correspondents. Harrison Salisbury to A. H. Sulzberger, April 15, 1949. Salisbury Papers. Box 187.

the *New York Times* suggests, the very feasibility of reporting from Moscow came under close scrutiny:

Throughout his stay in Moscow Mr. Salisbury has, to all intents and purposes, functioned as a mouthpiece for the official Soviet propaganda line at any given moment. His "reporting" of the Soviet scene has consisted chiefly in relaying abstracts of the latest editorials from *Pravda* and *Izvestia* [...] There is never the slightest hint that these products of the Stalinist propaganda mill might require analysis and exposure as part of the over-all Kremlin pattern of aggression and deceit.³⁷

Salisbury's critics expected the *Times* to accompany every item from Moscow with a reminder that its correspondent was complying with the restrictions of Soviet censorship.³⁸ Such an indication, suggested the readers, would alert the public to the potential biases in the copy. Otherwise, they pointed out, the *Times* was deceiving its readers by presenting Soviet propaganda under the guise of factual reporting.

Salisbury himself repeatedly lobbied the *Times* to preface his dispatches with an indication that his reports were censored.³⁹ He was well aware of the criticisms against him and believed that the absence of such a caveat tarnished his professional reputation and strengthened the impression that he was a Soviet sympathizer:

Every day these dispatches, pruned by the censors, are published by The Times. And [many readers] come to think that The Times correspondent in Moscow is a Red or a Pink or naive or stupid. I don't think it's good for The Times and I know it is bad for me. Particularly with feeling as it is in the U.S.A. right now.⁴⁰

Despite Salisbury's repeated appeals and the growing numbers of letters criticizing the coverage from Moscow, the editors of the *Times* refused to attach the censorship caveat

³⁷ Louis Jay Herman to the editors, *The New York Times*, August 7, 1951, p. 24.

³⁸ T.G. Bagration to the editors, *The New York Times*, June 15, 1951.

³⁹ Harrison Salisbury to Edwin L. James, March 28, 1949. Salisbury Papers. Box 187.

⁴⁰ Harrison Salisbury to Turner Catledge, November 15, 1951. Salisbury Papers. Box 188.

to his byline.⁴¹ It is conceivable that they refused precisely because in the anti-Communist atmosphere of the time, a daily reminder of Soviet censorship would have made their decision to maintain the Moscow bureau more difficult to defend. The *New York Times* foreign editor Emanuel Freedman believed that despite the censorship, discrediting anything that comes from Moscow “would be a mistake since we do get a considerable amount of hard information.”⁴²

In 1950, a large dispute broke out over Salisbury’s series on the Soviet reaction to the Korean War. The series and the dispute shattered the editors’ conviction that the Moscow bureau was providing them with useful facts and tested the editors’ decision not to call attention to the censorship of the Moscow copy. The series came out at a crucial time. The war began only a few months earlier and the U.S. establishment feared that the Soviet Union might join China and North Korea. The principal message of Salisbury’s series was that the Soviet Union was not going to participate in the war. Salisbury gave as evidence the massive projects for civilian reconstruction all over the country, the increase in availability of foods and produce in the Soviet stores, and the general absence of war rumors on the Soviet street. All of these, wrote Salisbury, pointed to the Soviets’ decision to concentrate on domestic improvement and abstain from military conflicts overseas.⁴³

⁴¹ Harrison Salisbury to Edwin L. James on March 28, 1949 and June 7, 1949. Salisbury Papers. Box 187.

⁴² Emanuel Freedman to Charles Merz, January 21, 1951. New York Times Company records. Foreign Desk Records. Manuscripts and Archives Division. The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations. Box 78. Folder 5.

⁴³ The published installments of the series appeared in the *New York Times* on the following dates: “Moscow is in Midst of Building Effort,” October 11, 1950, p. 18; “Domestic Matters Intrigue Russians,” October 12, 1950, p. 19; “No ‘Scare Buying’ in Moscow Stores,” October 13, 1950, p. 13; “Russian Citizen Blame U.S. in Korea,” October 14, 1950, p. 6

The last article in the series focused on public opinion and argued that “Soviet citizens ... took the view that the United States was the aggressor in the Far East.”⁴⁴ In matters of foreign policy, explained Salisbury, the Soviet public sides with its leaders: “there is a little difference between the views of expressed by ordinary Soviet citizens and those place on record by such leading organs as *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*.”⁴⁵ Salisbury cautioned against American hopes for a developing rift between the Soviet people and the government: “any supposition abroad that such a cleavage does in fact exist or is likely to develop, is wishful thinking at best and may be extremely dangerous.”⁴⁶ Even if they occasionally listened to the broadcasts of the Voice of America, Soviet people still had “no sympathy for the American viewpoint,”⁴⁷ he concluded.

Salisbury’s discussion of Soviet public opinion challenged numerous widely accepted notions of the time. The assertion that the regime and the people were not at odds was particularly hard to digest. State Department officials and Soviet observers close to the Truman administration believed that there was a large gap between the suffering Soviet people and their ruthless oppressive leaders. Many hopes concentrated on this imagined gap and on the possibility to use it to bring down the Soviet regime by promoting pro-American sentiments and popular discontent from within.⁴⁸ Several civil servants expected that the Russian language broadcasts of the *Voice of America* would

⁴⁴ “Russian Citizen Blame U.S. in Korea,” *The New York Times*, October 14, 1950, p.6.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ David S. Foglesong, *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire". The Crusade for a 'Free Russia' since 1881* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 109-111.

encourage such pressure.⁴⁹ Analysts at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and the majority of former Moscow correspondents strongly supported these views.⁵⁰ By contrast, Salisbury argued that the Soviet people did not adopt the *Voice of America* as the bearer of truth, and equated its broadcasts with propaganda. Such an assertion was particularly offensive to the supporters of the *Voice*, who believed that Soviet listeners welcomed the station as the truthful alternative to the lies of Soviet propaganda.

Salisbury's departure from conventional wisdoms was so radical that editors at the *New York Times* debated whether the series was fit for publication.⁵¹ The detractors demanded Salisbury's withdrawal from Moscow, arguing that the series amounted to Communist propaganda and proved that Salisbury's allegiances were compromised.⁵² One installment was scrapped altogether, although at the time, Salisbury felt that it contained the best evidence of the lack of Soviet intentions to join the war.⁵³ After a considerable delay and a query from Salisbury, the *Times* published the series with the following introduction:

As in case with all dispatches from Moscow, these articles were subject to Soviet censorship and were written with that fact in mind. The correspondent reported unusual cooperation in transmitting these particular dispatches; however, the Times did not receive certain requested material to make them more complete,

⁴⁹ The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman) to the Secretary of State, January 20, 1946, *FRUS* 1946, VI, 676-678; The Chargé in the Soviet Union (Durbrow) to the Secretary of State, May 22, 1947, *FRUS* 1947, IV, 558-569.

⁵⁰ Edmund Stevens, "This is Russia Uncensored: U.S. Voice Haunts Red War Planners," *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 31, 1950, p. 1; Magidoff, *In Anger and Pity*, 268. The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Smith) to the Secretary of State, December 27, 1947, *FRUS* 1947, IV, 647-648.

U.S. Ambassador in Moscow, Walter Bedell-Smith, was an enthusiastic supporter of *VoA* as a counter-measure to Soviet propaganda and considered it a conduit of future change in the USSR. See: Walter Bedell-Smith, *Moscow Mission, 1946-1949*, (London: William Heinemann Limited, 1950), 169-172.

⁵¹ Harrison E. Salisbury, *A Journey for Our Times: a Memoir* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), 373-375; Turner Catledge to Harrison Salisbury on October 19, 1950. Salisbury Papers. Box 188.

⁵² Salisbury, *Journey for Our Times*, 373-374.

⁵³ Harrison Salisbury to Turner Catledge, October 31, 1950. Salisbury Papers. Box 188.

such, for instance, as specific prices and wages and other items for American comparison.⁵⁴

While this introduction used censorship to explain the unorthodox views expressed in the dispatches, it also hinted at the editors' mistrust of their Moscow correspondent. The reference to Soviet "unusual cooperation in transmitting these dispatches," suggested that the censors could have been pleased with Salisbury's original copy and did not see any reasons for intervention. The wording also made it unclear whether the lack of "certain requested materials" derived from difficulties posed by the censors or from purposeful omission by the correspondent.

As the editors have foreseen, the publication provoked indignation on all sides of political map. The military attaché of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow sent a letter to the Defense Department complaining that the series could "lull the American people to a false sense of security."⁵⁵ The Communist Party newspaper, *Daily Worker*, accused the *Times* of trying to suppress the series and for relegating the description of USSR's unwillingness to join the war to its back pages.⁵⁶ The conservative *Time* magazine labeled the dispatches a "useful piece of Communist propaganda" and criticized Salisbury's "naïve conclusions."⁵⁷ Eugene Lyons, a well-known journalist, who worked in Moscow between 1923 and 1934, also accused Salisbury of trumpeting Soviet propaganda.⁵⁸ Lyons argued that Salisbury's assessment of Soviet public opinion was useless and

⁵⁴ "Russian Citizens Blame U.S. in Korea," *The New York Times*, October 14, 1950, p.6.

⁵⁵ Salisbury, *Journey for Our Times*, 375.

⁵⁶ "Did 'Times' Try to Suppress Series on USSR?," *The Daily Worker*, October 20, 1950, p.4.

⁵⁷ "Worker Windfall," *Time Magazine*, October 30, 1950, Vol. 56, Issue 18, p. 87.

⁵⁸ Lyons began his career as a socialist and a fellow traveller, yet was soon disappointed with the Soviet regime and became one of its harshest critics. Eugene Lyons to the editors, *The New York Times*, October 23, 1950, p. 22.

outrageous because people living under Communist dictatorship would not have been able to speak their minds.⁵⁹ Other letters to the *Times* echoed Lyons' critiques. "Even Pravda would not hesitate to carry those dispatches," wrote one angry reader.⁶⁰

These critiques indicated that American readers found it difficult to qualify or reconsider their existing notions of self-understanding vis-à-vis the Soviet communist world. Salisbury's argument that the Soviet people supported their government conflicted with the anti-Communist campaign, which taught American readers to contrast their good fortunes and freedoms with the suffering of the oppressed people on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Confronted with Salisbury's radical suggestions, readers and colleagues resolved in favor of familiar patterns and argued that Salisbury had gone soft on Communism and that the citizens of dictatorship were not free to tell him what they really thought.

The controversy over the Korea series shows the high stakes invested in reporting from Moscow. The public outcry against Salisbury's supposed assistance to Soviet propaganda grew out of prevailing fears of Communist subversion and suspicions that Moscow correspondents were helping the Soviets to infiltrate American public opinion. The involvement of a military attaché suggested that certain members of the U.S. political establishment expected Moscow correspondents to corroborate the government's perceptions of the USSR and to draw public attention to the Soviet menace. The *Times'* cautious approach to the series epitomized the tensions between freedom of the press and the news media's willingness to help the U.S. government in the Cold War.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Yedidia Hamburg to the editors, *The New York Times*, November 14, 1950, p. 30.

The outcry over the Korea series registered with the editors of the *New York Times* and prompted them to doubt Salisbury and his subsequent dispatches. About a month after the publication of the series, Salisbury got the impression that in handling the materials from Moscow, the editors preferred to use the AP's copy.⁶¹ When he asked the newspaper why his material was bypassed, the foreign editor Emanuel Freedman replied:

Lack of qualification in some of your copy as it reaches us sometimes troubles us. We shall continue to go on the assumption that the omissions represent the work of censor, and hence will feel free to qualify whenever we feel we are able to do it accurately. In other cases we shall simply continue to eliminate questionable material.⁶²

On the one hand, Freedman's comment corresponded to the professional logic of the time: Salisbury's articles were disqualified because they failed to comply with the professional standard of objectivity. The rules of the trade demanded that journalists present two sides of any argument, and find out if an argument contradicts a known record.⁶³ Yet, despite the traces of censorship in all materials emanating from Moscow, the *Times* did not give up on these items altogether, but rather selected the ones that seemed "less questionable." By giving preference to the agency copy, Freedman signaled to Salisbury that, Soviet censorship notwithstanding, Salisbury's dispatches could do with some more "qualifications."

Freedman's attitude epitomized the general approach to reporting from Moscow: if a correspondent delivers an unqualified positive item, the reason must be censorship intervention. And, while they "continue to go on the assumption that the omissions

⁶¹ Harrison Salisbury to C. L. Sulzberger, November 22, 1950. Salisbury Papers. Box 187.

⁶² Emanuel Freedman to Harrison Salisbury on January 4, 1951. Salisbury Papers. Box 187.

⁶³ Halberstam, *The Powers that be*, 35.

represent the work of censor,” the editors surely hoped that the omissions did not stem from the decline of the correspondent’s immunity to Soviet propaganda. Like American officials, the *Times*’ editors considered censorship part of the Soviet propaganda machine. Eager to protect the readers from the Soviet propaganda, the editors tried to minimize its effects and applied their own censorship by means of “qualification,” “elimination,” or selection.

Salisbury was convinced that the anti-Communist sentiments at home shaped the readers’ and editors’ expectations about reporting from the USSR. He believed that the negative reactions to his reporting stemmed from its failure to comply with the prevailing conception of the terrible life under a Communist dictatorship:

The fact is, that conditions in places which I have visited are by no means as black as seems to be generally supposed among the public at large. Thus, when I write about, for example, the really quite pleasant conditions of life in Georgia it seems to the casual reader that I am gilding the lily or singing paeans of praise for the Soviet system instead of merely offering a factual report.⁶⁴

Salisbury realized that his reporting might be a liability for the *New York Times*, especially since it was increasingly moving into the spotlight of investigations of anti-American activity: “With conditions as they are today, I certainly don’t want to place The Times in the position of being accused of publishing pro-Soviet propaganda and I most definitely do not want to make myself the object of such criticism.”⁶⁵ Salisbury was willing to circumscribe his journalistic activity in order to protect himself and the *Times* from accusations. In the concluding paragraph of the letter he offered to put on hold any future trips around Russia, since travel-based items particularly sparked accusations of

⁶⁴ Harrison Salisbury to Emanuel Freedman, June 27, 1951. NYT. Foreign Desk. Box 82. Folder 1.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

helping the Soviet propaganda.⁶⁶ Freedman replied that the unbalanced picture, resulting from Soviet censorship, bothered the editors more than the readers' critiques.

Nevertheless, he agreed that "in the present circumstances, it would be best to forego the special trips."⁶⁷ Freedman's reasoning and decision to put the special trips on hold demonstrates how lightly the *Times* treaded around its reporting from Moscow. On the one hand, the editor denied that public criticism had any affect on the coverage. On the other hand, his decisions shaped the *Times*' coverage and eliminated items that could potentially result in accusations of promoting Soviet propaganda.

The general reception of Salisbury's Korea series combined anxieties about the subverted loyalties of American correspondents in Moscow with fear of Soviet propaganda's infiltration of American public opinion. In 1951, these concerns were explicitly articulated in an open letter from the *New York Times* expert on Soviet affairs, Harry S. Schwartz, to the editor of the *Moscow News*. The letter was published in the trade journal of the American Newspapers Guild, the *Guild Reporter*. It summarized the journalists' distress with the lot of their colleagues in Moscow and called on the Soviet government to abolish censorship.

Schwartz argued that Soviet treatment of journalists undermined Americans' trust in news reports from Moscow: "The whole world knows that no reporter may send a word from your country unless it goes through careful censorship. ... Under these conditions, how can we believe what our correspondents send from Moscow is even that

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Emanuel Freedman to Harrison Salisbury, July 11, 1951. NYT. Foreign Desk. Box 82. Folder 1.

limited portion of the whole truth which they are able to learn?”⁶⁸ Soviet refusal to grant exit visas to the journalists’ families, Schwartz continued, further compromised the work of foreign press corps: “How can such men write objectively? How can such an inhumane attitude be justified?”⁶⁹ With conditions of work as they were, pointed out Schwartz, correspondents could not be trusted to report truthfully from the Soviet Union.

A few weeks later, a liberal anti-Communist magazine, *The New Leader*, carried Schwartz’s letter with a preface by a columnist Arnold Beichman, well known for his anti-Communist writing. Whereas Schwartz’s letter focused on censorship and working conditions, Beichman’s commentary concentrated on the trustworthiness of the correspondents’ dispatches and the problem of the journalists’ Russian wives. Beichman stressed that the American people were not getting truthful representations of Russia, and remained “privy to blackmail reporting,” as long as their information was coming from “newspapermen whose personal happiness depends entirely upon the Kremlin barbarians.”⁷⁰ A picture of Edmund Stevens accompanied Beichman’s article. Its caption, “Ed Stevens sent pro-Soviet dispatches until his Russian wife could leave the country,” stressed that the Moscow copy was deeply subjective and not trustworthy. Both Schwartz and Beichman expressed concerns that instead of factual reporting from Moscow, Americans were getting Soviet propaganda. While both blamed Soviet policies for this situation, they nevertheless expressed the general mistrust of Moscow correspondents and work.

⁶⁸ “Dateline Moscow,” *The New Leader*, November 12, 1951, p. 8.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

In 1953, the *New York Times*' editorial writer John B. Oakes considered the effects of McCarthyism and observed that it moved the news industry to the right:

McCarthyism has had a profound effect on all of us – on our writing, our speaking and even thinking. We are all very much more careful about what we write, what we say, what we join, than we used to be because we all start from the premise that whatever we do may be subject to damaging criticism from the extreme right. Our takeoff point has moved without our even realizing it.”⁷¹

The discussions on *The Guild Reporter* and *The New Leader*, as well as the exchanges between Salisbury and his editors demonstrate how sensitive Moscow reporting was to the ongoing anti-Communist campaign. News agencies and the *Times* believed that their Moscow bureaus were essential for the prestige of their organization and for the media's commitment to keeping the public informed. At the same time, editors and journalists wanted to protect themselves from accusations of Communist sympathies. It was increasingly difficult to maintain this balance in the early 1950s, when the scrutiny of the press's loyalty intensified and the public's anti-Communist sentiments soared. In the case of the *New York Times*, it is evident how the editors and Salisbury altered “the takeoff point” of Moscow reporting and adapted their coverage to meet the readers' expectations from descriptions of Soviet life. While the United States did not have a centralized censoring institution comparable to the Soviet Glavlit, editorial and journalistic practices performed the function of censorship and made sure that coverage toed the anti-Soviet line.

⁷¹ Quoted in Bayley, *Joe McCarthy*, 216-217.

“Russia Uncensored”

The reports produced by American foreign correspondents reflected the influences of anti-Americanism abroad and anti-Communism at home. Derogatory publications in the Soviet press, journalists’ sense of vulnerability and isolation from the Russian people prompted American correspondents to regard the Soviet Union as a menacing and hostile place. Faced with their readers’ and colleagues’ concerns about the allegiances of Moscow press corps, the journalists stressed their opposition to the Soviet regime; asserted their loyalties to the United States; and emphasized their potential contribution to American anti-Soviet propaganda. Both trends manifested in the accounts that foreign correspondents authored after the conclusion of their assignments.

Since the journalists knew that Soviet censors would delete any critical assessment of the USSR, including references to censorship itself, most correspondents did not even attempt to discuss these issues in their copy from Moscow. Upon their return home, most correspondents authored lengthy analyses, in books or article series, which summarized their assignment and views of the Soviet Union. The journalists introduced these accounts as the ultimate report on Russia, unhindered by censorship. Since these accounts were much more critical of the Soviet Union than were the dispatches from Moscow, they fit better with readers’ expectations from descriptions of life under Communist dictatorship. At the same time, the harsh tone of these accounts perpetuated the notion that censorship curtailed the Moscow copy and created a dynamic whereby pundits and readers attached greater importance to what the journalists wrote *after*, as opposed to *during* their assignments. Whereas the former became equated with factual objective reporting, the latter was perceived as part of the Soviet plan to beam propaganda to the United States.

In 1949, after their departure from the Soviet Union, both Edmund Stevens and Joseph Newman summarized their views on the USSR in series of articles. Stevens' series comprised forty installments and ran in *The Christian Science Monitor* between October 1949 and January 1950. The series won the Pulitzer Prize and came out as a separate book edition in 1950. General Walter Bedell Smith, U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1946 to 1948, wrote a warm foreword to the book – a clear sign of establishment's endorsement of Stevens' work.⁷² Newman's series comprised thirteen installments published in *The New York Herald Tribune* and in *The Washington Post*.⁷³ Both Newman's and Stevens' series carried the title "Russia Uncensored" and emphasized the primacy of censorship in the work of Moscow correspondents. Robert Magidoff also authored a post-assignment account. His book, *In Anger and Pity*, was published in 1949. Magidoff offered a retrospective analysis of his time in Moscow and recounted in detail the events that led to his expulsion.⁷⁴

All three journalists styled their accounts as efforts that would dispel the lies of Communist propaganda and present their readers with facts about the Soviet Union. The journalists emphasized the contradictions between the Soviet ideology and the daily lives of Soviet people and focused on the ways that the Soviet regime deprived its people of what Americans considered the most basic rights. In so doing, foreign correspondents replicated strategies that were deployed in anti-Soviet propaganda conducted by U.S.

⁷² Edmund Stevens, *This is Russia, Uncensored* (New York: Didier, 1950).

⁷³ The published installments of the series appeared in *The Washington Post* between November 2 and November 20, 1949.

⁷⁴ The title of Magidoff's book came from an interview he gave to American journalists after his expulsion. Referring to the secretary who denounced him, he said that he thinks about her "more in pity than in anger." "Expelled Reporter Quits Russia; Spy Charge Trumped Up, He says," *The New York Times*, April 19, 1948, p. 8

government-sponsored bodies, such as the *Voice of America* and USIE (United States Information and Education Exchange Program). Several officials in U.S. civil service and information establishment believed that the best way to battle Soviet propaganda would be to publicize the dire conditions of life in the Soviet Union, and to highlight the oppressive nature of the Communist regime.⁷⁵

American correspondents attacked Soviet Union's self-representations as a democracy and pointed out that Soviet elections were rigged; that the Supreme Soviet served as the Party's rubber stamp; and that Soviet workers had no leverage against their leaders. Articles dedicated to living standards criticized the Soviet state for prizing the military and the heavy industry above the welfare of the people and thus depriving their hardworking citizens of the most basic things:

Four years after the war, with the prewar level of industrial output already surpassed, the Soviet Union still does not produce enough shoes to give each person one pair a year. The failure to satisfy the needs of the worker, in the eyes of the Politburo policymakers, is more than compensated by success in expansion of heavy industry, which is increasing the might of the country every day.⁷⁶

All correspondents agreed that, compared to wartime and to the immediate postwar years, the daily life of the Russians was gradually improving. The correspondents noted such things as greater availability of consumer goods, a larger variety of foods, and the

⁷⁵ Foglesong, *The American Mission*, 109-111; Laura Belmonte, *Selling the American Way: U.S. Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 30-31, 45; The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Smith) to the Secretary of State, November 5, 1947, *FRUS 1947*, IV, 611-612; The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Smith) to the Secretary of State, November 15, 1947, *FRUS 1947*, IV, 619-622. USIE was the precursor of United States Information Agency.

⁷⁶ Joseph Newman, "Russia, With Wealth and Broad Lands Offers Riddle of Low Standard for Worker," *The Washington Post*, November 18, 1949, p. 16.

abolition of food rationing.⁷⁷ At the same time, the journalists stressed that the Soviet people were still struggling to make ends meet. Their diets consisted of cabbage, potatoes, and black bread. The majority of Russians, wrote the journalists, could not afford suits or decent clothing and walked around in shabby dresses and worn-out coats.

Edmund Stevens and Joseph Newman emphasized that contrary to the Soviet statements, a planned economy was not an adequate alternative to capitalism. Each article about Soviet consumer sector contained a large segment explaining how the planned economy was the source of such things as food shortages, industrial theft, or low quality of products. Newman pointed out that the persistent reports on inefficiency of Soviet production “suggest that the waste in the planned Soviet system may be greater than in the unplanned capitalist country.”⁷⁸ Stevens went one step further and argued that waste and inefficiency were inherent attributes of command economy and derived directly from the lack of “commercial competitive element, which operates as a powerful corrective to incompetence under free economy.”⁷⁹ Such statements affirmed the might of American capitalism, industry, and living standards. Surveys of Soviet economy and consumption also sent an encouraging message to readers and commentators at home, who viewed the economy as the primary indicator of Soviet readiness to launch a war against the United States.

⁷⁷ Magidoff, *In Anger and Pity*, 241-248; Edmund Stevens, “This is Russia Uncensored: Hemline Scorns the Party Line,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 27, 1949, p. 1.

⁷⁸ Joseph Newman, “Soviet Zealously Conceals Economy Flaws To Save Official Story of Worker's Heaven,” *The Washington Post*, November 3, 1949, p. 10.

⁷⁹ Edmund Stevens, “This is Russia Uncensored: Graft Grafts Itself To Roots of Business,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 1, 1949, p. 1.

True to their mission to expose the inconsistencies of Soviet words and deeds, foreign correspondents explained to their readers that Soviet propaganda simply lied when it asserted that the Soviet people had the freedom to worship.⁸⁰ Newman revealed that the Russian Orthodox Church was nothing but a mouthpiece for Soviet Cold War propaganda, which “summoned all the faithful into the Soviet camp.”⁸¹ Edmund Stevens explored the grave fate of the Roman Catholic clergy in the newly annexed Baltic states and described how show trials, based on false evidence, convicted Lithuanian monks and clerics for “indoctrination of youth and anti-Soviet activities.”⁸² Articles dedicated to the plight of the Soviet Jews combined the themes of Soviet repression with the theme of the Soviets’ ruthless attitude toward religion. American correspondents witnessed the unfolding of the campaign against “cosmopolitanism.” They discussed the campaign at great length, stressing that it was officially sanctioned and orchestrated from above. The articles dedicated to the purge told about journalists’ Jewish acquaintances losing their jobs and described how the Jews were attacked in the press and in the unions of creative industries.⁸³ Moreover, stories about the disappearance of famous Soviet Jews, such as the wife of Foreign Minister Molotov, or the mysterious murder of Solomon Mikhoels,

⁸⁰ Americans’ interest in Soviet treatment of religious worship predated the Cold War. As David Foglesong has shown, Americans took great interest in the status of religion in the Soviet state since its inception. Many American observers viewed “godlessness” as one of the most terrifying features of the Bolshevik state. During WWII, the American press applauded the restoration of the Orthodox Church and saw it as a hopeful harbinger for post war reform in Russia. Foglesong, *The American Mission*, 57, 82-84.

⁸¹ Joseph Newman, “Bolsheviks Help Church to Resume Role,” *The Washington Post*, November 13, 1949, p. M3.

⁸² Edmund Stevens, “This is Russia Uncensored: Jews Denied Jobs or Exit Visa to Israel,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 10, 1950, p. 1.

⁸³ Stevens, “This is Russia Uncensored: Noose for Religion Tested in Baltics,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 19, 1950, p. 1.

supported the journalists' assertions that the repressive machine of the Soviet state could turn against anyone.

Although the journalists set out to demonstrate how the Soviet state was mistreating its citizens, the accounts of American correspondents contained very few descriptions of actual Russian people. Most of the time, the journalists' insights about Soviet life were accompanied by stories about other foreigners in Moscow. Surveys of consumerism explained that in the Soviet stores it was impossible to find items that which most Americans considered basic. Stories that described the secret-police surveillance of foreigners or how Soviet authorities denied exit visas to the Russian wives of British and American citizens figured prominently among the journalists' examples of Soviet repressive apparatus. Stevens used a story of "Aunt Dasha," a peasant woman who sold him fresh milk, as segue into an article on peasant markets. Yet, the article told very little about "Aunt Dasha" herself, except that the Soviet planned economy caused her, and other peasants on collective farms, to struggle to make ends meet. Most of the time the Soviet people appeared in journalists' accounts as faceless shoppers, workers, or peasants.

The journalists' descriptions of rights that the Soviet regime denied to its citizens, corresponded to the notion of the four freedoms: freedom of speech; freedom of worship; freedom from want, and freedom from fear. President Franklin D. Roosevelt articulated the idea of four freedoms in 1941 and defined them as the most basic human rights,

which the U.S. promised to defend from the “new order of tyranny.”⁸⁴ According to Daniel T. Rodgers, Roosevelt’s speech emphasized an idea of the world “divided between human slavery and human freedom,” a division that “slipped unchanged into place as the controlling metaphor of the Cold War.”⁸⁵ Since 1946 the notion of four freedoms informed American political rhetoric, especially in the realm of foreign affairs.⁸⁶ The journalists’ implicit use of this concept positioned the United States as the defender of the cause of freedom, pitted against the tyranny of international Communism.

Foreign correspondents agreed that the decisive battle in America’s struggle against Communism would be fought “in the realm of ideas – and for the possession ... of men’s minds.”⁸⁷ The journalists argued that America’s victory in this battle depended on its ability to appeal to the people of the Soviet Union and around the world. Foreign correspondents explained that although the Soviet Union was a menacing police state, the Russians were “basically humble, fraternal and good”⁸⁸ people, who would eventually see the light and learn to disdain the Communist dictatorship:

There are in Russia today legions of thinking, intelligent people who chafe under the omnipotent police state and long with their whole being for freedom. The Russians are a race neither domineering nor aggressive nor xenophobe. They are warmly human, gregarious, and endowed with an avid and friendly curiosity about other peoples. All these qualities tend to instinctively alienate them, if not from the Soviet system, at least from its present policies and home and abroad. [...] It is essential that the West learn to distinguish between the police state and

⁸⁴ Franklin D. Roosevelt, *Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union*, January 6, 1941, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum Website: <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/pdfs/fftext.pdf>

⁸⁵ Roosevelt, *State of the Union*; Daniel T. Rodgers, *Contested Truths: Keywords in American Politics Since Independence* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press paperback edition, 1998), 215.

⁸⁶ Rodgers, *Contested Truths*, 215.

⁸⁷ Edmund Stevens, “This is Russia Uncensored: Collective Slavery is Seed for Revolt,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 28, 1950, p. 1.

⁸⁸ Joseph Newman, “Two Years’ Residence Reveals Two Russias,” *The Washington Post*, November 20, 1949, p. M5.

the Soviet people, for if the former are implacable foes, the latter, unless stupidly antagonized, are potential friends and allies.⁸⁹

The journalists emphasized that while the police state duped its people with lies and propaganda, it was possible to talk sense to the good, freedom-loving Russians. The Russians had to be told about America's peaceful intentions and commitment to freedom. The Russians had to be told that their lives were worse than those of people in the rest of the world, and that they were denied rights and standards of living that were considered inalienable in the West. If the intelligent Russians would learn these facts, the journalists argued, they would reject the lies of the Soviet regime and pull further away from their oppressive leaders.

American correspondents insisted that their professional ethos and intimate knowledge of Russia made them uniquely qualified to play a vital role in American efforts to refute Soviet propaganda. The concluding article in Joseph Newman's series pointed out that first-hand experience taught American journalists to see through the blinds of Soviet lies and manipulation:

⁸⁹ Edmund Stevens, "This is Russia Uncensored: Collective Slavery is Seed for Revolt," *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 28, 1950, p. 1. This view of the Russian people offered a radical alternative to the image of the Communist enemy, which permeated American popular culture of the time. Representations of Communists in American Cold War culture alternated between Communists as evil geniuses, who sought to subvert Americans and between Communists as inhuman robots, who did not partake in natural emotions and aspirations. Notorious anti-Communists, such as J. Edgar Hoover, argued that hatred of America and a desire to take over the world were the primary reasons for Communists' actions. For more on this theme see: Cyndy Hendershot, *Anti-Communism and Popular Culture in Mid-Century America* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2003), 9-40; Andrei Shcherbenok, "Asymmetric Warfare: The Vision of the Enemy in American and Soviet Cold War Cinemas," *Kino-Kultura*, 28 (April 2010).
<http://www.kinokultura.com/2010/28-shcherbenok.shtml>

In contrast to the prevailing images, the journalists ascribed to the Russians humane and rational motivations, such as fear from the secret police and desire to protect their loved ones. The descriptions of ideological control in Soviet culture pointed out that the universally understandable system of payoffs and material rewards operated in Communist Russia as elsewhere. Edmund Stevens and his colleagues suggested that the Russians and Americans shared basic human features and similar attitudes toward the Communist dictatorship.

He who can distinguish between fact and fiction soon learns that the debate raging abroad is over two different countries, related to each other only in name. One is the Russia of Marxism, the other is the Russia of Russia. The former is the Russia of which many discontented workers and intellectuals dream as the land where order, justice and prosperity have been brought to all men. This is the Russia in which Moscow encourages the troubled people of other countries to believe and to which they are invited to lend their support. The other ... is Russia of ... hatred of the foreigner; wide-spread [sic] poverty in a progressively industrial economy; exploitation of the worker by the state to further its ambitions in foreign policy, injustice, fear and oppression. This is the Russia the Kremlin would conceal from the outside world.⁹⁰

“He who can distinguish between facts and fiction,” or between Soviet propaganda and Soviet reality, was of course an American journalist with a first-hand experience in the Soviet Union. According to Newman, the Kremlin manipulated Marxist ideology and created the illusion that the Soviet Union was a place of justice and prosperity. It was the duty of the journalists to open the eyes of Soviet supporters and to reveal that Soviet reality was a far cry from the fables of propaganda. Other correspondents concurred. Robert Magidoff emphasized that “the traditional freedom of our profession to report events fully and objectively ... and to comment on them regardless of whether the powers that be liked or disliked the reports and comments” empowered the journalists to bear witness to the truth.⁹¹ American correspondents positioned themselves as objective observers, who had the unique ability to stand up to the Soviet censorship and the secret police; and to tell the world that the Soviet Union was not a beacon of justice, but an oppressive dictatorship.

⁹⁰ Joseph Newman, “Two Years’ Residence Reveals Two Russias,” *The Washington Post*, November 20, 1949, p. M5.

⁹¹ Magidoff, *In Anger and Pity*, 59.

The journalists' self-positioning in the battle against Soviet propaganda corresponded to the general line adopted by U.S. information establishment. In 1947 Ambassador Walter Bedell Smith presented the State Department with a list of "organizational measures" that would help the U.S. to "debunk Soviet propaganda and clarify our own policies."⁹² Smith suggested that the American information program should stress the inefficiency of Soviet economy, discuss the exploitation of Soviet labor, "point out [the] plights [of] Soviet wives married [to] foreigners, and "explain [the] totalitarian nature of [the Soviet] regime."⁹³ The topics that Smith proposed to explore bore a close resemblance to the themes that Stevens, Magidoff, and Newman emphasized in their post-assignment accounts two years later. In turn, foreign correspondents complimented the American officials on their efforts "to proffer the hand of friendship to the Russian people over the head of the Soviet government," especially, the Russian language broadcasts of the *Voice of America*.⁹⁴ On the one hand, this remarkable similarity suggests that the journalists and other American observers shared similar notions of self-understanding vis-à-vis the Soviet Communist world. On the other hand, this similarity reveals how foreign correspondents participated in the propaganda initiatives of the U.S. establishment.

Whereas Soviet foreign correspondents were formally affiliated with their government's anti-American campaign, American correspondents unofficially

⁹² The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Smith) to the Secretary of State, November 15, 1947, *FRUS 1947*, IV, 619.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 620-621.

⁹⁴ Edmund Stevens, "This is Russian Uncensored: U.S. 'Voice' Haunts Red War Planners," *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 31, 1950, p. 1; Robert Magidoff praised the *Voice* broadcasts, as "factual information coming tirelessly and incessantly, [...] the best means of combating the insidious web of falsehood in which the Russian people have been enmeshed." Magidoff, *In Anger and Pity*, 268.

contributed to anti-Soviet propaganda in the U.S. The journalists advised the American Embassy in Moscow on the best ways to conduct the anti-Soviet campaign; they repeated and upheld the major tenets of this campaign in their writings.⁹⁵ U.S. legislation prohibited the dissemination of government propaganda materials to the American public.⁹⁶ However, the reports of foreign correspondents, which did not differ much from the establishment's propaganda, figured prominently in the national newspapers and reached large domestic audiences. While labeling the Soviet positions as "propaganda," a negative term associated with brainwashing and deceit, the journalists described their own efforts in positive terms such as "truth" and "honest reporting." In so doing, foreign correspondents articulated the superpower struggle as a conflict between police state and freedom, and between propaganda and truth. In response to domestic concerns about the loyalty of American journalists in Moscow, these foreign correspondents aligned themselves with American efforts to win the Cold War and presented their work as vital for their country and for the free world.

Narratives of Belonging

In their quest to rule out any doubts about their political allegiances, several correspondents used their post-assignment accounts to stress their personal loyalty to the United States and American values. Like other sections in the journalists' narratives about Russia, these explicit proclamations of personal commitment to the American creed

⁹⁵ In one of his telegrams to the State Department, Ambassador Smith mentioned Stevens and Magidoff as participants in the Embassy roundtable discussion on the means to improve the Russian language broadcasts on the *Voice of America*. See: The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Smith) to the Secretary of State, March 1, 1947, *FRUS 1947*, IV, 541.

⁹⁶ Belmonte, *Selling*, 32.

built on the distinction between fact and fiction, and stressed the author's resistance to the charms of Soviet propaganda. Robert Magidoff, conscious that his Russian origins might have cast a shadow over his patriotism, emphasized how his internal transformation into a true American proceeded along geographic lines:

I was born in Russia but left at the age of fourteen, early enough to have my character and world outlook ... modeled by America's great democracy in action. A desire to become more fully a part of America led me from my home in New York to Madison, Wisconsin, for my college education, and the years I have spent there remain the happiest in my life. It was there that I began to think of myself as an American in the fullest sense of the word. Every year of my long stay in the Soviet Union added to my feeling of pride in being a citizen of a free country.⁹⁷

Magidoff's emigration from Russia and his encounter with "American democracy in action" was the first stage of his transition. The move from New York, a city associated with immigration and multiculturalism, to the Midwest, the heart of America, symbolized the shedding of Magidoff's identity as an immigrant and his complete immersion in American values. However, Magidoff also had to justify his return to Russia in the 1930s and his long residence in the Soviet Union:

When I first went to Russia in the summer of 1935, I was starry-eyed about the land of the Soviets. Conscious of imperfections in the American way of life, hard hit by the depression, [...] I was sold on the legend of the great Soviet Utopia. But not being a communist, I never accepted the Soviet Union with the blind fanaticism of the believers. I was particularly repelled by the workings of the Party line. To me, the Party line's greatest crime is the wanton injury it inflicts on man's self-respect and dignity, compelling people to accept without question, out of fear ... a reign of terror or the betrayal of friends or a hate-America campaign.⁹⁸

Magidoff admits an initial infatuation with the fictions of Soviet propaganda ("legend of the great Soviet Utopia"), but insists that he never was a fellow traveller. He stresses his

⁹⁷ Magidoff, *In Anger and Pity*, 80.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

opposition to the Communist Party claiming that he is able to see the reality behind the propaganda. Magidoff emphasizes that as far as he is concerned, the Communist Party represents an oppressive mechanism, which stands against everything that America is about: dignity, freedom and pluralism. As if responding to an unspoken accusation, Magidoff claims that years spent in the USSR have not weakened his devotion to the United States but have actually strengthened his pride and sense of belonging to America. Magidoff distances himself from potential accusations of disloyalty and positions himself as a true patriot of his country.

Magidoff had additional reasons to fear that his allegiances to the U.S. might come under scrutiny. Magidoff's wife, Nila, was a former Soviet citizen, who during the war gained notoriety for her campaigns on behalf of the Russian War Relief Fund, an alleged Communist front group.⁹⁹ In a chapter dedicated to their "romance in Moscow," Magidoff describes Nila's loyalty to the United States and her transition from Soviet to American womanhood. Magidoff emphasizes that Nila had embraced America as her new homeland already in the 1930s, following an injustice she sustained from the Soviet state. Nila's first husband was arrested as an "enemy of the people" and died in exile. A few years later, during the Great Purge, she narrowly escaped arrest by marrying Magidoff. Through Magidoff, the U.S. saved Nila from the claws of Soviet dictatorship and gave her the freedom to enjoy life: "Her mind free of worries, her soul thawed by the

⁹⁹ Ralph de Toledano, *Spies, Dupes, and Diplomats* (Arlington House, 1967), 234.

warmth of love, she applied herself diligently to the study of the life and ways in her new world.”¹⁰⁰

Magidoff then narrates how, under his guidance, Nila transformed herself into an American woman: she developed American manners; adapted to the comforts of American appliances and standards of living; and learned how to dress tastefully and to host sophisticated American-style dinners. The descriptions of the new Nila corresponded to the 1950s conceptions of the ideal American woman: consumer, homemaker, and her husband’s faithful companion. Nila’s embrace of the American lifestyle and garments paved the way to acquisition of American friends: “Gradually she built up her wardrobe, and just as slowly she began to make friends among the members of the diplomatic corps and among my colleagues.”¹⁰¹ In the final sections of the chapter, Magidoff describes how Nila began to spread the gospel of American lifestyle to her friends, “who, like most Russians, were then ... shyly feeling their way toward a more gracious life.”¹⁰² Now that her transformation was complete, Nila began to contribute to American propaganda in the Soviet Union. Magidoff stressed Nila’s allegiance to her new home country and emphasized her investment in American values and her deep gratitude to the United States.

In these complementary narratives of belonging, Magidoff’s definition of being American combined political freedoms with high living standards. Magidoff expresses his own loyalty to the U.S. in terms of ideological allegiance: appreciation of freedom

¹⁰⁰ Magidoff, *In Anger and Pity*, 93.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 93.

and rejection of the Communist party. Nila's story operates on the premise that Americans are defined by their standards of living. Her new lifestyle and wardrobe serve as evidence of her internal transition from Soviet to American womanhood, and integration into the Western community. The two narratives also corresponded to the contemporary gendered ideals of American men and women. Whereas Magidoff's self-description focused on the masculine realm, opinions and political consciousness, his description of Nila emphasized the traditional conception of woman as a homemaker and a consumer. Taken together, the stories portray Robert and Nila Magidoff as a perfect American family, firmly rooted in American political traditions and moral values. Despite being foreign-born, Magidoff and Nila belonged in the United States.

Although Harrison Salisbury was a third-generation American, the narratives of belonging featured in his post-assignment writings reveal similar dynamics. By 1953, Salisbury was the only American correspondent not bound to Moscow by family ties, and therefore had to justify why he continued to report from Russia despite the tough working conditions and censorship. Several publications attacked Salisbury as a communist sympathizer throughout his assignment. The *New Leader* repeatedly accused him of being a "transmission belt of Soviet propaganda line" and offered to give him a "prize for totalitarian journalism."¹⁰³ The anti-Communist newsletter *Counterattack*, accused the *New York Times* of helping the Kremlin "by featuring Salisbury's dispatches."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Louis Jay Herman, "From Times Square to Red Square: A Salisbury Tale," *The New Leader*, April 13, 1953, p. 12; Eugene Lyons, "From the 'Times' Reporter," *The New Leader*, March 30, 1953, p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ *Counterattack*, Undated. NYT. Foreign Desk. Box 82. Folder 3.

In 1954, Salisbury wrote fourteen articles summarizing his work as a Moscow correspondent. The series title, *Russia Re-Viewed*, suggests the author's reconsideration of his previous positions.¹⁰⁵ In the first article, Salisbury proclaimed that the Soviet regime was criminal and dangerous, thus distancing himself from accusations of Communist sympathies. Several installments in the series delivered "first-hand evidence of the horrors of life in the world's greatest police state" and broke the story of the labor camps in Siberia.¹⁰⁶ The last article, "Censorship of News is Erratic," dealt with the working conditions of American journalists in the Soviet Union and constituted Salisbury's response to the accusations of disloyalty leveled against him.¹⁰⁷ The article stressed the dangers Salisbury encountered in his efforts to provide honest reporting from the Soviet Union and described "this correspondent's" work in hazardous conditions and under a constant surveillance of the secret police. Finally, to eliminate all doubt as to where his allegiances lay, Salisbury told his readers that when he left Moscow he "did not know any single Russian, so there was not a single goodbye to be said – except to other foreigners."¹⁰⁸

The critical tone of the series helped Salisbury position himself on the front lines of resistance to Soviet propaganda and distance himself from suspicions about his

¹⁰⁵ The series were published on the front page of the *New York Times* in 1954, every day between September 19 and October 2. The series was a dialogue of sorts with Salisbury's previous publications about the Soviet Union, especially his first book from 1946, *Russia on the Way*. Written after the war, it proposed that the Soviet Union would emerge from its war experience as a better, more open country. Understandably, a publication of such prognosis in 1946 ensured the manuscript's failure and made the loyalties of its author highly suspect.

¹⁰⁶ Harrison Salisbury, "Russia Re-Viewed: Under New Management Soviet Tactics Change," *The New York Times*, September 19, 1954, p. 1.

¹⁰⁷ Harrison Salisbury, "Russia Re-Viewed: Censorship of News is Erratic," *The New York Times*, October 2, 1954, p. 19.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

misplaced loyalties. Editors, critics, and readers celebrated the new approach. Unlike the controversial Korea series, most of the installments in *Russia Re-Viewed* appeared on the front page of the *New York Times*. The series received the Pulitzer Prize for international reporting, which gave Salisbury's opinion institutional prestige and bolstered his professional authority. Many readers who followed Salisbury's work throughout the years hailed the series as a sign of Salisbury's liberation from the shackles of Soviet censorship.¹⁰⁹ A former émigré and a survivor of a Soviet labor camp, praised Salisbury's Siberian exposé for its contribution to American awareness of the Communist menace:

Your articles bring a great benefit to the American people, who for decades, were so naïve in their understanding of the Communist dictatorship, helping this regime by forming across America communist party cells in the name of saving the "starving" and riding-in-his-own-car working class.¹¹⁰

Now, when Salisbury was allowed to "speak up," safe at home, in American freedom and critical of the Soviet Union, the readers were ready to listen and to embrace his insights.

Publishers and literary agents began to pester him with offers of book contracts.

Salisbury's book, *An American in Russia*, was published in 1955. The second chapter defended Salisbury's reporting from Moscow and reiterated his loyalty to the American creed:

From all I knew of it I hated the stupidity of the party line approach, the blind subservience to what was called Party discipline and the immorality of Communist tactics. Communist ideology simply bored me. I had never read Marx or Lenin and hoped I never had to. I did not believe that any man or group of men had or ever would invent a perfectionist way of life or a Book of All Answers. [...] I was and I am an individualistic product of an individualistic society.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Salisbury Papers. Box 192

¹¹⁰ Michael Golbinger to Harrison Salisbury. Salisbury Papers. Box 192.

¹¹¹ Harrison Salisbury, *American in Russia* (New York: Harper, 1955), 6.

In this statement Salisbury proclaims his ultimate resistance to the Communist ideology and its temptations. Moreover, he took pride in his ability to see through the fictions of propaganda and to expose the Communist tactics as stupid or immoral. He stressed that regardless of years spent at the heart of Communism, he remained an individualist American to the core and therefore found ideology unappealing and irrelevant. By stressing his individualism and unwavering faith in the ultimate advantages of an individualistic society, Salisbury squarely positioned himself as loyal to the American side. As in Magidoff's narrative, personal affiliation with the Midwest – the heart of “real America” – features as a proof of Salisbury's ability to remain true to his American self and resist the charms of Soviet ideology:

By chance of geography I happen to come from Minnesota, which is a part of the United States where citizens do not permit anyone to dictate political or social opinions to them. Possibly by tradition but perhaps, as we like to think because we have free and inquiring minds we Minnesotans are very likely to be “agin-ers.” [sic] [...] the quickest way to insure our opposition is to tell us that we should, or ought or must vote or believe in particular man or a particular philosophy. Thus, any absolute doctrine was quite incompatible with my personal character. I might manage to live for a time among Communists ... but I could never become a John Reed. [...] I had a real interest in Russia, as opposed to communism, and still do.¹¹²

Oblivious to the irony, Salisbury located his individualism in the traditions of Minnesotans, and their spirit of rebellion. Salisbury explains that, as a Minnesotan, he could do nothing but resist “any absolute doctrine” he encountered, and pointed out that his dislike of ideologies was almost a fact of nature.

Salisbury's articulation of belonging to the United States juxtaposed American individualism to collectivism; the latter was one of the major components in the cultural

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 6-7.

imagination of America's enemies. Cold War-era cultural products pitted the collective-minded Communists against autonomous and individualist Americans.¹¹³ While the actions of the Communists were represented as guided by external forces, such as the party or the ideology, Americans were defined by their freedom and internal morality or faith.¹¹⁴ Thus in evoking his opposition to ideology and stressing his individualism and personal moral compass, Salisbury aligned himself with the essence of Americanism.

At the same time, Salisbury's claims that he was above any "ideology" or "absolute doctrine" defended his reporting as independent and objective. Salisbury implicitly addressed his critics and pointed out that unlike their positions, his point of view derived from a purely intellectual interest in Russia, and was not affected by pre-existing ideological notions. Salisbury thus claimed the prerogative to write however he saw fit and dismissed the accusations against him.

Salisbury's jab at his critics was not lost on the audience. Fredrick C. Barghoorn, a prominent Yale scholar of the Soviet Union, reviewed Salisbury's book in the *New York Times* and praised Salisbury for offering "a wealth of data and a high quality of interpretation."¹¹⁵ Barghoorn addressed the domestic critics of Moscow correspondents and stressed the importance of the latter's work: "Those who doubt the usefulness of the Moscow press corps under Soviet conditions and those who advocate such extreme steps

¹¹³ Ragnhild Fiebig-von Hase, "Introduction" in, *Enemy Images in American History*, ed. Ragnhild Fiebig-von Hase and Ursula Lehmkuhl (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1997), 15, 24-27.

¹¹⁴ David M. Kennedy, "Culture Wars. The Sources and Uses of Enmity in American History," in *Enemy Images*, 346; Hendershot, *Anti-Communism*, 5.

¹¹⁵ Fredrick C. Barghoorn, "Eleven Years in Moscow," *The New York Times*, July 4, 1954, p. BR3; Fredrick C. Barghoorn, "Assignment to the Heart of Russia," *The New York Times*, February 15, 1955, p. 263.

as severing all connections between the Soviet Union and the United States should certainly read ‘American in Russia.’”¹¹⁶

Magidoff and Salisbury turned to narratives of belonging as an additional, and more personal, response to the domestic mistrust of foreign correspondents and their work. Each correspondent went beyond reiteration of his professional credibility and stressed deep personal connections to American values, which for both journalists were embodied in the Midwest and its traditions. Each correspondent highlighted his commitment to American democracy, immunity to the charms of Soviet ideology, and ability to see through the fictions of Soviet propaganda. Each correspondent presented individualism and commitment to freedom as the defining traits of his character. In so doing both Magidoff and Salisbury defined themselves in opposition to the prevailing images of the Communist enemy and emphasized their loyalty to the United States.

The superpowers’ concerns with internal and external enemies had a formative impact on the work of American correspondents in Moscow. Soviet Anti-American campaigns embittered the journalists; increased their negative attitude toward the Soviet regime; and reduced the scope of reporting from Moscow. Domestic anti-Communism and persistent scrutiny of the correspondents’ ideological allegiances necessitated vigilant reaffirmations of their loyalty and professional credibility. In response to attacks at home and abroad, foreign correspondents stressed their anti-Soviet opinions; emphasized their ability to contribute to American efforts at refuting Soviet propaganda; and highlighted their personal inalienable connection to American values.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Several important precedents were established during this period. Foreign correspondents' harsh stance against the Soviet regime became a staple of good reporting and facilitated the public acceptance of the journalists as an important authoritative voice in the national discussion about the Soviet Union. The post-assignment accounts became a popular and respected format for articulating the journalists' insights on the Cold War adversary. These trends manifested themselves in American coverage of the Soviet Union throughout the Cold War, even after the conditions of reporting improved and the domestic concerns with the journalists' loyalties had long subsided.

Thaw in the Cold War

Shortly after Stalin's death in 1953, the Soviet Union embarked on a new path under a new leadership. The improvement of its relationship with the foreign media was central to the Soviet attempts to project a new image of itself as more friendly to the international community.¹¹⁷ As a result, the American press corps in Moscow expanded significantly and so did its opportunities for coverage. The new cohort of American correspondents in the Moscow bureaus captured the transformation of Soviet society under Khrushchev. Foreign correspondents introduced a new and different Russia to their American readers. The journalists began to emphasize the stability of the Soviet Union and its achievements; they explained the motivations of Soviet leaders and citizens. At

¹¹⁷ The media was one of the primary arenas of Soviet policy of peaceful coexistence. In 1956 the English language newspaper *The Moscow News* reopened after 7 years. Originally established in the 1930s by Anna Louise Strong, the newspaper's target audiences were foreign specialists in Moscow. It was closed in 1949. RGANI. F. 6. Op. 16. D. 734. L. 70. Similarly, Agitprop urged the editors of the *Novosti* – Soviet English language journal distributed in the UK and the U.S. – to readjust the journal in order to be more effective in meeting the expectations of its foreign audiences. RGANI. F. 5. Op. 16. D. 739. Ll. 151-162.

the same time, foreign correspondents monitored the cooling of the superpowers' antagonism, and offered American readers reassurance of their country's continuous superiority vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

The years 1954 and 1955 marked the transformation in the working conditions of American press corps in Moscow. As a gesture of good will, and in order to advance the expansion of its own press corps across the Iron Curtain, the Soviet Union admitted more American journalists through its borders.¹¹⁸ In 1954, Marguerite Higgins, a celebrity journalist and the first American female correspondent assigned to the USSR since WWII, re-opened the Moscow bureau of the New York Herald Tribune. In 1955, NBC dispatched its new Moscow correspondent, Irving Levine. The CBS bureau was re-opened in 1955 as a gesture of good will, following a personal appeal from Senator Estes Kefauver (Dem. Ten.) to Bulganin on behalf of the network.¹¹⁹ During the same year TASS signed agreements for information exchange with the Associated Press and the United Press, the first agreement of this kind since the Cold War started.

The changing tides in superpower relations were evident in their treatment of the rival's correspondents. Following the Geneva Conference in 1955, the Department of State hosted a delegation of Soviet journalists and editors and welcomed into the U.S. the representatives of the loudest trumpets of Communist propaganda, such as Pravda or Literaturnia Gazeta. On the other side of the curtain, the Soviet leaders received an even

¹¹⁸ Exchanges between the Central Committee and Agitprop refer explicitly to the reciprocity rule. In 1955, V. Moskovskii from Agitprop wrote to the Central Committee that MID holds the issuing of visas for American correspondents because the U.S. was delaying the entry visas for Pravda and TASS journalists. RGANI. F. 5. Op. 16. D. 734. L. 106.

¹¹⁹ RGANI. F.5. Op. 16. D. 740. Ll. 1-4. Kefauver's appeal to Bulganin on behalf of the CBS shows yet again how important was the press in Soviet-American relations.

less likely guest: William Randolph Hearst Jr., the staunch anti-Communist and the frequent target of Soviet anti-American propaganda.¹²⁰ Much to the consternation of resident Moscow correspondents, Hearst and his entourage were granted access to Nikita Khrushchev and the highest Soviet officials.¹²¹ The Soviet leaders received Hearst, granted him an unprecedented access, and allowed his journalists to file without censorship in order to demonstrate their good will toward the United States.

Two years later, Khrushchev articulated his persistent interest in Soviet-American dialogue to another senior newsman, Turner Catledge, the managing editor of the *New York Times*. In his interview with Catledge, Khrushchev addressed Soviet censorship of American correspondents and explained that Soviet censors “take measures only in the case of correspondents who distort conditions and the real life of our country.”¹²² Since 1947 this was the first time that a senior Soviet official had admitted the existence of censorship. Another watershed moment came in 1957 when Khrushchev agreed to Daniel Schorr’s proposal to appear on CBS’s program *Face the Nation*. Khrushchev gave this, his first ever, television interview in order to appeal directly to Americans and reassure them of his country’s peaceful intentions. The most important aspect of the interview

¹²⁰ Hearst arrived on this visit accompanied by two famous journalists, J. Kingsbury Smith and Frank Coniff. Hamilton, *Journalism’s Roving Eye*, 435.

¹²¹ Clifton Daniel to Turner Catledge, February 13, 1955. NYT. Foreign Desk. Box 23. Folder 7.

¹²² Khrushchev even pointed out that censorship benefitted international relations and the New York Times, for it prevented “waste of means, such as ink, paper and paint on information that only creates harm.” Turner Catledge, “Khrushchev, in Interview, Asserts U.S.-Soviet Accord is the Way to Avert a War,” *The New York Times*, May 11, 1957, p. 1.

according to Schorr was that “Khrushchev had appeared in America’s living rooms – real, robust and unthreatening.”¹²³

Such degree of visibility and accessibility of Soviet leaders to the foreign press was unseen during the Stalin era and played an important role in the efforts to project a new image of the Soviet Union, as a country open to the world. These efforts proceeded in many spheres. Soviet officials began to attend receptions and celebrations within the Moscow diplomatic community; cultural figures and industry captains became more accessible to foreign press corps. Other innovations of the period, such as opening the gates to international tourists, the Moscow Youth Festival, and the American Exhibition emphasized that the USSR was reaching out to the world and welcoming foreign cultures into its midst.

Important changes occurred in the working conditions of foreign press corps in Moscow. While American correspondents still had to submit their dispatches to the faceless Glavlit censors at the Central Telegraph, the restrictions on the topics of their reporting gradually relaxed. In a dispatch sent to the editors at home, Clifton Daniel, the *New York Times* correspondent observed that the censorship “really is becoming more lenient” and even expressed hopes that the Soviet authorities might abolish it altogether one day.¹²⁴ Soviet authorities sought to accommodate foreign correspondents in other ways. Restrictions on foreign journalists’ travel loosened. Agitprop and the Press Department began to organize trips that introduced foreign correspondents to such

¹²³ Daniel Schorr, *Staying Tuned: a Life in Journalism* (New York: Pocket Books, 2001), Kindle edition, Chapter 7.

¹²⁴ Clifton Daniel to Nathaniel Gerstenzang, June 14, 1955. NYT. Foreign Desk. Box 23. Folder 7.

exclusive Soviet institutions as the kolkhoz or the Young Pioneers camp.¹²⁵ In 1956, Agitprop suggested that the Press Department of the Soviet Foreign Office launch special press conferences for foreign correspondents. The topics of the proposed events varied between “Training of specialists in the Soviet Union” and “Perspectives for housing constructions in Moscow.”¹²⁶ However, certain Stalin-era practices persisted. Between 1955 and 1958, four American journalists were expelled from the Soviet Union, in most cases, for violation of censorship. Yet, the news organizations suffered no reprisals and were allowed to send replacement correspondents.

The new image of the Soviet Union was gradually registering with American audiences. In 1956, Salisbury went on a book tour for American in Russia and learned from interactions with readers that they wanted a new type of information from the Soviet Union:

The principle change in the interest and concern of the audiences was a shift away from worry about the immediate outbreak of war with Russia. [...] There are many questions about the general conditions of Soviet life. These range the gamut. [...] My overall impression is that public opinion has, generally, decided there is not to be an immediate war with Russia. In the interim there is a lively public interest in specific and realistic reports of specific segments of soviet life – schools, churches, houses, living conditions, moral problems, youth, science, technique.¹²⁷

As the sense of threat of war with the USSR gradually subsided, Americans were ready to learn more about what the Russians were like and how they lived. Salisbury observed

¹²⁵ “Agitprop plan for press conferences and other activities for foreign correspondents, April-June 1962.” RGANI. F. 5. Op. 33. D. 203. Ll. 46-47.

¹²⁶ “Agitprop plan for press conferences for soviet and international correspondents, March-April, 1956.” RGANI. F. 5. Op. 16. D. 738. L. 136.

¹²⁷ Harrison Salisbury to Emanuel Freedman, January 23, 1956. NYT. Foreign Desk. Box 82. Folder 5.

another indicator of the changing attitude toward the Soviet Union: more and more readers expressed interest in visiting Russia as tourists:

I received a good many personal inquiries (getting me aside after the talk) for specific information about travel to the Soviet Union. My impression is that a good many of the well-to-do and community leaders are thinking about including Russia on their travel plans for next summer. This, of course, reflects a substantial diminution in the general fear which I noted so often last year on the questions of "going to Russia."¹²⁸

Salisbury pointed out that these questions offer a valuable indication as to where the Times could turn its coverage and could be easily addressed under the new conditions of reporting from Moscow. Indeed, the changes in Soviet policies toward foreign correspondents and the growing variety of reporting opportunities allowed American journalists to meet and interact with Soviet citizens and to write about their daily lives for the first time since the Cold War started.

In 1957, the New York Times featured a series of articles written by its Moscow bureau chief William J. Jorden. Titled *The People of Russia*, the series described Jorden's visits with people of various occupations all over the Soviet Union. That the New York Times ran on its front page such headlines as "A Bus Driver in Moscow Gives His Views on Life in the Soviet Union" or "A School Teacher in Soviet Armenia Mingles Family Life and Work" shows how valued these first journalistic encounters with Soviet people really were as new sources of information.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ William J. Jorden, "The People of Russia: A Bus Driver in Moscow Gives His Views on Life in the Soviet Union," *The New York Times*, August 18, 1957; William J. Jorden, "The People of Russia: A School Teacher in Soviet Armenia Mingles Family Life and Work," *The New York Times*, August 21, 1957.

From the early days of the Cold War, journalists' limited access to the "average Russian" had evolved into an important trope in the narrative that constructed the Soviet Union as a closed society. "There was an evident hunger in the United States just to see Russian faces, Russian stores, schools, subways. With the menacing Stalin gone, it was as though a curtain were parting on a hidden country," remembered *CBS* correspondent Daniel Schorr.¹³⁰ These newly available descriptions of "average men" and their everyday lives were particularly valued, because they allowed the readers a peek behind the curtain of a totalitarian regime.

Since regular reporting still had to contend with censorship, the journalists' post-assignment accounts remained essential and valuable sources of well-rounded information about the Soviet Union. In the late 1950s, the accounts of foreign correspondents reflected the changing attitudes toward the Soviet Union and focused on daily life across the Iron Curtain. The 1958 book *Main Street U.S.S.R.*, authored by NBC's Moscow correspondent Irving R. Levine, grew out of a weekly radio program in which Levine responded to listeners' questions about Russia. The book offered answers to such questions as "How many years of schooling are compulsory in Russia?"; "Do Russian women make their own clothes or buy them ready made?"; "What's on Russian television?"; "Is there stock exchange?"; and "Do Russians keep pets?"¹³¹

Aline Mosby, who served as *UPI* Moscow correspondent between 1959 and 1961, provided a female angle to the Soviet story. Mosby's reporting for the UP included such triumphs as interviews with the downed U-2 pilot Garry Powers and Lee Harvey Oswald

¹³⁰ Schorr, *Staying Tuned*, Chapter 5.

¹³¹ Irving R. Levine, *Main Street, U.S.S.R.* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1959), ii.

when he deflected to the Soviet Union in 1959. Her book, by contrast, shied away from politics and focused on the daily life, exploring women's fashions and hairstyles, Russian-style parties, and the peculiarities of shopping and dating in Moscow.¹³²

The largest breakthrough in introducing a more normalized view of the Soviet Union was the 1958 publication of a Russia-themed installment of John Gunther's famous "Inside" books – *Inside Russia Today*. The series had been widely popular in the United States since the 1936 publication of the first book *Inside Europe*.¹³³ Essentially, the series aimed to familiarize readers with foreign places and explain how and why those places differed from the United States. *Inside Russia Today* added the Soviet Union to a long list of places, the "otherness" of which should be explained to the American reader. At the same time, Gunther's narrative normalized Russia by treating it just as another country in the world, suggesting that it could be an interesting tourist destination, and offering tips for getting around.¹³⁴

Whereas previously, readers were introduced to the Soviet life mostly through stories about the experiences of foreigners in Moscow, they now learned more about the everyday lives of the Soviet people. The range of Soviet characters in the journalists' work expanded significantly. They now included random acquaintances, fellow passengers in journalists' travels around the country, or people approached on the street. The readers learned how Soviet citizens spent their leisure and vacations, what they wore,

¹³² Aline Mosby, *The View from No. 13 People's Street* (New York: Random House, 1962).

¹³³ Each book in the "Inside" series presented the results of Gunther's extensive exploration of a continent or a country; including history and assessment of current political affairs; information about the daily lives of regular people; interviews with professionals and citizens; statistics; and Gunther's own analysis of what he learned from extensive travel.

¹³⁴ In 1962, Gunther published another Russia book – two volumes of *Meet Soviet Russia* were accompanied by a TV series documenting his travels.

and what their daily routines were. These first descriptions of actual people also introduced the readers to traits which the journalists imagined as universally “Russian”: emotionality, patriotism, generosity, and provinciality. These perceived peculiarities of Russian national character later became staples in American correspondents’ representations of the Soviet people. When the journalists touched on the position of foreigners in the Soviet Union, the stories about Soviet police surveillance and intimidation all but disappeared. Instead, the journalists created sympathetic descriptions of Soviet attempts to accommodate tourists from overseas, particularly from the United States.¹³⁵

In another innovative move, foreign correspondents began to elucidate the rationale behind Soviet policies. Journalists in the late 1940s seldom explained the actions and motivations of Soviet leaders and institutions. On the rare occasion when such explanations were provided, they evoked Communism’s expansionism and aversion to freedom. By contrast, the new accounts described the ideological origins of numerous Soviet policies, such as planning or national ownership of factories. The journalists emphasized that Soviet leaders sought to improve the lot of their people, even though their methods seemed wrong to the outside world.

The new focus on the Soviet people helped the journalists to develop a more nuanced view of the relationship between the Russians and the Americans. In the 1940s, a period of scarce opportunities to interact with the Soviet people, most the journalists wrote that the Russians did not differ much from the Americans. The only exception was

¹³⁵ See for example: Levine, *Main Street*, 20-21; 207-218.

Harrison Salisbury, who stressed the cultural and historical differences between the two nations. In the late 1940s, the conception of similarities between the Russians and the Americans facilitated the idea that there was a gap between Soviet people and the leaders, which could be exploited to bring down the Soviet regime.

In the 1950s, foreign correspondents began to emphasize that the gap was in fact between the American and the Soviet people, and that the latter had a close affinity to their leaders.¹³⁶ Explanations of the Soviet political system pointed out that contrary to the prevailing view in the U.S., the Soviet people did not consider themselves as lacking freedom, nor did they await liberation from overseas. Irving Levine explained:

Russians will rarely, if ever, suggest that they would like to return to the days of the Czar or that they would prefer intervention by a foreign country to liberate them from tyranny. The pressure seems to be in the direction of bringing about changes within the system rather than overthrowing the system.¹³⁷

The journalists did not portray Soviet citizens' loyalty to their system as a delusion.

Levine and his colleagues explained that as far as the Russians were concerned, their country was making a great progress since the Revolution, and that the lives of ordinary Russians had significantly improved compared to their fathers. Moreover, the journalists pointed out, after Stalin's death, the Russians entertained hopes for future improvements and supported the innovations introduced by their leaders.

¹³⁶ Aline Mosby enumerated the cultural collisions that she had with her Russian acquaintances and how Americans and Russians differed in their attitude to such things as gadgets, dating, and female drivers. She frequently pointed out how strikingly "not western" the Russians were. Mosby, *The View*, 20; Irving Levine explained to his readers that, "isolation has made Russians provincial." Levine, *Main Street*, 28.

"There are times, no matter how friendly individual Russians may be, when it seems utterly impossible to reach them. How can you reach people who cannot reach themselves? Moreover, even if the contact is established, Russians talk an utterly different language." Gunther, *Inside Russia*, 25.

¹³⁷ Levine, *Main Street*, 27.

At the heart of the changing descriptions of Soviet Union was the realization that Russians did not share the Americans' view of the USSR as an oppressive dictatorship. The new rhetoric both reflected and reinforced the transformations in U.S. establishment's view of the rival superpower. By the late 1950s, earlier hopes that covert propaganda would instigate a citizen's revolt against the Soviet government seemed less realistic. Many American policymakers and observers began to realize that coexistence with the Soviet rival was inevitable.¹³⁸

Foreign correspondents followed the currents of political thought of their time and stressed that despite the differences, the people on both sides must do their best to understand each other for the sake of the world's future: "The gulf, the chasm, the abyss, may seem too great to be bridged. But we must try to bridge it, because the world will have no rest otherwise."¹³⁹ This prescription, which appeared in the introduction to John Gunther's book, differed significantly from his predecessors' wish to promote pro-American sentiments among the Soviet population.

The new prescriptions matched the new image of the Soviet Union. American journalists pointed out that the regime's attempts to mobilize the citizens without violence, transformed Russia into a different country.¹⁴⁰ And this changing Russia, they argued, posed new challenges to the United States: "it is a country showing signs of emerging from absolute, centralized dictatorship ... a land bursting suddenly from the age

¹³⁸ Foglesong, *American Mission*, 129-139.

¹³⁹ Gunther, *Inside Russia*, 25.

¹⁴⁰ Gunther, *Inside Russia*, 212-236; 501-502; William J. Jorden to Clifton Daniel, September 28, 1956. NYT. Foreign Desk. Box. 55. Folder 4.

of the sickle into the era of sputnik.”¹⁴¹ Indeed, the launch of the Sputnik played an important role in the change of American perceptions and representations of the Soviet Union.¹⁴² The Soviet head start in the space race shattered American popular belief in its scientific, technological and military superiority and caused grave concerns across the political spectrum.¹⁴³ Russia no longer appeared as an unthreatening country of backward peasants, but as a potent competitor with first-rate technology. Sputnik also transformed the image the Soviet education system and made Americans realize that the USSR trained world-class scientists and technological specialists.¹⁴⁴ In the journalists’ accounts, Sputnik loomed large among the challenges that the Soviet Union posed to the United States.

More than any other correspondent, John Gunther emphasized Soviet advantages in education and technology. He explored the Soviet system of education and wrote with appreciation about his visits to Soviet schools, universities, and popular scientific exhibitions. Gunther compared the Soviet and American education systems and stressed that the former had several advantages over the latter. In conclusion, Gunther pointed out that Americans should regard with utmost seriousness Soviet achievements and future potential:

It is always unwise to underestimate adversaries. For a generation, it has been part of the American folklore to think that Russians are hardly capable of operating a

¹⁴¹ Levine, *Main Street*, 15.

¹⁴² Julian E. Zelizer, *Arsenal of Democracy: the Politics of National Security – from World War II to the War on Terrorism* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 138-139.

¹⁴³ American politicians and newspapers portrayed the launch of Sputnik as evidence of the Soviet military threat to the United States and its way of life, and frequently compared Sputnik to Pearl Harbor. Robert Divine, *The Sputnik Challenge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), xviii-xiv; Zelizer, *Arsenal of Democracy*, 140.

¹⁴⁴ Divine, *Sputnik Challenge*, xvi-xvii.

tractor. Not since Pearl Harbor has the United States suffered such a jolt. [...] American prestige has gone down ... the United States can no longer claim with reason to be the world's first scientific power, in an era when science, as well as prestige, counts for so much.¹⁴⁵

Gunther urged his compatriots to re-evaluate the Soviet adversary and not take American superiority for granted. He gave the Soviet head start in the space race as evidence that the Soviets could easily live up to their potential and eventually surpass the US.

The writings of other correspondents spoke to similar concerns. In 1959 the *New York Times* correspondent Max Frankel wrote a series of articles about Siberia, which focused on Soviet campaigns to revive the region. Like other correspondents, Frankel pointed out the changes that were sweeping the Soviet Union and described the optimism of young Soviet people about the future of their country. Two articles in the series emphasized that the developments in Siberia had the potential to tip the scales of superpower competition in the Soviet favor:

Thousands [of people] toll there in summer heat and winter cold to overtake the United States some day in industrial output and standard of life. The American learning about the Soviet Union can no longer look only to Moscow, unfamiliar enough as are its ways. [...] Throughout Siberia there are pride and hope. Soviet plans for Siberia are grandiloquent, and many Russians seem willing to work and wait for the new world of communism.¹⁴⁶

Frankel suggested that the U.S. beware of Soviet plans for Siberia and popular mobilization in the area. His editors in New York agreed and supplemented the series with headlines and riders, which situated the articles in the context of Soviet promises to “reach and surpass” the United States. The rider of the first article, on the reconstruction

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, xxiii.

¹⁴⁶ Max Frankel, “Four Siberian Centers Typify Soviet Efforts to Overtake U.S.,” *The New York Times*, April 28, 1959, p. 1.

of Siberia, stated: “Vast, Rich Area Is a Basis of Hope of Excelling U.S.” The headline of the second item, describing life in major cities of the region, proclaimed that “Four Siberian Centers Typify Soviet Efforts to Overtake U.S.” While Frankel pointed out that “reaching and surpassing” America was still far away, neither he nor the *Times* would dismiss these goals as impossible.

References to sputniks, schools, and the transformation of Siberia presented a new image of the Soviet Union, but they certainly did not dispel entirely the old notions of the Soviet menace. On the contrary, by pointing out the areas of potential disadvantage to the U.S., the journalists’ accounts exacerbated the domestic concerns with the Communist enemy. The implicit proposition that American superiority might not last forever angered several readers. One such response to Frankel’s Siberian series reprimanded the *New York Times* for giving a false impression of Soviet progress:

Frankel’s recent visit to Siberia and the Soviet Far East [...] would lead people to believe that Russia is just around the corner from the high standards of living the United States now enjoys. Nothing can be farther from the truth. It will probably take quite a while longer than the articles imply for the Russians to even come close to the standard of living of the average U.S. Citizens today.¹⁴⁷

In an atmosphere of concern with Soviet overtaking the U.S., the reader evoked “high standards of living” as a point of reassurance in American superiority.¹⁴⁸

In fact, many foreign correspondents used similar strategies. Every reference to Soviet achievements also reiterated that Soviet standards of living remained far behind those of the United States or that Soviet dictatorship was no match for American freedom. For example, Irving Levine emphasized that Soviet high level of technology

¹⁴⁷ NYT. Foreign Desk. Box 34, Folder 10.

¹⁴⁸ On post-Sputnik concerns with Soviet superiority see: Zelizer, *Arsenal of Democracy*, 138-139.

coexisted with the low standards of living: “there were sputniks in the sky, but for Russians on the ground there were no cars to be bought, shortages of everyday goods, and cramped housing.”¹⁴⁹

At the same time, persistent references to American superiority derived from habits inculcated by domestic anti-Communism, whereby the readers identified unqualified descriptions of Soviet advantages with the attitudes of “fellow travellers.” Forty years after the conclusion of his Moscow assignment, Max Frankel explained that his descriptions of Soviet everyday life sought to reassure audiences of American superiority and to protect himself from being labeled a Communist sympathizer:

Stalin had made *Soviet* a synonym for *aggressive*, and in the overheated atmosphere of the 1950s, my minority view that Khrushchev had a primarily domestic agenda could have marked me as the Communists’ dupe. Americans were simply not ready to be reassured. I nonetheless tried to reassure them by contrasting the spectacular success of Soviet rocketry with the pathetic poverty and inefficiency of daily life.¹⁵⁰

The contrast between “success of Soviet rocketry” and “pathetic poverty of daily life” became a central feature in the journalists’ post assignment accounts. The evocation of this contrast allowed the journalists to explore Soviet achievements while making themselves safe from accusations in Communist sympathies.

The journalists had used the faults of the Soviet state to showcase the superiority of the U.S. since the early days of the Cold War. In the 1940s, foreign correspondents focused on the Soviet regime’s oppression of its citizens and thus demonstrated the advantages of U.S. democracy and the freedoms that it allowed. In the late 1950s, the

¹⁴⁹ Levine, *Main Street*, 24.

¹⁵⁰ Max Frankel, *The Times of My Life and My Life with the Times* (New York: Delta, 1999), 181.

journalists began to concentrate on Soviet everyday life and emphasized the comparative advantages of American standards of living. Foreign correspondents expected their readers to find reassurance in these descriptions because high living standards in the U.S. were central to Americans' self-representations at home and abroad.¹⁵¹ The comparisons between Soviet and American everyday life increased the importance of living standards in American journalists' examination of the Soviet Union and in their evaluation of the superpower contest. Reporting on Russia thus became an extension of the journalists' American ideology.

By the mid 1950s, Soviet leaders had embarked on a new path in foreign policy, which led to a gradual opening of the Soviet Union to American foreign correspondents. The changes within the Soviet Union and the new opportunities for journalistic work that had opened up since mid 1950s brought new themes into the journalists' accounts. Their explorations featured a broader cast of Soviet characters and introduced the readers to the daily life in the Soviet Union. Foreign correspondents recorded the transformations that were occurring after Stalin's death and explained to their readers the sources of the Russians' optimism about the future. The correspondents pointed out how this transformation of the rival superpower, especially its advances in science and technology, introduced new challenges to the United States.

From the mid-1950s, foreign correspondents began to focus their accounts on Soviet everyday life and made comparisons between Soviet and American standards of

¹⁵¹ Hendershot, *Anti-Communism*, 13-16; Kenneth A. Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2006), 253-274.

living an important feature in their writings. They were reflecting the changing rhetoric in superpower competition, which now involved not only ideas and values, but also satellites and kitchen appliances. On the one hand, the journalists' focus on Soviet everyday life sought to respond to the changing interests of American readers and their desire to learn more about regular people across the Iron Curtain. On the other hand, this topic offered ample opportunity to demonstrate the comparative advantages of American political culture and standards of living. The journalists' post-assignment accounts thus offered the readers a safe framework, which allowed them to explore Russia and at the same time, to reassure themselves of the superiority of their own country. In the years to follow, the contrast between Soviet and American standards of living took on a life of its own and became the most important theme in writings about the Soviet Union.

Chapter 4: Reports from the Backward East

In 1976, more than twenty years since the appearance of his book *American in Russia*, Harrison Salisbury reviewed the books of two younger colleagues and proclaimed:

The simultaneous appearance of two such excellent reports on Russia is a double blessing and, incidentally, a remarkable demonstration of the ability of American reporters to crack the famous enigma wrapped in a riddle [*sic*] – as Winston Churchill liked to characterize Russia.¹

The “excellent reports” were *The Russians* by former *New York Times* bureau chief Hedrick Smith, and *Russia: the People and the Power* by his counterpart from the *Washington Post*, Robert Kaiser. Readers and critics hailed both publications as excellent “inside” view on Soviet society. Shortly after their appearance, these accounts came to be regarded as the essential reading on contemporary Soviet Union and as the most important publications of Moscow correspondents since Salisbury’s book came out in 1955.²

Smith and Kaiser’s accounts were the most well known, but certainly not the only reports on Soviet life available to the U.S. reader. As American press corps in Moscow expanded in the 1960s, almost every year between 1965 and 1985 saw a publication of a new book authored by an American journalist, just out of Moscow. It was an evidence for Russia’s continuous status of “enigma wrapped in a riddle” that each such publication

¹ Harrison E. Salisbury, “Russia – A Continent from Cover to Cover,” *The Los Angeles Times*, January 25, 1976, p. 6.

² See for example: Philip Knightley, “Reports from the Moscow Bureaus,” *The New York Times*, January 25, 1976, p. 5; Max J Freidman, Illuminating the dark pall that has hung over Russia, *Chicago Tribune*, January 25, 1976, p. F3.

was hailed as an important contribution to Americans' understanding of their Cold War adversary.

In the late 1960s and the 1970s the spirit of investigative, socially mobilized, journalism expanded into foreign reporting and inspired American correspondents in Moscow to seek new angles on the Soviet story. Changes within the Soviet Union helped the journalists to realize their aspirations. In 1961 censorship of foreign correspondents was abolished and journalists began to file directly from their offices. Soviet authorities opened additional areas to journalists' travel; Foreign Ministry's Press Department expanded the range of organized excursions for international press. Finally, the proliferation of Soviet dissident groups gave the journalists an unprecedented critical "inside" access to the Soviet society.

This is not to say that Moscow correspondents now enjoyed working conditions that were similar to those of their colleagues in London or Paris. Quite often journalists, whose publications or connections with dissidents especially displeased the Soviet authorities, faced an increase of bureaucratic hurdles or direct expulsions. Surveillance of and outright intervention in journalists' interactions with Soviet dissidents made their relationships uncomfortable and precarious. As a result, the notion that, post-assignment account allowed the journalists to express their thoughts more freely than in the Moscow copy, persisted.

Each journalist approached the Soviet story in a different way. Hedrick Smith, Robert Kaiser, and David Shipler, delivered comprehensive descriptions of Soviet life, in which they targeted the ingrained stereotypes about the Soviet menace and suggested that the Soviet Union posed no danger to the United States. Anatole Schub and Kevin Klose

from the *Washington Post*, and Andrew Nagorski from *Newsweek* took it upon themselves to promote Americans' awareness of the plight of Soviet dissidents. Other journalists used their personal experiences in the Soviet Union to illustrate less known aspects of Soviet society. For example, *Time* correspondent Jerrold Schechter came to Moscow with his wife and five children. All the children were sent to Soviet schools, which gave Schechter unique insights into Soviet education system.

Despite the difference in style and approach, reports authored by the new generation of foreign correspondents shared certain important themes, which I explore in this chapter. Most correspondents emphasized the oppressive apparatus of Soviet police state, highlighted the failure of Soviet institutions, and focused on the faults of Soviet standards of living. Journalists in the Brezhnev era also introduced a new narrative, which stressed the erosion of Soviet citizens' commitment to the socialist ideology and drew attention to the failure of Soviet-style socialism. Relying on stereotypical representations of Russian national character, the new narrative sought to explain the Soviet people's refusal to embrace capitalism and liberal democracy and the supposedly better life that they offered.

Investigative Reporters and Soviet Dissidents

The rebellious spirit of the 1960s ushered in reconsideration of the press's role in American society and of the media's relationship with the government. Younger journalists saw the press as an important tool for education and social change, which would illuminate injustices in American society, and help to correct them. Journalism played a pivotal role in the turmoil of the 1960s and the 1970s. Coverage of the Civil Rights Movement and the war in Vietnam, as well as the exposure of the Pentagon Papers

and the Watergate Affair, brought these contested issues into every household and increasingly put the press in opposition to the governing elites. The triumphs of investigative journalism also elevated the prestige of the profession and reinforced the idea of “the fourth branch of government” – journalistic reports really led to significant political changes.³ The atmosphere of the early Cold War, whereby the press mobilized to support U.S. government and its interests, was no longer tenable. More and more voices in the profession claimed that the journalists’ duty was to protect the public, to be government watchdogs, and to investigate its activities.⁴

In fact, many of triumphs of investigative reporting in the 1960s occurred on the Cold War front. In 1960, the Moscow bureau of the AP broke the story of Soviet shooting down of the U-2 spy plane, which President Eisenhower attempted to cover up.⁵ The most radical clash between the journalists and the national security state was in Vietnam, whereby the government and news media’s senior editors attempted to silence the first journalistic reports on American troops’ violence toward civilians.⁶ Incidentally, Harrison Salisbury was one of the first journalists, who clashed with editors and civil servants over

³ James Aucoin, *The Evolution of American Investigative Journalism* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press 2005), 52-57.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 48-49. Schudson, *Discovering the News*, 162-163; 179-181.

⁵ Aucoin, *Investigative Journalism*, 53. Eisenhower first denied that the plane was shot down and then told the press it was a research plane. According to Aucoin, when the Soviet authorities presented the captured pilot, Gary Powers, “editors, reporters, and columnists, who had trusted the White House to tell them the truth, were astounded that they had accepted the administration’s words at face value.” Schorr, *Staying Tuned*, Chapter 7; Nicholas Daniloff, *Of Spies and Spokesmen: My Life as a Cold War Correspondent* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008).

⁶ Aucoin, *Investigative Journalism*, 56. On American press in the Vietnam War see: Hamilton, *Roving Eye*, 382-417; William M. Hammond, *Reporting Vietnam: Media and Military at War*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998); Daniel C. Hallin, *The “Uncensored War:” the Media and Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Clarence R. Wyatt, *Paper Soldiers: The American Press and the Vietnam War* (New York: Norton, 1993).

his coverage from Vietnam.⁷ The government's attempts to silence journalistic reports from Southeast Asia amplified the importance of "on-site, behind-the-media-event, direct-observation reporting."⁸

The rotation of foreign correspondents from one international hot spot to the other brought investigative reporting into the coverage of the Soviet Union.⁹ Interviewed in 2010, Robert Kaiser, *Washington Post*'s Moscow bureau chief between 1971 and 1974, made an explicit connection between investigative journalism at home and abroad:

In Washington, as we know from the history of this newspaper, we can find out important things that could bring down the government. I didn't have any such ambition in the Soviet Union. But because of the fog created by Churchill and that whole view of the Soviet Union that it was a mystery and we could never figure it out, my challenge was to resolve the mystery. It was to say, "No, this can be figured out." Not in the sense of knowing the names of all the Soviet Union's spies or all the secrets of the Politburo, but more in the sense of how this system really works, what matters, what doesn't, and why things happen the way they do.¹⁰

Correspondingly, in coverage of Soviet affairs, the first target of the journalists' investigations was "the conventional wisdom" and the ingrained stereotypes about the Soviet menace. Robert Kaiser continued:

And we were in America as they were in the Soviet Union, the victims of stereotypes and misleading notions about what the other guys was really like. So I had [a] lot of fun always, writing about unexpected things and trying to explain to Americans that this was just another kind of human organization and enterprise. But it was recognizably human, and the people in it were, too. [...] But I also thought that it was very stable. That it wasn't going to be a great success but that

⁷ Hamilton, *Roving Eye*, 393-403.

⁸ Aucoin, *Investigative Journalism*, 56.

⁹ Many American correspondents embarked on their Moscow assignment after an assignment in Vietnam. Among these were Hedrick Smith, Christopher Wren, Robert Kaiser. Others, continued to cover international hotspots after Moscow. David Shieler went to the Middle East; Seymour Topping to China and Vietnam and Max Frankel was assigned to the Caribbean and Cuba. Moreover, foreign editors and foreign correspondents considered Moscow one of the "tough" assignments, on the same level with Vietnam and Africa. NYT. Foreign Desk. Box 156. Folder 12.

¹⁰ Robert Kaiser, interviewed by Dina Fainberg, December 6, 2010, Washington DC.

it wasn't a great threat to us. That was one of my early realizations. It was a challenge to conventional wisdom, certainly in Washington.¹¹

Developments in superpower relations supported Kaiser's feeling that Americans needed to re-examine the Soviet threat and to develop a more nuanced understanding of the Soviet society. This need grew even stronger with the beginning of the Soviet-American negotiations, known as the *détente*. According to Hedrick Smith, the chief of the *New York Times* Moscow bureau between 1971 and 1974, the *détente* prompted a new wave of interest in Soviet life:

We were extraordinary lucky – we were in Russia at the time when *détente* occurred and there was some reduction in the tension and there was some impulse on both sides to try to get along better and to figure some way to manage the nuclear threat. [...] I wanted to know what that society was like, what its people were like, was it really a threat, was there a way that we could live with them on this globe, what are they like, as people. Just the most simple basic questions. And nothing I had read, certainly not in a newspaper, but elsewhere either, and I had studied it, told me.¹²

While general interest in Soviet everyday life persisted since the 1950s, the *détente* introduced new questions and required a new analysis of American-Soviet relations: Can we be friends with the Russians? Can the Russians become more like us? The first question emerged in the context of expanding diplomatic negotiations and addressed the public concern with the trustworthiness of the Soviet regime, a concern quite natural after years of emphasis on the Soviet menace. The second question had occupied American minds since the 19th century. While it assumed Russians' potential similarity to the

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Hedrick Smith, interviewed by Dina Fainberg, December 11, 2008, Bethesda MD.

Americans, this question also betrayed a fundamental sentiment that this was an altogether different breed of people that needs to be examined and understood.¹³

During the late 1960s and the 1970s, a previously unavailable source for better understanding of the Soviet Union presented itself. The activity of Soviet dissident groups expanded in the early 1960s and finally attracted international attention with the trial of the writers Andrei Siniavskii and Yulii Daniel. Since 1965 several American journalists played an important role in publicizing the dissidents' cause in the West. Many articles, chapters, even entire books, were dedicated to the Soviet dissidents and their plight. The dissidents occupied a central place in the social lives of many American journalists in Moscow, and the relationships between the two groups often became very personal. To this day, many correspondents fondly remember their special friendship with the dissidents, the latter's courage, and the deep intellectual conversations they had about Soviet life.¹⁴ Foreign correspondents described at great length how, among the dissidents and the intellectuals, they found intimacy, friendship, and kindred spirits.¹⁵ Robert Kaiser explained that this sense of kindred spirit made the dissidents important to him and his colleagues: "American journalism loves conflict, it loves challenges to authority and in

¹³ For late 19th century cultural and religious imagination of Russia in the U.S. see: Foglesong, *American Mission*, 7-33.

¹⁴ Susan Jacoby, interviewed by Dina Fainberg, December 15, 2010, New York City; Smith, interviewed on December 11, 2008.

¹⁵ Hedrick Smith to Christopher Wren, April 6, 1975; Hedrick Smith to Lev and Raisa Kopelev, December 28, 1975. Papers of Hedrick Smith. Manuscript Division. Library of Congress. Washington, D.C. Box 2. Folder 4; Folder 9; Jerrold Schecter, interviewed by Dina Fainberg, December 12, 2008, Washington DC; Kaiser interviewed on December 6, 2010. Also see: Andrew Nagorski, *Reluctant Farewell* (New York: Holt, Winston, 1985); Kevin Klose, *Russia and the Russians: Inside the Closed Society* (New York: Norton, 1984), 218-223; Bassow, *Moscow Correspondents*, 257-258.

the American context, Soviets who seem to share American values about basic things like freedom of expression and so on, were instantly sympathetic figures.”¹⁶

The boundaries between “us” and “them,” which governed most journalists’ interactions in the Soviet Union, were erased in their relationship with the dissidents and prompted many correspondents to view the dissidents as fellow truth-seekers and to identify with their plight. Robert Kaiser continued:

Solzhenitsyn was interesting to us [...] because he was like us, a seeker of truth. And he was finding out stuff. A wonderful definition of a good American journalist is someone who finds out things that powerful people don’t want him to find out. And that’s exactly what he was doing in the Soviet context with a GULAG and everything. It was all an attempt to show [...] what the realities were. [...] Literary journalists, journalists who care about writing are always impressed by things of that kind, I certainly was.¹⁷

Kaiser viewed Solzhenitsyn and others as fellow investigative reporters, who like himself, sought to uncover the truth. That sense of shared calling drew the journalists close to the dissidents. It is also highly probable that the dissidents’ activities impressed the journalists to such a degree because they echoed events at home: the struggle for Civil Rights, students’ protest movements, and American activism against the war in Vietnam. Many journalists were exposed to these movements prior to their arrival to Moscow and expressed admiration of their participants.¹⁸ The dissidents might have seemed like the Soviet incarnation of the international struggle for a better world.

The perception of emotional and ideological bonds with the dissidents inspired many correspondents to see the dissidents’ struggle with the Soviet state not just as a

¹⁶ Kaiser interviewed on December 6, 2010.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ For example, Hedrick Smith covered the Civil Rights unrests in one of his first assignments. Robert Kaiser covered the students’ protests in Europe during his tenure in the Post’s London bureau.

good news story, but as an important political cause, in which American journalists were personally invested. Several correspondents tried to increase international awareness of the dissidents' plight by publicizing it in their reports. Journalists and dissidents believed that the attention of international media would curtail the repressions against them.¹⁹ The relationship with the dissidents pushed several journalists beyond their original intention to challenge conventional wisdom about Russia. The view of journalism as the watchdog of the government, central to the 1960s, transplanted into reporting from the Soviet Union, and the government to watch became the Soviet one. American correspondents were no longer engaged in direct-observation reporting, but actually participated in a local conflict.

Moreover, covering the dissident story as a participant was thrilling. It put the journalists at the heart of action and intrigue and enabled them to experience a sense of danger, all of which became important tropes in descriptions of investigative reporting after Vietnam and Watergate. To that day, Robert Kaiser and Hedrick Smith remember the elaborate conspiracy techniques they used to communicate with their dissident friends or to arrange their famous interview with Solzhenitsyn.²⁰ The following fragment, describing the efforts of the *Washington Post* correspondent Kevin Klose to interview Irina, wife of the dissident Yuri Orlov, demonstrates that these stories made for an excellent read:

Orlov was convicted the next day and given the maximum sentence. [...] Irina's account of this was crucial. We would take her to David's [Satter, *Financial*

¹⁹ Zhores Medvedev, interviewed by Dina Fainberg, September 5, 2011, London; Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Bodalsia telenok s dubom, ocherki liteaturnoi zhizni* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1975), <http://lib.ru/PROZA/SOLZHENICYN/telenok.txt>.

²⁰ Robert Kaiser and Hedrick Smith, interviewed together by Catharine Nepomnyashchy on November 13, 2008, Columbia University, New York City; Smith, interviewed on December 11, 2008; Kaiser interviewed on December 6, 2010.

Times correspondent] apartment where the correspondents could interview her. [...] As we rolled along the Moscow Ring Road toward it, KGB cars completely surrounded us [...] Four or five beefy agents were jammed inside each car and one man in each car had a small videotape camera trained on us. Then I noticed that, as if out of signal, the taping has ceased in every car. *They've ran out*, I thought. Immediately another thought crowded past that idea: *they're saving tape for something still to come*. This bothered me plenty. But what? [...] I suddenly recognized the scenario: the car in front of me would plug the building's narrow entrance like a cork in a bottle and then the other agents would attack as we moved on foot into the building. They were saving film for that. Even as this realization was forming in my head, I began accelerating the Volvo. The KGB driver ahead had to stay in front of me by reading my movements in his rear view mirror. This man would have to be very good to stay with us. I began weaving from lane to lane. [...] We led them on a high-speed chase through winding back streets. With each turn, the KGB fell further behind. [...] As we crested the last rise a block from the compound, a stumpy babushka with string sacks groaning with groceries was square in the middle of the street. I hit the horn. She hunkered, hesitated, then leapt aside as we flashed past. [...] Satter and Voinovich hustled Irina inside. Then I heard the chase cars coming – horns blaring. The babushka was in the middle of the street again! At that exact moment, I figured I was one for one and batting a thousand against the secret police.²¹

This description of the journalists' efforts to help the dissidents and report about Orlov's trial reads as if it was lifted from a Cold War thriller in its entirety, including the crossing babushka as a comic relief. Stories such as this, increased the prestige of Moscow correspondents, and endowed the profession with a certain sense of romanticism and allure, similar to the ones the readers were familiar with from the glamorous representations of the Cold War in popular culture. Yet, unlike characters in spy fiction or a James Bond movie, the journalists saw themselves as helping the just fight of concrete individuals and as standing up to real villains and oppressive system. Stories such as this positioned American journalists as champions of Soviet people's rights and as staunch opponents of the oppressive Soviet regime.

²¹ Klose, *Russia and the Russians*, 25-26.

The brave friendship between Soviet dissidents and Western journalists is the staple of contemporary narrative about American Cold War reporting. Less remembered are the clashes of expectations that informed this encounter and the resulting tensions that occasionally erupted between individual representatives of the two groups. In their attempts to limit the dissidents' contact with foreign press, Soviet authorities threatened international news organizations with "stern reprisals" against their bureaus in Moscow.²² Faced with a choice between coverage of dissident news and protection of their Moscow operations, many editors instructed their correspondents to stay away from dissident events.²³ Several journalists also felt that although the struggle for human rights in the Soviet Union was very important, it was not the only story in town.²⁴

Memoir literature reveals that dissidents occasionally found their interactions with Western journalists frustrating and difficult to understand. For example, Andrei Sakharov remembered that, "many times I encountered very dangerous distortions and reductions of the documents that I gave [to the foreign press], as a result, important parts of these documents were distorted and I came across as a fool."²⁵ Sakharov and others also pointed out that several Western correspondents were not daring enough in their critique of the Soviet regime and therefore occasionally failed to report on news and events that

²² Bassow, *Moscow Correspondents*, 237.

²³ In 1968 the relatives of two dissidents, Yuri Galaskov and Alexander Ginzburg, organized a press conference for Western journalists. Soviet Foreign Ministry warned foreign correspondents that if they attend the press conference, "stern reprisals would follow" and news bureaus would be closed. Out of eighteen American correspondents in Moscow, only four journalists showed up to the press conference. The journalists retreated when they realized that KGB men in civilian clothes blocked access to the apartment. NYT. Foreign desk. Box 66. Folder 9; Bassow, *Moscow Correspondents*, 237-238.

²⁴ Bassow, *Moscow Correspondents*, 249.

²⁵ Andrei Sakharov, *Vospominaniia: v dvukh tomakh* (Moscow: Prava cheloveka, 1996), Ebook edition, Ch.14.

the dissidents deemed important.²⁶ Sakharov attributed these glitches and distortions to an existence of a “Soviet fifth column.”²⁷

What Sakharov failed to understand is that foreign reporters and editors did not regard every dissident statement as newsworthy. Few years after high profile dissidents like Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn first came to dominate international headlines, journalists and dissidents began to feel that “there is less interest in the West about Soviet dissidents.”²⁸ Smith’s successor in Moscow, Christopher Wren, believed that the declining interest was partially of dissidents’ own making: “Andrei Dmitrich [Sakharov] and Yelena Bonner [...] call us over and then don’t have anything new to say, consequentially eroding their credibility more each time.”²⁹ Sakharov and other dissidents saw it as the duty of the Western press to publicize Soviet mistreatment of dissidents in the most detailed and nuanced form possible. Reporters on the other hand, were more interested in dramatic “new” developments and cared less about the fine details of the conflict.

In fact, these two conflicting approaches to the journalists-dissidents relationship clashed on the pages of *The New York Review of Books* as early as 1971. An article by a well-known dissident, Andrei Amalrik, argued that American journalists in Moscow willingly forfeit their professional duty to report on the crimes of totalitarian regime, “on

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Ch.10; Solzhenitsyn, *Bodalsia telenok*.

²⁷ Sakharov, *Vospominaniia*, Ch. 14.

²⁸ Cristopher Wren to Hedrick Smith, May 10, 1975. Hedrick Smith Papers. Box 2. Folder 4.

²⁹ *Ibid.* Hedrick Smith also felt the sea change in public interest. He remained in touch with many Moscow dissidents and did his best to help in their hardships. But he felt that news media in the U.S. was over-saturated with the dissident question. Smith explained to an émigré friend: “They [the New York Times] received many articles from Russian immigrants about such themes as emigration, dissent, the treatment of dissidents, Sakharov, Solzhenitsyn, and they are getting tired of having the same themes treated in the same way. [...] There is an over-supply on the market. Hedrick Smith to Viktor and Barbara, March 6, 1976. Hedrick Smith Papers. Box 3. Folder 1.

the assumption that it will only serve to anger the Soviet authorities even further.”³⁰

Amalrik directly accused *UPI*'s bureau chief, Henry Shapiro, of collaboration with the Soviet state and criticized the *New York Times* bureau chief, Bernard Gwertzman, for ignoring important developments in the dissident circles.³¹ In conclusion Amalrik pointed out that foreign correspondents united to oppose the Soviet regime only when the journalists lost their permission to order goods from abroad and their own luxurious lifestyles were threatened.³²

The historian Barbara Walker explains that it was the existence of close relationships between certain dissidents and journalists that laid the foundations of Amalrik's attack: “By aiding and entertaining the dissidents, such journalists were participating in what could appear to be partisan or insider activities, and ... subjecting themselves to certain partisan or insider expectations.”³³ Amalrik's critique grew out of such expectations and “was founded on the notion that ... Western journalists had certain moral obligations” toward the dissident movement, namely to give it the highest priority in their reporting and to cover it at all costs.³⁴

Several months after the appearance of Amalrik's article, *The New York Review of Books* published Bernard Gwertzman's response, which defended the professional

³⁰ Andrei Amalrik, “News from Moscow,” *The New York Review of Books*, March 25, 1971.

³¹ According to Amalrik, Shapiro shelved important dissident documents and distorted other correspondents' view on dissident activities, in exchange for favorable treatment from the Soviet authorities. *The New York Review of Books* blacked out Shapiro's name in the entire article and wrote that “the name of this well known foreign correspondent for a Western news agency is known to the editors, but has been omitted here.” Barbara Walker explains that everyone knew that the omitted name was Shapiro's, especially because prior to publication Amalrik's article circulated in Samizdat and among Moscow correspondents, with Shapiro's name explicitly mentioned. Barbara Walker, “Moscow Human Rights Defenders Look West. Attitudes toward U.S. Journalists in the 1960s and the 1970s,” *Kritika* 9, no. 4, (2008): 923.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 918-919.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 924.

integrity of American correspondents. Gwertzman argued that journalists' duties demanded reporting on wide spectrum of events and opinions, and extended beyond the coverage of dissidents. Amalrik's criticism, Gwertzman contended, derived from a fundamental Soviet misunderstanding of the working of American press:

No American newspaper sends a correspondent to report in one aspect of Soviet life. [...] Concepts of "balanced reporting" in which American newsmen have been trained are alien to the Russian experience, and completely foreign to the history of the Soviet Union. The press to a Russian is something to be "used." The officials want to impress the world with their achievements through the foreign press, and the dissidents want to expose how evil is the system through the foreign press.³⁵

Gwertzman proposed that Soviet misconceptions about the duties of American press derived from a cultural gap between the two countries. In evoking the cultural gap, Gwertzman not only sought to defend himself and his colleagues. He also attempted to restore the distance between reporters and the subjects of their reporting, which became increasingly blurred as a result of journalists' close contact with the dissidents.

Gwertzman's reply shows how difficult it was to reconcile two notions that were central to the self-representation of Moscow correspondents at the time: the journalist as an impartial observer, and the journalist as a defender of human rights. *The New York Review of Books* debate revealed how clashing expectation occasionally undermined journalists' relationships with the dissidents.

Even though individual correspondents differed in their opinions on how involved they should be in the dissidents' struggle, journalists' encounters with the members of Soviet intelligentsia, dissidents, and refuseniks shaped their view of Soviet life. For

³⁵ Bernard Gwertzman, "News from Moscow," *New York Review of Books*, May 20, 1971.

example, most journalists' descriptions of Soviet society singled out three prominent groups – the party apparatchiks, the intellectuals (including the dissidents), and everybody else. Although the party and the intellectuals often enjoyed separate chapters, the lion's share of the reports focused on the members of the third group, whom the journalists labeled as "the average Russian." This three-tiered view of Soviet society began to appear in the post-assignment accounts since the mid-1960s and built on the journalists' interactions with their friends in Moscow. A classification of Russian society into "the servants of power," "the enlightened intellectuals," and "grey masses"– was a longstanding tradition of the Russian intelligentsia.

Several journalists came to rely on the dissidents as an important source of information about Soviet life. Hedrick Smith's correspondence reveals that while he worked on *The Russians*, he often consulted several émigré acquaintances, whom he had met in Moscow. Robert Kaiser explained that the dissidents were very helpful in his efforts to understand how the Soviet Union worked:

Selfishly, the most important thing for me was that the fact of the dissidents' existence, gave me an opportunity to penetrate Soviet society. [...] It wouldn't have been possible otherwise. Both the dissidents and the emigration. Ultimately, when I left the Soviet Union in July 1974, my first stop was Rome and my second stop was Tel Aviv, and I remained [there] three or four weeks, interviewing recent émigrés from all walks of life and from all over the Soviet Union who could tell me how things worked and lots of very helpful material that's in my book. But the same was true in Moscow, the guy like Alexander Lerner, many of the refuseniks, who'd been very well placed in Soviet society, who applied to emigrate, had been refused, and were liberated by this fact to an extraordinary degree.³⁶

As Kaiser pointed out, his knowledge about the internal workings of Soviet society came mainly from the dissidents and the emigrants. Since the latter were essentially disgruntled

³⁶ Kaiser interviewed on December 6, 2010.

and frustrated with the Soviet state, they were bound to impart their critiques to the journalists. Thus, in their capacity as friends, news item, or source of information, the dissidents influenced the journalists' perception of the Soviet Union, which foreign correspondents passed on to their readers.

The Unimaginable Plight Of Soviet Consumers

After visiting the Ukrainian mining city of Donetsk in the late 1970s, *Washington Post* correspondent Kevin Klose reported his dismay at the living conditions experienced by "regular" Soviet people:

This was life in the fourth-largest city of the Ukraine, a Soviet Socialist Republic with its own voting seat in the United Nations. ... The citizens of New Colony [housing for retired workers in Donetsk] got their water from a community well in a weed-choked field a hundred yards from Leonovs' doorway. A journey of about forty feet in another direction took the residents to their sanitary facilities – six foul-smelling, rough-hewn outhouses.³⁷

Klose's attention to such things as amenities, water, and retirement homes closely followed Americans' interest in Soviet everyday life, which persisted throughout the Cold War years. However, since the late 1960s Soviet living standards and availability of consumer goods moved to the center stage of the journalists' accounts. Most books and articles paid close attention to the stores and consumption in the Soviet Union, the purchasing power of salaries, and the conditions of housing, schools, and hospitals.

Earlier foreign observers attributed the difficulties in the Soviet consumer sector to the war and did not rule out future improvement. In the 1950s journalists compared their observations of Soviet living standards with the ones available in pre-Revolutionary Russia or during the immediate post-war years. They emerged from these comparisons

³⁷ Klose, *Russia and the Russians*, 49.

convinced that the Russians' life had greatly improved. Many journalists in the late 1950s also pointed out that the Soviet people themselves were mostly content with the state of their material lives and believed that it will improve further in the future.³⁸ By contrast, journalists in the Brezhnev era frequently used the United States as their reference point and compared Soviet everyday life with the living standards of the American middle class. As a result, most journalists in the 1970s shared the view that the Soviet system was rotten and that the only possible outcome for Soviet economy, services, and consumer culture was further decline. When foreign correspondents encountered statements of content with Soviet standards of living, they dismissed such statements as examples of Russian provinciality or explained them as fear to criticize the regime.³⁹

In describing the everyday lives of everyday Russians, American correspondents stressed the gaps between the statements of Soviet propaganda and their own observations. While briefly recognizing the potential appeal of such things as free housing, healthcare, and education systems, the journalists pointed out their inadequacies. They explained that universal housing usually means total lack of privacy: a room in a communal apartment where three generations of one family live together. They pointed out that the average wage was scarcely enough to support a family and that the healthcare system was too overcrowded to provide a decent treatment. According to journalists, the idea of a free education system, accessible for all, also collapsed under close scrutiny, for they learned that greasing the palm of someone on the admission committee increased

³⁸ Gunther, *Inside Russia*, 355-377; Levine, *Main Street*, 338-339; William J. Jorden, "The People of Russia," *The New York Times*, August 25, 1957, p. 38.

³⁹ Hedrick Smith, *The Russians* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1980), 104; Nagorski, *Reluctant Farewell*, 94.

one's chances to enter a prestigious university. Moreover, the journalists explained, the socialist system's inability to meet the basic needs of its people set in motion a whole economy of corruption, which contributed to the erosion of confidence in the state.

The dire state of Soviet everyday life was most evident in the descriptions of the Soviet stores. The latter had attracted the attention of foreign correspondents since the dawn of the Cold War.⁴⁰ In the earlier accounts the stores served the journalists' indicator of the pace of Soviet recovery from the war and economic development. By the mid 1950s, comparisons between availability of consumer goods in the USSR and the U.S. sought to reassure American readers in the continuous advantages of American liberal capitalism and democracy. By the mid-1960s, the contrasts between Soviet and American standards of living moved to the center stage of correspondents' reports. Foreign correspondents dedicated large segments of their accounts to the details of Soviet everyday life. The journalists' scrutiny of the Soviet stores became more vigorous and their comparisons with American stores more persistent. Many correspondents pointed out that American readers couldn't even begin to imagine the plight of Soviet consumers. The following fragment from an account by *The Christian Science Monitor* correspondent David K. Willis is a typical example of the language that the journalists used to describe the difficulties of Soviet experience:

⁴⁰ In the early 1970s American policy makers and cultural-exchange designers continued to hope that images of Western abundance would eventually make the Soviet people realize the advantages of life in the liberal system. Thus, they sought to promote cultural change in the USSR through published descriptions and exhibitions of the superiority of American consumer goods and living standards. The more ardent Cold Warriors hoped that these tactics would spur the Soviet citizens to overthrow the communist government altogether. For example, in a May 1977 broadcast Ronald Reagan suggested "We could have an unexpectedly if citizen Ivan is becoming discontented enough to start talking back. Maybe we should drop a few million typical mail order catalogues on Minsk & Pinsk & Moscow to whet their appetites." Cited in: Foglesong, *The American Mission*, 167.

Around a corner was a butcher's shop. [...] I went down the steps into a dark room. Shelves were almost empty. The floor was filthy. The white coats on the sales assistants had not been laundered for some time, if ever. Large bottles containing various pickled parts of unnamed animals stood here and there. A single twenty-watt bulb without a shade provided the only light. [...] By Western standards, much of what the Soviet Union sells as meat to ordinary citizens is almost inedible.⁴¹

Willis' description stressed that the daily task of food shopping in the Soviet Union was a gruesome experience. Willis and his colleague blamed the dire state of the Soviet stores on the inefficiency of the Soviet state, the malfunctioning of planned economy and the absence of free market. Some, like Hedrick Smith, invited their readers to appreciate the advantages of the capitalist system by comparing their experiences with those of the Soviet consumers:

The figures don't begin to convey the texture of Soviet consumer life, and the enormous gulf between the daily ordeal of the Russian shopper and the easy life-style of Americans. My Russian friends were amused to hear about the American suburban housewives getting into their station wagon and dashing off to the supermarket or shopping for groceries a couple of times a week.⁴²

Both fragments cited above demonstrate that American correspondents evaluated Soviet consumption vis-à-vis the practices and experiences of their own circles – the American middle class. Such comparisons, and the resulting critical view of the Soviet system glossed over the differences in standards of living and access to consumer culture that existed in the United States. In these and other similarly styled descriptions, American correspondents elevated the standards of American middle class to the position of universal yardstick, and presented the principles of liberal capitalism and consumerism as natural, rather than ideologically determined, forms of social arrangement.

⁴¹ Willis, *Klass*, 19-20, 30.

⁴² Smith, *The Russians*, 76-77.

Writing in 1976, Hedrick Smith surely knew that the “suburban housewife” was by no means representative of American society. Therefore it is plausible to suggest that broader cultural trends of the time influenced Smith in his selection of a prototype. The use of the middle class to represent America as a whole was a prominent feature in U.S. self-representation at home and abroad.⁴³ While glossing over domestic class and racial rifts, this image suggested to foreign audiences that the American model should be emulated and invited domestic audiences to imagine themselves as a nation unified by high standards of living. Beyond the traditional importance of consumerism in the Cold War rhetoric, detailed descriptions of long lines and empty stores in the Soviet Union had a special significance in the mid 1970s, when the United States was going through its first economic decline since WWII.⁴⁴ The vivid picture of the plight of Soviet consumers reinforced the readers’ belief in the strength of the U.S. economy and its ultimate advantages.

Scholars of American consumer culture pointed out the persistent importance of consumer plentitude in the construction of “American exceptionalism”.⁴⁵ In 1958, David Potter’s book *People of Plenty* cemented the idea that material abundance and variety of choice are unique attributes of American national character.⁴⁶ American journalists in the USSR took the idea of consumer plenty one step further. Their critiques of Soviet

⁴³ Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 112-165; Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 253-274; Belmonte, *Selling*, 116-159; Hendershot, *Anti-Communism*, 13-16.

⁴⁴ James T. Patterson, *Grand expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), Ebook edition, Ch. 25.

⁴⁵ T. J. Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 17-40; Cohen, *Consumers' Republic*, 19; James T. Adams, *The Epic of America* (Boston: Little Brown, 1959), 374-386.

⁴⁶ David M. Potter, *People of Plenty. Economic Abundance and American Character* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1954).

consumption suggested that material abundance was universally important, almost a human right. That the Soviet people did not claim that right from their leaders was a marker of Russian national character and a proof of people's submissiveness to their leaders. Hedrick Smith explained:

The regime has failed to make good on all kinds of promises, yet Russian consumers are appeased if there is a steady supply of bread, cabbage, potatoes, and vodka, an occasional shipment of oranges and a chance once in a while to go to a western movie. They will settle for less than consumers in any other industrialized nation – and that is an important element of the regime's stability.⁴⁷

In Smith's view, Soviet people's willingness to settle for limited consumer variety and inferior goods defined them as a nation, and set them radically apart from the norm – the American middle class. Paradoxically, derision of Soviet people's willingness to put up with scarcity of products went hand in hand with descriptions of their insatiable desire for, and fascination with, Western consumer goods of any kind. Just like the descriptions of Soviet stores, stories of Russians' passion for blue jeans and records showcased the ultimate advantages of American economic and political model.⁴⁸

Varying degrees of access to commodities and living standards informed the journalists as they differentiated between the segments of Soviet society. Thus, most of the correspondents defined Soviet elites as a group that enjoyed unlimited access to consumer goods. Foreign correspondents stressed that top echelons of the Party, Red Army and KGB high command, managers of important factories, and regional party bosses enjoyed privileges unimaginable to other Russians and did not share the daily

⁴⁷ Smith, *The Russians*, 667.

⁴⁸ International correspondents were perfectly aware of the hopes that US policy makers were investing in Russians' transformation through American commodities. The journalists' books implicitly criticize these policies and warn that the descriptions of Russians' attraction to Western goods should not be understood as a step towards adoption of Western principles. See for example, David Shipler, *Russia: Broken Idols, Solemn Dreams* (New York: Times Books, 1983), 348.

plights of their compatriots. Robert Kaiser illustrated how the benefits available to the Soviet elite, set it apart from the rest of the population:

Their food comes from a special shop to which they pay a nominal fee of 50 or 70 rubles a month. For this amount, which is less than most workers' families spend for food, they are entitled to order whatever they want, including rare products, which are not sold to the public. They can acquire foreign cars and gadgets otherwise never seen in the Soviet Union. Even their vodka is better than the ordinary man's.⁴⁹

The stories of the luxurious lifestyles of those in the upper echelons augmented the journalists' critical observations of the "average Russians," who were satisfied with a few potatoes and some vodka and failed to challenge the system. Moreover, the contrasts between the poverty of the regular people and the limitless abundance guaranteed to their leaders emphasized the comparative advantages of liberal democracy as a political system:

Unlike America, the ratified life style and hidden wealth of the Soviet privileged class has virtually no impact as a public issue. [...] Among ordinary Russians there is general awareness that the power elite and scientific-cultural celebrities have privileged lives, but the extent of the privileges is disguised by the custom of discreet rather than conspicuous consumption and by total lack of publicity about the private lives of the privileged class.⁵⁰

Journalists used the stories of contrasts between the elites and regular people to attack the Soviet state's proclamations that it was a classless society. In emphasizing the Soviet privileged class, the journalists pointed out that socialism failed to cure unfairness and social stratification; and that instead of creating an equal society, socialist leaders introduced a new system in which they were the upper class.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Kaiser, *Russia*, 178.

⁵⁰ Smith, *The Russians*, 65.

⁵¹ The accounts of the contrasting lifestyles of the Soviet politicians and the regular people had a special significance for readers in post-Watergate and post-Pentagon Papers America, for it reminded them that, unlike in the USSR, their system provided avenues for dealing with corrupt leaders.

The surveys of Soviet standards of living laid the foundation for an important new theme that appeared in the journalists' accounts in the mid-1960. Foreign correspondents began to argue that the Soviet people ceased to believe in the socialist ideology and turned into an array of cynics who "have lost their heroes and their faith, their faith in their ideology and in their future."⁵² Several journalists maintained that this transformation of Soviet people and their commitments derived from the Soviet Union's failure to deliver a lifestyle comparable to that of capitalist countries. For example, David K. Willis pointed out that even a brief look at the everyday life of the Soviet people reveals the hollowness of Soviet state's proclamations of its own achievements and advancement:

Above the clouds circled Soviet space capsules and killer satellites. In their remote bunkers sat ICBM missiles. Down on earth, in the capital city of the Communism itself, which is allocated the best food and consumer goods in the country, soldiers and mothers stood in the slush for thirty minutes or more to buy candy available in even the most ordinary shops in most of the rest of the world.⁵³

Willis pointed out that despite having complicated military technologies, Soviet government fails to meet the most basic needs of the population. If the Soviet regime is incapable of providing its people with such basics as candy, charged Willis, the USSR was clearly a failing state.

The gap between Soviet technological capability and the daily hardships of regular Soviet people featured as an important theme in the earlier accounts authored by American correspondents. In the Brezhnev era the journalists began to see this gap as an evidence for Soviet people's disillusionment with the foundational principles of their

⁵² Shipler, *Broken Idols*, 5. Also see Nicholas Daniloff, *Two Lives, One Russia* (New York: Avon Books, 1990), 74.

⁵³ Willis, *Klass*, 2.

state. Whereas in the 1950s foreign correspondents explained why socialist ideas appealed to the Soviet population, the new generation of journalists stressed that these ideas were no longer relevant because the Soviet state failed to realize workers' paradise. An additional source, which inspired this narrative of decline, was the journalists' social circle of dissidents and intellectuals, many of whom positioned themselves as disillusioned former "true believers," in their writings and interactions with Western friends. This social milieu strengthened the journalists' perception that the ideological commitment in the Soviet Union was going on a steady downward spiral.

Robert Kaiser argued that the malfunction of Soviet social institutions and the backwardness of Soviet economy were especially reassuring, because they offered an excellent evidence for why Americans should *not* fear the Soviet Union.⁵⁴ A closer look at the Soviet realities, he stressed, would reveal that internal shortcomings encumbered the rival superpower and that it was too weak to ever become a serious challenge to the United States:

And this is the country which has frightened us for nearly sixty years, which convinced us to invest billions in an arms race without end, which established itself as the second super-power and a threat to peace in the minds of several generations of Western statesmen. That this has been possible, given their egregious weakness, is a great tribute to the men who have ruled the Soviet Union. But this is also a tribute to our foolishness. [...] We have given the Russians more than due credit for military prowess and ignored their failings in economic and technological development, social organization and the rest. We have defined strength and power in purely military terms – favorable to the Soviet Union – and then exaggerated Soviet power.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Moscow correspondents were well aware that in addition to academic acquaintances, members of Congress, foreign policy and CIA analysts were closely following their dispatches and analyses. The journalists welcomed this attention and added commentary on Soviet-American relations and U.S. policy toward the USSR, hoping that their experience on the ground would improve American assessments of Russia and lead to the formation of more realistic tactics. Kaiser interviewed on December 6, 2010.

⁵⁵ Kaiser, *Russia*, 420-421.

In suggesting that American fears of Russia were much ado about nothing, Kaiser challenged the mainstream opinion of his day and attacked the views, which held that the “Soviet menace” justified continuous expenses on the armament race. Kaiser pointed out that the gaps between Soviet Union’s sophisticated military and its backward economy, services, and technology proved that it was too weak and inefficient to pose a serious threat the United States. Kaiser urged his compatriots to see that America had the ultimate lead in the superpower contest, and implied that national attention and funds should be diverted elsewhere.

Examination of Soviet society through the prism of material culture seemingly removed ideology from the superpower contest. Foreign correspondents averted the discussion from the difference in worldviews and social models that was at the heart of a superpower contestation and focused on everyday life and store shelves. In tying the declining ideological commitments of the Soviet citizens to their difficult everyday life, American correspondents effectively proclaimed U.S. victory in the Cold War. However, comparisons between everyday life in the Soviet Union and the United States referred to larger ideological debates of the Cold War: What is a good life? What ideology is better suited to bring this good life to the common man? Soviet journalists in the U.S. insisted that a good society was defined by social welfare and equal access to resources. American journalists’ descriptions of Soviet society, as scrambling for commodities and no longer caring about socialist principles, suggested that good life was measured in material culture and high standards of living. That finding in turn, further justified the correspondents’ avoidance of discussing superpowers’ different ideological positions on social welfare, economic and racial inequality. The seeming disappearance of an

ideological agenda from the journalists' analyses worked to naturalize liberal democracy and capitalism.⁵⁶

Moscow correspondents represented the Russians as coming to realize what the journalists and their readers knew all along – socialism doesn't work; liberal capitalism provides a superior lifestyle and consumer goods. An explanation was required therefore for why the Soviet people did not simply topple their government and demand open markets. If, as the journalists showed, the people no longer believed in the socialist principles of their state, the reasons for its endurance had to be elsewhere.

Timeless Russia

In their attempts to explain the endurance of the Soviet regime, foreign correspondents usually turned to the Russian past. Most journalists shared the assumption that the features of Soviet state and the behavior of the Soviet citizens were rooted in the specific developments of Russian history. While the contents of such explanations varied, they usually relied on a set of pseudo historical notions, which I will call the idea of “timeless Russia.”

The constitutive components of the idea of timeless Russia could be best demonstrated through a set of quotes from the conclusion to Hedrick Smith's bestselling account, *The Russians*. Smith believed that in order to understand contemporary Soviet Union, first and foremost, the readers must realize that the trajectory of Russia's historical development significantly differed from that of the West:

Here is an alien culture, one, which did not pass through the Renaissance, the Reformation and the era of Constitutional liberalism that shaped the West. Here is

⁵⁶ Shcherbenok, “Asymmetric Warfare.”

a culture that absorbed Orthodox Christianity from Byzantium, and then developed through centuries of Russian absolutism with intermitted periods of opening towards the West.⁵⁷

According to Smith, every important landmark in the history of the West put it one step closer to liberal democracy – the final stage of historical progress. By contrast, Russia's acceptance of Orthodox Christianity, a religion that elevated the sovereign, and a long succession of autocratic monarchs gave rise to the authoritarian state. Smith pointed out that the Communists did not change Russia in any fundamental way. On the contrary, the Soviet regime built on, absorbed, and perpetuated Russia's historical faults: "Rather than alter the centralized authoritarian system inherited from the czars, the Communists have strengthened it, made it more pervasive and efficient."⁵⁸ Smith explained that the socialist regime took hold in Russia, because the country was historically conditioned to accept authoritarian rule. It was not socialism, but a long history of autocracy and rule by force that had shaped contemporary Russian customs:

More fundamental is the deep-seated influence of history on Russian character and institutions – the centralized concentration of power, the fetish of rank, the xenophobia of simple people, the futile carping of alienated intelligentsia, the passionate attachment of the Russians to Mother Russia, the habitual submission of the masses to the Supreme Leader and their unquestioned acceptance of the yawning gulf between the Ruler and the Ruled.⁵⁹

Smith argued that these "character and institutions" persisted throughout the Russian history and could be easily discerned in the contemporary Soviet state. An important

⁵⁷ Smith, *The Russians*, 679. Nicholas Daniloff proposed a similar analysis of differences between Russian and Western history: "Russian history is very different from ours. The Russians were not part of the age of chivalry, when the knights of Europe promoted a code of courage, honor and noblesse oblige. Under the Mongol occupation, from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, Russian culture was tragically repressed by foreign overlords. In succeeding generation, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment did not have the same influence in Russia as they did in Europe." Daniloff, *Two Lives*, 36.

⁵⁸ Smith, *The Russians*, 676.

⁵⁹ Smith, *The Russians*, 679.

notion embedded in this description, was that of Russia's unchanging nature, or in other words, timelessness. Essentially, Smith argued, historical progress had barely touched Russia, and it was unlikely that anything will change in the future:

The more I lived in Russia, the more Russian it seemed to me and hence the less likely to undergo fundamental change. [...] Russians, unlike Westerners – do not take it for granted that Russian dictatorship must inevitably evolve into democracy for they know its power and its permanence; they recognize its ability to adapt without surrendering the essence; they find comfort in the stability and order that it provides.⁶⁰

The conditions of Russian history produced a breed of people that were altogether different from the Westerners, explained Smith. The tradition of authoritarian rule conditioned the people to be submissive, fearful of authority, and particularly able to bear long suffering. Unlike Westerners, the Russians did not strive for democracy, but enjoyed the stability of dictatorship; they do not expect, and more importantly, do not seek any political change, argued Smith.

To sum up, the idea of timeless Russia explained the durability of the Soviet regime as well as the forecast that the Soviet state was unlikely to change. The notion of timeless Russia emphasized that Russia's historical evolution differed significantly from that of the West and gave rise to the authoritarian state and the custom to rule by force. Authoritarian system and submissive national character explained the backwardness of Soviet material culture as well as the people's apparent lack of motivation to topple the Soviet regime and improve their lives.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* Compare with Daniloff's view conception of the all-enduring Russian people: "Bitter weather has made the Russian people patient and long-suffering; some would say that it inures the Russian soul to obedience and resignation." Daniloff, *Two Lives*, 72.

In the 1950s, Harrison Salisbury was the only correspondent who explored the influence of the Russian past on the Soviet present and evoked the notion of timeless Russia in his account. Twenty years later, this idea was already well established and figured prominently in the American press as well as in the analyses of academics and professional “Russia watchers.” The post-assignment accounts of foreign correspondents certainly varied in style, thematic focus, and approach. However, almost every correspondent evoked Russian history in explaining contemporary phenomena, stressed the similarities between Russian past and Soviet present, and suggested that Russia did not change much since the time of the tsars.

An important example of this trend was Nicholas Daniloff’s *Two Lives, One Russia*, published in 1988. Daniloff was a descendant of Russian nobility whose family emigrated during the Civil War. He came to Moscow in 1980 as a reporter for *US News & World Report*. During his stay, Daniloff pursued his interest in family history and tried to find information about a distant ancestor, who was exiled to Siberia in the nineteenth century for participating in the Decembrist uprising. In 1986, minutes after meeting a Russian acquaintance, Daniloff was seized by the KGB, driven into Lefortovo prison, and charged with espionage. The KGB argued that the Russian man had given Daniloff secret military files. Daniloff spent two weeks in prison and was deported to the U.S. after President Reagan’s personal appeal to Mikhail Gorbachev.

In his book Daniloff used a parallel narrative, which moved back and forth between the account of his arrest and the story of his Decembrist relative. The structure of the account and the author’s narration stressed the similarities between Daniloff’s own experience and that of his ancestor; and emphasized that Soviet Russia in 1986 and tsarist

Russia in 1816 was essentially the same repressive authoritarian state with corrupt legal system. In conclusion, Daniloff predicted a dire future for Gorbachev's reforms and prophesied that he will fail to overcome the historical backwardness of Russian state and society.

The notion of timeless Russia was a perfect fit for organizing the narrative of Daniloff's personal experience and family history. Other correspondents demonstrated Russia's timelessness by drawing parallels between their own observations of the Soviet Union and the experiences of tsarist-era observers. The most popular text for this purpose was the 1839 travel narrative, *Empire of the Czar*, by a French observer, Astolphe-Louis-Léonor, Marquis de Custine.⁶¹ De Custine travelled to Russia in search of arguments against representative government. The account he produced, however, criticized the practices of Russian autocracy and the apparent collaboration of the people in their own oppression. De Custine's most acrimonious remarks were reserved for the Russian court and the nobility, whom he mocked for using the veneer of European civilization to hide their barbarous Asiatic nature. De Custine used historical arguments to explain his observations and contended that Russia's shortcomings were the result of the backwardness of the Orthodox Church, years spent under the Mongol rule, and the

⁶¹ Astolphe Louis Léonor de Custine, *The Empire of the Czar; or, Observations on the Social, Political, and Religious State and Prospects of Russia, Made During a Journey through That Empire* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, 1843). Cold War era publishers must have realized that curiosity about Russia notwithstanding, it would be difficult to sell a book with this name. Therefore almost every subsequent edition of de-Custine's account had a different title. The evolution of titles through the year confirms my argument here, that de Custine's account was deemed important because it demonstrated that Russia did not change since the 19th century. The 1951 translation was entitled "Journey for Our Time; the Journals of the Marquis de Custine" – a title which suggested that de Custine's impressions were valuable "for our time" – the time of Cold War America. The title of the 1989 translation "Empire of the Czar: A Journey Through Eternal Russia" explicitly built on the theme of Timeless Russia, which by that time became a common currency in references to the Soviet Union.

repressive policies of Peter the Great. Almost every correspondent who covered the Soviet Union in the Brezhnev era made references to de Custine's text.⁶² *The Christian Science Monitor's* correspondent David K. Willis even arranged his entire book around de Custine, opening almost every chapter with quotes from the Marquis and proceeding to demonstrate how his own experience in 1980s Soviet Union paralleled de Custine's a century and a half earlier.

The revival of *Empire of the Czar* in Cold-War America began in 1952, when it appeared in a new edition with an introduction by General Walter Bedell Smith – a WWII hero and President Truman's Ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1946 to 1948. Smith praised the Marquis' account as extremely instructive for understanding contemporary Russia and stressed the parallels between de Custine's findings' and his own experiences. According to Smith, these continuities proved that Russia was a timeless place, unchanged by socialism:

Custine's letters were the greatest single contribution in helping us to unravel in part the mysteries that seem to envelop Russia and the Russians. [...] They underscore the fact that the problem is not something new, not merely the product of the so called Communist Revolution which took place some thirty years ago, but one epochal problem in the development of the history of man. [...] The [Russian] people, too, are different. They are different because wholly different social and political conditions have retarded and perverted their development and set them apart from other civilizations. [...] I could have taken many pages verbatim from his journal and, after substituting present-day names and dates for those of a century ago, have sent them to the State Department as my own official reports.⁶³

⁶² For examples of references to de Custine in the accounts of correspondents see: Elizabeth Pond, *From the Yaroslavsky Station: Russia Perceived* (New York: Universe Books, 1988), 24, 89-90, 177; Kaiser, *Russia*, 140-144; Shipler, *Broken Idols*, 3, 18; Nagorski, *Reluctant Farewell*, 107-108.

⁶³ Phyllis Penn Kohler ed., *Journey for Our Time: the Russian Journals of the Marquis De Custine* (Washington, D.C.: Gateway Editions, 1987), 9-11.

Smith emphasized that the Russian people differed from the rest of the world, and attributed these differences to “retarded” and “perverted” historical development. In his praise of de Custine, Smith spelled out what had been implicit in numerous other writings on Russia throughout the Cold War: Russia’s special historical path set it apart from “civilization” and doomed it to perpetual backwardness.⁶⁴

In 1989 a new edition of de Custine’s account was published. It featured a foreword by the historian Daniel Boorstin and an introduction by George F. Kennan, celebrity Kremlin analyst and former U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union. The title of the translation, “Empire of the Czar: A Journey Through Eternal Russia,” explicitly built on the theme of timeless Russia, by that time, a common currency in references to the Soviet Union. In 1971, Kennan also authored a book focusing on de Custine’s work and its reception. In his concluding remarks, Kennan took a more critical approach than Smith had in the early 1950s and declared that de Custine’s representation of Russia was “in the factual sense, dreadfully and almost shamelessly inaccurate.”⁶⁵

According to Kennan, de-Custine failed to understand that there were progressive forces in Russia, “liberals and democratic socialists” and “the new intelligentsia” who shared de Custine’s critiques and wanted to change their country by means of “organic

⁶⁴ Bedell Smith was one of the early admirers of the idea of “timeless Russia.” This was especially evident in the stylistic arrangement of his published recollections from the years he spent in Moscow as an Ambassador. Every chapter in Smith’s book begins with a quote from an American envoy to Russia in 1850. Smith thus drew explicit parallels between himself and the experiences of his 19th century predecessor and suggested that Russia had not changed much in the time that passed between the writing of each account. Walter Bedell-Smith, *Moscow Mission, 1946-1949* (London: William Heinemann Limited, 1950).

⁶⁵ George F. Kennan, *The Marquis De Custine and His Russia in 1839* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 120.

process and gradual reform.”⁶⁶ The Bolshevik Revolution, explained Kennan, interrupted these positive forces, prevented Russia’s convergence with the West, and re-established “in a more extreme form” the negative traits observed by de Custine.⁶⁷ Although Kennan agreed that Russia’s historical faults dominated in the 1970s, unlike Bedell-Smith, he professed faith in the future ascendancy of “the ‘Other Russia’ – the opposite pole to the brutality, the callousness, the meanness of spirit.”⁶⁸

In adopting de Custine’s account as their favorite historical text, foreign correspondents frequently conflated the two ambassadors’ approach to de Custine. Like Kennan, they pointed out that progressive Russians still existed among the dissidents and the critical intelligentsia. At the same time, the journalists doubted the eventual triumph of the “positive pole” and shared Bedell Smith’s conviction that Russia was trotting along its special historical path, which took it further away from the West. Both Bedell-Smith’s and Kennan’s views of Russia had their respective supporters among American specialists in Russian and Soviet studies. While some scholars emphasized that Russia’s history made it especially susceptible to authoritarian rule and separated it from the West, others emphasized its liberal elements, which unless interrupted by the revolution would have enabled Russia to keep pace with the West.⁶⁹

It is highly possible that American journalists, unwilling to delve into the details of academic debates and interpretations, absorbed both ideas while they prepared for their assignments in major research centers specializing in Russian and Soviet studies. Various

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 121-123

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 132-133.

⁶⁹ David C. Engerman, *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America’s Soviet Experts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 153-179.

lectures, seminars, and other activities in prominent academic hubs such as Harvard and Columbia offered the journalists many opportunities to learn from and exchange opinions with academics and diplomats.⁷⁰ In turn, the accounts that journalists produced during and after their assignments contained plenty of material that could have been used to support each argument. As a result, foreign correspondents, perhaps inadvertently, provided their former mentors with the most contemporary evidence validating their arguments. Moreover, the journalists carried these ideas behind the walls of research centers and government halls, and presented them to the public in a readable and accessible form.

The idea of timeless Russia and the journalists' emphasis on Russia's historical separation from the West structured the accounts in a way that precluded readers' identification with the Russians. To the imagined question from an imagined reader "Could the Russians someday become like us?" the journalists answered with a resolute "No!" – and marshaled myriad evidence to demonstrate that like their country, the fearful, submissive, and all enduring Russians would never change. The only exceptions to that rule were the dissidents, whose descriptions were styled to evoke readers' sympathies and identification. The rest of the Russians, the reader could pity – for being oppressed, deprived of consumerism, stripped of the right of suffrage, or forced to live in communal

⁷⁰ Smith, interviewed on December 11, 2008; Kaiser interviewed on December 6, 2010. For the history of American Sovietology and its relationship with policymaking see: Engerman, *Know Your Enemy*. Andrew Nagorsky explicitly referred to Richard Pipes' *Russia under the Old Regime*, as a book that was especially helpful in his preparation for the assignment in Russia. Nagorski, *Reluctant Farewell*, 107. For a critical analysis of Piper's scholarship and contribution to American perceptions of the Soviet Union see: Foglesong, *American Mission*, 178; Engerman, *Know Your Enemy*, 264-268, 273-185.

apartments; the reader could mock or criticize the Russians for not challenging their government, for not demanding justice from their courts or jeans in their stores. But the readers still could not understand them, because the journalists did not present any rational reason for the Russians to accept their miserable lives, other than their idiosyncratic history or national character.

Thus, journalists like Robert Kaiser were only partially successful in bringing the Russian people closer to their American readers. On the one hand, Kaiser and his colleagues invested many efforts in dispelling the view of the Russians as a dangerous and unknown foreign other. On the other hand, the journalists made it difficult to identify with the Russians and understand them on their own terms. Moreover, to ensure a proper identification with the narrator some of the accounts featured “clues” as to how the reader should respond to the information. Occasionally, code words such as “westerners are horrified/amused to discover/observe” a certain “Russian phenomena” or explanations what was a “typical westerner’s response” to this phenomena, stirred the reader to share the prism of the American journalist.

Since the perspective of the American journalist represented the West, the typical Westerner also represented the typical American. This figure, with whom the readers were meant to identify, was a homogenous, negative analogy to the Russians. If Russia was backward and unchanging, then America was modern and dynamic. If Russians were fearful and submissive, Americans were brave and assertive. If Russians dream of owning as much as the Americans, then Americans should appreciate their good fortune. The idea of a backward, oppressive Russia, reinforced the corresponding, but inverted,

image of America: forward moving, devoid of fear and oppression, and united around the liberal consensus.

The inverted images of “timeless Russia” and “dynamic America” were not shattered even after the turmoil of the 1960s brought America’s domestic problems and internal divisions into the heart of public debate. Many discussions of these problems emphasized that the U.S. was moving toward reform and correction of class, racial and gender inequalities.⁷¹ After the 1960s, the comparisons between the United States and the Soviet Union offered the journalists and their readers another source of self-congratulation. While Russia remained unchanged and continued to exhibit its centuries-old predicaments, as the journalists indicated, the U.S. seemed even more dynamic and adaptable, constantly improving the lot of its people.

To be sure, American correspondents in the Cold War were on a well-travelled intellectual path, paved as early as the Enlightenment. The contrasts that these journalists evoked to differentiate between America and Russia bore a strikingly resemblance to the efforts of Western European travelers, philosophers, and intellectuals to grapple with the question of Eastern Europe. Larry Wolff explains how the idea of Eastern Europe helped to create a unified and coherent concept of Western Europe:

The invention of Eastern Europe was a subtly self-promoting and sometimes overtly self-congratulatory event in intellectual history, whereby Western Europe also identified itself and affirmed its own precedence. The evolving idea of “civilization” was essential for this process, and provided the most important philosophical term of reference for putting Eastern Europe in a position of empathic subordination. The critical binary opposition between civilization and

⁷¹ James T. Patterson, *Restless Giant: The United States from Watergate to Bush V. Gore* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 15-18.

barbarism assigned Eastern Europe to an ambiguous space, in a condition of backwardness, on a relative scale of development.⁷²

Although American journalists often codified “development” as consumerism and living standards, like their Enlightenment predecessors they found evidence of Russian underdevelopment in institutions, political culture, and even in such amorphous concepts as personality, courtesy, or frankness. Moreover, in a move similar to those of many early observers, most notably de Custine, the majority of accounts, directly and indirectly, insisted on distinguishing the Russians from the narrators and their readers.

These similarities were more than a mere rehashing of the dichotomy between the “Eastern other” and the “Western self.” In the Cold War the binary concepts of East and West represented the alternative models for the world’s future. The Soviet Union contended that Soviet socialism, and not American capitalism, was the true heir of the Enlightenment and offered the proper path for the future. American assertions that Russia was backward and timeless denied these claims, positioned America and “the West” as the true and only heirs of the Enlightenment, and excluded the Soviet Union from the “civilization” that the Enlightenment brought about.

Thank You for Discovering Russia

The journalists’ view of “timeless Russia” and its separation from “the West” also featured prominently in the reviews of their books in American newspapers. Several reviews referred to Russian history as a key to its present, or stressed that the country had not changed since the times of the tsars. The constant evocation of these themes and their

⁷² Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 360.

central position in the reviews of the journalists' work suggest how appealing these ideas were for the American audience. Quite often, references to Russian past and present were accompanied by the traditional symbolic representations of the USSR. Stereotypically snowy landscapes, "the Russian bear," "darkness," "fear," and "vodka" appeared in several reviews. For example, in a *Chicago Tribune* essay titled "Illumination of the dark pall that has hung over Russia," Max J. Friedman praised Smith's and Kaiser's work, and marveled at the powerful grip of Russia's past over its present. "Just as the great Russian steppes and Siberian permafrost stretch endlessly, in a kind of hypnotic sameness, so too does Russian society move inextricably forward, in many ways unchanged from the times of Peter the Great."⁷³ Harrison Salisbury's review of Smith and Kaiser in the *Los Angeles Times* used history to warn readers against investing many hopes in the détente: "It is ridiculous to suppose ... that détente is going to change Russian internal policy radically. Russia has been a repressive state for hundreds of years."⁷⁴ Reviewers themselves often came from the ranks of former Moscow correspondents. They lent support to their colleagues' views that history accounts for the unique state of the Soviet Union, and that socialist ideology was not a strong influence in the Soviet society. In 1984, another review in the *Chicago Tribune* pointed out that the changes that David Shipler observed in Soviet society show evidence of "an atavistic movement from the Soviet present to the Russian past."⁷⁵

⁷³ *Chicago Tribune*, Jan 25, 1976, p. F3.

⁷⁴ Salisbury, "A Continent from Cover to Cover," p. 6.

⁷⁵ R.C. Longworth, "Dark, basic changes set in motion by Russian character," *Chicago Tribune*, February 19, 1984, p. K37.

Although by the 1970s journalists' books about the Soviet Union appeared on non-fiction bestseller lists, almost every review celebrated the author's unique achievement of penetrating Soviet society and praised the author's special ability to "grasp what is going on behind the façade, the sullen faces the Russians have turned for their rulers for centuries."⁷⁶ Former Moscow correspondents especially highlighted their colleagues' ability to break through "the official and cultural barriers that surround foreigners in Moscow [and] to talk with all manner of Russians."⁷⁷ The emphasis on how difficult it was to access, let alone understand, an average Russian presented the correspondents' success to do so as a triumph of investigative journalism, and at the same time perpetuated the notion of Russia as a closed society, gripped by oppression and fear.⁷⁸

Following the emphasis of the books on the gaps between Soviet propaganda and reality, many reviews highlighted the existence of a Soviet privileged class, and promoted the journalists' division of Russian society into "the elite," "the dissidents," and "the grey masses."⁷⁹ Reviewers were especially delighted with stories of Soviet economy and frequently peppered their articles with examples from corruption and a "system of mutual favors."⁸⁰ The *New York Times* review of David Willis' *Klass* even suggested that the "Soviet Union actually depends upon finely calibrated degrees of rank and privilege to keep its people motivated and its economy moving. [...] One might even go so far and

⁷⁶ Salisbury, *A Continent from Cover to Cover*, 6.

⁷⁷ Longworth, "Dark, basic changes" p. K37.

⁷⁸ S. Frederick Starr, *A Reporter in Russia: Pushing the Limits*, *The Washington Post*, December 29, 1985, p. BW4.

⁷⁹ Ann Hall, "Behind the Soviet Monolith," *The Hartford Courant*, February 22, 1976, p. 7F.

⁸⁰ Joshua Rubenstein, "How Ivan Beats the System in the U.S.S.R.," *The Wall Street Journal*, December 29, 1983, p. 10.

say that it keeps them [the Russians] out of trouble.”⁸¹ Like bears and vodka, graft became an inseparable attribute of Russia and its people.

Taken together, the reviews over the years emphasized and enhanced the professional standing of Moscow correspondents and their importance as bearers of truth about Russia. At the same time, they helped to communicate the ideas and the views of Moscow correspondents to the general public. The readers who chose not to buy the book and satisfied their curiosity with the review still got the message that “alien culture,” an oppressive past and present, as well as a lack of interest in freedom, opened an unbridgeable gap between the Russians and the Americans.

Popular responses to the journalists’ work were also very enthusiastic. Journalists’ books often made it to the national non-fiction bestseller lists and won prestigious awards, which further enhanced their appeal. Below I analyze the readers’ responses to Hedrick Smith’s seminal account *The Russians*, and draw comparisons with readers’ responses to Salisbury’s book, *American in Russia*, where appropriate. Smith’s papers at the Library of Congress contain dozens of readers’ letters, which Smith received after the publication of his book. In addition to indicating readers’ opinion on that particular work, readers’ letters illuminate the larger patterns in audience’ engagement with the reports of Moscow correspondents.

First and foremost, the letters demonstrate that the readers adopted the invitation to engage with the account comparatively and juxtaposed Smith’s descriptions of the Soviet Union with their own imagination of the United States. Quite often readers simply

⁸¹ Christopher Lehman Haupt, “Books of the Times,” July 8, 1985, p. C15.

wrote that Smith's book made them appreciate their good fortune: "I just finished reading your book *The Russians*, and I must say it makes me feel glad that I live in the United States. Our problems may be numerous but they are nothing compared to the can of worms society they are faced to live in."⁸² Comparative examination also informed the occasional instances of readers' disagreement with Smith's views. Although very few of these responses are available, their existence suggests that his view of America as surpassing the Soviet Union on all fronts did not go completely uncontested. Most of the readers who challenged Smith's descriptions of Soviet society argued that socialist countries were plagued by problems similar to those of the United States. A good illustration of this sentiment was a reader's response to Smith's *Atlantic Monthly* article on the Soviet government, which laid the foundation for his book's chapter on the same topic:

This article is written from a superior point of view as if an equal corruption, deceit, and diversion of wealth to those in power did not exist in our land of the free. It sounds pre-Watergate, pre-Agnew, pre-CIA atrocities. [...] As every American now knows, we have given respect to our elected and appointed officials only because the truth about their activities was so carefully suppressed by the very agencies which exercised unholy zeal and duplicity to blacken the Soviet Union.⁸³

Other readers refuted Smith's suggestion that the American political system was more transparent and more beneficial to the common man, especially in light of the Watergate scandal. Smith's readers focused their critique on the author's rosy view of the United States, yet seemed mostly comfortable with the picture of the Soviet Union that he presented.

⁸² Walter Martin to Hedrick Smith. Hedrick Smith Papers, Box 3, Folder 5.

⁸³ Ellen Lebow to *The Atlantic Monthly*. Hedrick Smith Papers, Box 2, folder 9.

In another pattern of response, readers embraced Smith's account, because his narratives resonated with their personal experiences in the Soviet Union. The increasing frequency of this type of response demonstrates that more and more Americans embraced the opportunity to visit the Soviet Union. Correspondents praising Smith's ability to show what Russia was really like ranged from tourists to exchange students, from businessmen to scientists. The following representative letter in this pool was from an agent in a tourist bureau:

I've travelled to the USSR quite a few times both individually and as escort to groups organized by my office. Quite frankly, I wasn't terribly interested in reading your book because one, I didn't think anyone could tell me anything about the Russians that I didn't already know from my own experiences and, two, my own experiences have, for the most part, been so negative and so full of frustrations that I really didn't want to know anything else. [...] You have verbalized so much that I have experienced and felt and the insights that you have provided have helped me to better understand seemingly un-understandable things. [...] Some of the outrageous things that you describe and explain so well cannot, I think, be fully appreciated unless one has had the same experience because they are unbelievable. [...] From now on, I intend to tell anyone travelling to the Soviet Union that the best preparation they can make is to read your excellent book.⁸⁴

Michael Shirley's letter captures the sentiments of many other letters that Smith received from former travelers. All the readers in this category praised Smith's ability to articulate their own experience in Russia. Many readers thanked Smith for explaining that their sense of being so different from the Russians derived from difference in national character and historical development. The book demonstrated to the readers that theirs was the quintessential experience of "Westerners in Russia" and transformed one's personal trip there into a collective American experience. As the following excerpt

⁸⁴ Michael B. Shirley to Hedrick Smith, February 5, 1976. Hedrick Smith Papers. Box 2. Folder 11.

suggests, the trip to the Soviet Union reinforced the readers' faith that they belonged to a superior society.

Many of the things you write about from 1971 to 1974 were exactly the same as when Maxine and I were in the Soviet Union in 1959. The poor construction, the poor quality of merchandise, the endless lines people had to stand in to buy, then pay for and finally retrieve what they bought. [...] But overall we came to the same conclusion as you did, but on a smaller scale. When we came back we remarked that these people and this country, in many things, was 25 years to 50 years behind us. [...] When we went to Russia I was a voluntary agent of the C.I.A. Before we went I had three meetings at my office in New York with several agents. [...] So I had a double interest in going. The first, because we were curious, and the second because I was doing something patriotic for my country. I think you, in writing the book, did a great service to your country. I believe everyone in the senate, congress, the White House and many of the bureaucrats should read your book and they will get a clearer idea of what to expect of Russia in a showdown if that ever becomes necessary. Under their system I don't, and apparently you don't, think that they can measure up to our know-how and individual efforts. Our incentive system is much more rewarding than theirs.⁸⁵

In addition to providing a curious insight into the CIA's practices of recruiting tourists as informants, the letter shows how the reader focused his comparative impressions on Soviet material culture, which reaffirmed his belief in the superiority of American system and "know-how" over Russian backwardness. Another interesting aspect of this letter, is its "know your enemy" approach: the rest of the readers, who travelled to the Soviet Union in the early 1970s, explained that they were drawn to the trip and the book by curiosity or professional reasons.

Another reader, Sandy Chernoff, saw a direct connection between the academic notion of Russia's special development and Smith's account; and then used both to explain his own observations in socialist countries. After complimenting Smith on his

⁸⁵ May 21, 1976. Hedrick Smith Papers. Box 3 Folder 9.

ability to “understand the Russians and what made them,” Chernoff explained that the book corroborated his studies in Yale Graduate School of Political Science:

The Yale method of teaching political science is based on "conceptual analysis" – a method which analyzes stages through which most societies pass. The Russian society skipped a vital stage in state-society interaction-building – that of libertarianism, it passed directly from the middle ages to authoritarianism. [...] It does explain in a way why the Russians are so different.⁸⁶

Chernoff shows an affinity with the theory of Russia’s singularity, which informed the analyses of academics and journalists. This response suggest that the academic idea of Russia’s special development was noticed by readers, who embraced it as an explanatory framework for their experiences in Russia, even if they were not aware of its academic origins.

Emigrants from the Soviet Union formed a formidable and quite different category of letter-writers. In 1955, Harrison Salisbury’s articles and book chapters on labor camps and Siberia, prompted readers, who had experienced the system themselves, to write to Salisbury and share their story. The increase in Soviet emigration, which occurred since the late 1960s manifest itself in the larger number of letters that Hedrick Smith received from former emigrants. Importantly, by the time of Smith’s writing, American journalists have already established themselves as critical oppositional force aiming to expose the evildoings of the Soviet regime and as the allies of the dissidents and other oppressed groups in the Soviet Union. For émigré readers, the most important aspect of the book was that it made Western audiences aware of what a horrible place the Soviet Union really was. As in 1955, Smith’s book compelled émigré readers to share

⁸⁶ Sanford Chernoff to Hedrick Smith, February 5, 1979. Hedrick Smith Papers. Box 2. Folder 11.

their own story of hardship in the Soviet Union. The following excerpt from Ida Chaban's letter is indicative:

You are the first author who gives the real picture of so called free people, their life and struggles for food, clothes and living quarters. I am from Russia. [...] I used to take the train to Moscow where I started to run from store to store, for food and kerosene, yes, kerosene. [...] Your book, dear Mr Smith, reawakens my memories. I saw myself again in the endless lines, in the winter poorly clad against the cold, freezing to the bones and in summer suffering from the heat. I would stand for hours for 5 kilogr. [of] frozen wet potatoes mixed with dirt. [...] I lost my father in concentr. camp [in] 1937 he was 53 years old. I had 2 brothers, the oldest died in exile, Kazakhstan, in 1961 age 52. My younger brother spent 17 years in a concentr. camp in Siberia. He was released and then lived also in exile near his brother. [...] I was sentenced to death in 1941. The Lord saved me. Upon the wish of my children I wrote my life story. While I was working on my life story the memories kept me awoken at night. Now your book did the same to me. O, how I wish that the American people will read and understand your book.⁸⁷

Ida Chaban explains that Smith's description of life in the Soviet Union touched upon her worth memories of the past – the struggles she experienced in her daily life and the painful family history of state repression. It is interesting that this reader moved from descriptions of daily hardship to descriptions of labor camps, almost seamlessly, as if suggesting that they were two sides of the same coin. While Salisbury's émigré respondents in 1955 focused their letters exclusively on the Soviet penal system, several of Smith's émigré readers combined stories of state repression with stories about their difficulties to procure basic foods and supplies. This addition illustrates how immigrants began to embrace the narrative that positioned consumer bounty at the heart of U.S. superiority over the Soviet Union. Reading the book and writing the letter to Smith allowed Ida Chaban to express her gratitude to her new country and to articulate how it gave her a better life.

⁸⁷ Ida Chaban to Hedrick Smith, April 21, 1976. Hedrick Smith Papers. Box 4. Folder 2.

Disassociation from Russia and assurance of new belonging to the United States were prominent themes in the letter Smith received from the celebrity conductor Vladimir Ashkenazi:

It is very encouraging to see that the West is beginning to realize certain things about Russia and you show that it is and will be more and more difficult for the Soviets to fool the rest of the world about what the USSR really represents today and what we are to expect from that country in the future. I am sure you'll agree with me that to understand and evaluate the USSR correctly is of paramount and perhaps crucial importance if our concept of democracy is ever to survive. [...] As for those whom you cited as missing terribly the country once they emigrated I wish you could meet my numerous friends – emigrants from Russia, both Russian and Jewish who laugh when I ask them if they miss Russia. They have had so much unpleasantness with the system that their feelings for the country are forever mixed with the feelings of hopelessness and frustration etc. – therefore no nostalgia as such or a sense of a great loss (I include myself in that category).⁸⁸

Ashkenazi adopted Western democracy as his own and squarely positioned himself on the American side of the confrontation. Ashkenazi stressed his distance from the old homeland and was particularly eager to explain to Smith that he was mistaken to think that Russians don't feel at home in America. To underscore that he and other immigrants are loyal to the United States and feel at home there, Ashkenazi spent the lion's share of his letter explaining how entrenched and institutionalized was Soviet anti-Semitism.

For those readers who had experience in Russia, whether as visitors or former citizens, the books offered a prism through which they reworked their own, albeit very different, personal experiences. Through a combined discussion of Russian history and national character, the book offered an explanation for one's "Russian experience," helped understand what defined one as American, and confirmed the readers' sense of belonging to a nation superior on all counts and identifiable by its distinction from Russia.

⁸⁸ Vladimir Ashekanzi to Hedrick Smith, March 12, 1979. Hedrick Smith Papers. Box 3. Folder 5.

For the immigrant readers the book served as a reminder why they left, and as a reinforcement of that decision. The very act of writing a “thank you” letter to the journalist was an affirmation of one’s identity as a new American and a sense of belonging “here” and not “there.” By sharing the critical perspective of the American journalist-narrator, and declaring their affiliation with him, immigrant readers inscribed themselves into their new society.

In 1955 many of Harrison Salisbury’s readers challenged his negative picture of the Soviet Union and took him to task for failing to acknowledge that in many respects, socialist USSR surpassed capitalist America.⁸⁹ By contrast, in 1975 this type of response was entirely absent from the letters to Hedrick Smith. In 1955, the reading public in the U.S. had a fresh memory of the pre-war period, when many people seriously considered Soviet-style socialism as a potential alternative to American capitalism; and when the respective benefits of each were publicly debated in the U.S., quite often among the Moscow correspondents. By the time Hedrick Smith’s book was published in 1975, the spectrum of assessments of the Soviet Union had changed. The ideological debate shifted its focus from the ephemeral realm of ideas to living standards, consumer goods and everyday life. The evidence of American superiority in this realm was constructed in such a way that the valence of socialist ideas lost its meaning to American observers and was no longer appealing.

⁸⁹ For example: “Did you sir ever take a stroll through the slums of new york where a million more people live in rat-infested and dark holes, if one can call them that? That goes for many other American cities [...] The people government of the USSR are making great strides to a decent society and you sir, know it better than me.” J. Dixon to Harrison Salisbury. Other exemplary letters are: M. D. Litman to the editors of the *New York Times*, September 22, 1954; Frank Lento to Harrison Salisbury, May 21, 1954. Salisbury Papers. Box 192.

In 1988, Whitman Bassow, a veteran of the American press corps in the Soviet Union published *The Moscow Correspondents*. The purpose of the book was to provide a summary of the work of Western journalists in Russia from 1917 to 1988.⁹⁰ In his concluding remarks, Bassow wonders whether his colleagues' work had changed the prevailing stereotypical images of the Russian people and had "any significant impact on American public opinion and understanding of the Soviet Union."⁹¹ For years, Bassow argued, negative statements of American politicians carried more influence with the public than the dispatches of correspondents in Moscow. As a result, "the Soviet Union has become such a villain in the American psyche that most of us carry a profoundly negative image of the Russians: bad, threatening, mysterious, powerful, and anti-American."⁹² Many journalists whom Bassow interviewed for the book expressed concerns that "despite their collective efforts [...] negative perceptions and stereotypes are so ingrained that most Americans will not permit the facts to undermine their tightly held opinions."⁹³

American journalists arrived in the Soviet Union hoping to transform previous stereotypical views of Russia and at the same time to cut through the deceptions of Soviet propaganda. They wished to show their readers "the real Russia" and to explain why the Soviets behaved as they did. Journalists' books were impressive in scope and depth and daring in their analysis and insights. Although foreign correspondents believed that their accounts represented the objective viewpoint of an impartial observer, the starting point

⁹⁰ Bassow, *Moscow Correspondents*, 7-8.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 348.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 349

⁹³ *Ibid.*

of their approach often was the shared faith in what Dusko Doder from the *Washington Post* called the “the self-evident superiority of Western morality and way of life.”⁹⁴ The majority of Cold War-era journalists perceived socialism as an unnatural and oppressive system and remained convinced that liberal democracy and capitalism were the natural principles of a social order. Thus, while their stated aim was to describe the Soviet Union, the books also attempted to explain why the majority of Soviet people put up with the socialist regime.

Journalists’ explorations of Soviet everyday life and material culture, and how they compared to those available to American middle class, invalidated Soviet claims that socialism offered an alternative path to a good life. Comparisons with the Soviet Union showcased the advantages of liberal democracy and capitalism and presented them as “a set of ideology-free values consistent with human nature.”⁹⁵ In so doing, the journalists glossed over myriad domestic political, class, and racial conflicts over the definition of these concepts and promoted an image of America devoid of internal contradictions and unified by liberal consensus.

To explain why Soviet people did not embrace this “natural” order, the journalists relied on the amorphous notions of “Russian national character” and stressed that historical and cultural differences separated Russia from “the West.” American journalists thus contributed to a shift in discursive focus in the superpowers’ contest from competing ideas to differences in culture, history and material life. Despite their aspirations to the contrary, foreign correspondents reinforced stereotypic representations

⁹⁴ Doder, *Shadows and Whispers*, 2.

⁹⁵ Shcherbenok, “Asymmetric Warfare.”

of Russian national character, exoticized the Russians and their mysterious soul. They also affirmed their readers' belief in American superiority and convinced them that the gaps between Russia and the West were unbridgeable. Journalists' reports on Russia helped the readers to solidify their self-identification as Americans and infused that self-identification with content and meaning.

Conclusion:

The findings of this dissertation broaden our understanding of Soviet and American postwar history, and of the cultural history of the Cold War. I believe that this project also can be useful for understanding some events in our own time.

My project contributes to a growing body of scholarship on the history of the Soviet Union in the post-war era, particularly to our understanding of the role of the press in post-war society and culture. I challenge the assumption that Soviet foreign correspondents hid their envy and appreciation of America behind a mindless reproduction of Party's slogans. My study demonstrates how much agency and personal initiative the journalists invested in their work and how they used foreign coverage in their capacity as socialist thinkers, writers, and educators. The long historical period covered in this project reveals how vibrant Soviet journalism was: it changed and adapted itself to the political, cultural and international circumstances and took an activist approach to the Soviet society, constantly trying to engage the readers and shape their worldview.

The study of Soviet foreign correspondents offers new insights into the influence of the Cold War on the developments within the Soviet Union. The encounter with the United States prompted this particular group of loyal elite to re-think and re-articulate their understanding of the meaning of socialist society, and their commitment to its goals and ideals. As the readers developed new (and increasingly difficult to fulfill) aspirations as consumers and citizens, they found it hard to derive reassurance in socialism's superiority from the journalists' accounts. The gap between the journalists' reports and

their readers' engagement with these texts could be seen as a harbinger of the different attitudes to Gorbachev's Perestroika. While the elites sought to revive the hopes in the socialist alternative, the population was too disillusioned to follow the reforms.

The examination of practices and content of American reporting from Moscow reveals how socialist ideas were driven out of the boundaries of mainstream media and political discussions. In the early days of the Cold War correspondents referred to socialist ideas as a tool of brainwashing and a source of oppression of the Soviet people, which segregated them from the rest of the world. Although the journalists criticized socialist ideology, they recognized its influence in the Soviet Union and outside of its boundaries. By the mid-1970s this acknowledgment all but disappeared. Foreign correspondents began to dismiss socialist ideology as a relic of a misguided past, irrelevant for understanding the superpower debate or the Soviet Union. The shifting focus of Soviet-American comparisons from political figures and practices to everyday life and material standards reaffirmed the basic tenets of American ideology. At the same time, the dominant media discourse simply ceased to engage the competing worldview altogether and thus gradually narrowed the spectrum of political discussion and debate.

This rhetorical shift informed the triumphalist narrative, which attributed the dissolution of the Soviet Union to the latter's inability to compete with American technology and consumer goods. For example, in his celebrated book on globalization, renowned *New York Times* columnist Thomas L. Friedman wrote that the Iron Curtain collapsed because the people wanted things that were on the other side – McDonald's,

IBM, and Mickey Mouse.¹ The adoption of American-style free market capitalism, Friedman continued, inevitably led to greater democratization in politics and society. Such a narrative reaffirmed the impression that capitalism and liberal democracy were the uncontested pillars of natural social order. The results of this misleading narrative are evident in American analyses of Russia today, where commentators fail to understand that the great importance that Russian citizens attribute to social welfare lies at the heart of their continuous support for Vladimir Putin.

This dissertation challenges the conception of American reporting from Moscow as transparent, objective, and immune to cultural prejudices, and argues that like its Soviet counterpart, U.S. international-news making was motivated by ideological concerns. These findings bear implications for our understanding of American journalism and international reporting today. The case study of Moscow correspondents highlights how the press came to support the anti-Soviet positions of the U.S. government through a variety of processes such as self-censorship, editorial intervention, and correspondents' self-mobilization. It is very likely that similar processes occurred in the recent past, when most of mainstream media lent their support to U.S. involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. Millions of Americans tune in on a daily basis and form their opinions on the international situation based on the reports of journalists stationed overseas, believing they are getting a more or less objective picture. However, international reporting from these distant spots remains deeply rooted in American ideology and cultural sensibilities and tends to obscure the complexity of foreign cultures and developments.

The United States continues to serve as an important source of social, political and cultural metaphors in Russia today. A few months ago a famous music producer from

¹ Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), 389

Moscow explained on the radio that Russia is a true democratic alternative to the American police state. As I am writing these lines, Russian liberal media criticize the authorities' management of the recent horrible flood in Krymsk, suggesting that the Russian government's conduct has been inadequate compared to the actions of U.S. government in response to hurricane Katrina. The legacy of Cold War culture is an important source of these attitudes. As we have seen, the Soviet imagination of the United States was never monochrome. Appreciation of American efficiency, technological advancement, and material culture competed with criticism of social atomization, manners, and morals. In many ways, comparisons with the United States still inform Russian pride in its achievements as well as its self-criticism.

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