

Book Reviews

Rósa Magnúsdóttir, *Enemy Number One: The United States of America in Soviet Ideology and Propaganda, 1945-1959*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. 159 pp., plus notes, index and illustrations. Hardcover, \$74.00

Though the United States and the Soviet Union were allies during the Second World War, their collaboration was destined to be a brief one. The joyous meeting of American and Soviet troops on the banks of the Elbe River in April 1945 and the goodwill it engendered could not withstand the pressures of the post-war period as disagreements about ideology, spheres of influence, and national security emerged to the fore. Rósa Magnúsdóttir's study, *Enemy Number One: The United States of America in Soviet Ideology and Propaganda, 1945–1959*, examines the first decade and a half of the Cold War through a cultural lens, examining the ideological campaigns of Soviet leaders and organizations in their attempts to shape perceptions of America and respond to American propaganda. Beginning with her introduction that discusses the pre-war period, Magnúsdóttir demonstrates that the Soviet opinion of the United States has always been one of begrudging respect combined with harsh criticism, particularly with regard to racial, social, and economic inequality.

Approaching her topic in a chronological manner, Magnúsdóttir begins with an examination of the last years of Stalin's rule, 1945–53, a period noted not only for its campaign against America, but against Soviet intellectuals. The period of *Zhdanovshchina*, named for Stalin's head of the Department of Agitation and Propaganda and the Foreign Policy Department, Andrei Aleksandrovich Zhdanov, focused on reining in members of the Soviet intelligentsia and rooting out Western influences in the Soviet Union. Contact with foreigners became dangerous

as the anti-Western movement gained momentum and came to include a toxic strain of nationalism and anti-cosmopolitanism. The anti-American narrative can be found in theater, film, and literature. Magnúsdóttir cites numerous examples that distort the positive narrative of the wartime alliance and instead emphasize the differences between the two nations and the possibility of a war between the former allies. Texts by Maxim Gorky and Vladimir Mayakovsky, both critical of the United States and published much earlier, were now republished because they fit perfectly in the emerging Cold War ideological battle with the West. At the same time, certain American authors considered sufficiently progressive were promoted as suitable reading material as well. Langston Hughes, Jack London, Upton Sinclair, and Mark Twain, for example, were acceptable due to their criticisms of American social, economic, and racial issues.

The American government attempted to combat Soviet portrayals of the United States through two major avenues, the radio broadcasts of the Voice of America and a magazine called *Amerika*, published by the American Embassy by permission of the Soviet government in a bi-lateral agreement. Soviet officials, of course, did their best to battle the influence of this propaganda by restricting access (jamming radio frequency and limiting distribution) and persecuting those who displayed signs of enchantment with the West. Despite the government's official stance, however, the Soviet people were keenly interested in and curious about the United States. Local party organizations and other surveillance groups gathered information about the mood of the people toward America and compiled reports that were then shared with the Central Committee in Moscow. Magnúsdóttir argues that this information on popular opinion is interesting but likely had no influence on Soviet ideology and strategy which was a top-down process. The reports do, however, show that the United States was the country that intrigued Soviet citizens the most. Magnúsdóttir also examines over two hundred files of citizens who had fallen prey to persecution by the government. These reveal the same themes, concern about the post-war Soviet-American relationship and curiosity about the American way of life.

With the death of Stalin in 1953, the Soviet agenda shifted from direct anti-Westernism to peaceful coexistence. Patriotic themes remained important in Soviet literature and the arts, but the strong anti-American tone of the Stalin years began to fade. Nikita Khrushchev sought to raise the Soviet Union's profile as a global superpower and promote cultural exchange with the United States and others. Not all of these portrayed American life in a positive light. The "Negro Question" remained a problem for the United States in combatting anti-American propaganda, and when the cast of *Porgy and Bess* engaged in a four-year global tour, the State Department refused to contribute to the Soviet part of the tour. Soviet authorities, however, did come up with the money and show was an enormous success in 1955 with audiences in both Leningrad and Moscow. That same year, a Soviet agricultural delegation traveled across the United States, visiting farms, factories, and universities, as did a delegation of journalists. The Soviets learned from these exchanges, however, that their information about the enemy was incomplete and outdated. They also realized that their propaganda did not speak to

American citizens. As the Soviet Union permitted and encouraged these exchanges, one of its greatest challenges was how to allow its citizens access to the West yet still control the narrative about the United States. Magnúsdóttir dedicates a chapter to this fascinating subject of “the paradoxes of peaceful coexistence.” Positive interactions were acceptable so long as those involved remained faithful to Soviet ideology. It is often forgotten that even under Khrushchev there was intense scrutiny of and persecution of Soviet citizens accused of anti-Soviet activity.

The year 1959, with the Soviet National Exhibition in New York and the American National Exhibition in Moscow (the site of the famous Nixon-Khrushchev kitchen debate), marks a turning point in Soviet-American relations. Even here, however, we see the Soviet struggle to control its citizens perceptions of its main enemy. In the area of material comfort and consumer good, the Soviet Union could simply not compete and its successes in education and technology could not supersede that fact. Khrushchev’s own trip to America made this abundantly clear to him and when he returned, the Central Committee and the Council of Ministers made it a priority to increase the production of household and consumer goods.

Magnúsdóttir’s study is based on extensive archival research, though her use of sources is sometimes uneven. Certain sections of her manuscript rely almost exclusively on letters written to Soviet authorities which, though interesting in themselves, do not always fit neatly into her narrative. Her desire to include these unique sources is understandable, though one wishes that they had been incorporated more smoothly into her book as a whole. Perhaps such sources do not exist for the entirety of the period she is covering, but her heavy use of these letters in only certain parts of her text gives her book an unbalanced feel.

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Michael Cassella-Blackburn, *Radical Anti-Communism in American Politics after World War II, 1945-1950: William C. Bullitt and the Campaign to Save Nationalist China*, Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2018. x + 166pp.

In this short book, historian Michael Cassella-Blackburn seeks to extend the project of his first monograph, *The Donkey, the Carrot, and the Club: William C. Bullitt and Soviet-American Relations, 1917–1948*, to consider William C. Bullitt’s impact on anti-communism and U.S.-China relations in the late 1940s.¹ Bullitt was one of the most influential U.S. diplomats in the history of U.S.-Soviet relations. Bullitt was sympathetic to the Soviet Union from the late 1910s to the early 1930s and helped Washington achieve official recognition of the USSR. During Bullitt’s time as the first U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union, however, as Cassella-Blackburn points out in his first book, Bullitt turned into a hard-core anti-communist because he was irritated by his failed negotiations with Soviet officials over issues like trade, repayment for loans to the Russian Provisional Government from 1917, anti-American propaganda, and the construction of a new

U.S. embassy. In his second book, Cassella-Blackburn argues that Bullitt and the China Lobby used fear and conspiracy theories to shape American public opinion and policy toward China in the late 1940s.

According to Cassella-Blackburn, Bullitt and the China Lobby repeatedly promoted a conspiracy theory that Soviet imperialism was using communism to enslave the world and the rise of Chinese communism was part of Joseph Stalin's evil plan (8, 11). Bullitt's solution to the problem in China was to continue U.S. economic and military aid while exercising American direction and control (76). By publicizing the conspiracy theory, Bullitt intended not only to educate U.S. policymakers and the public but also to expose the Soviet agents inside the U.S. government. As Cassella-Blackburn notes, to circulate the conspiracy theory, Bullitt published his book *The Great Globe Itself* (1946), wrote for popular magazines, testified before Congress, and offered advice to politicians. Cassella-Blackburn labels Bullitt's book "popular" and "influential," but he also acknowledges that the book focused on European issues and seemingly received more criticism from reviewers (viii, 8, 46-49). Among Bullitt's sixteen articles listed in the book's bibliography, Cassella-Blackburn cites only five and treats Bullitt's two-part article in *Life* in 1948, titled "How We Won the War and Lost the Peace," as a key piece of evidence at multiple places. Readers would welcome more discussion about how Bullitt's other published articles influenced American public opinion.

Cassella-Blackburn himself seems undecided about Bullitt's immediate and lasting significance in shaping American public opinion. On one hand, Cassella-Blackburn ambitiously seeks to demonstrate that Bullitt inflamed anti-communism in the U.S. He asserts that "Bullitt set the stage for Joseph McCarthy and his accusations about internal Soviet support" (70). Yet he provides little evidence showing that McCarthy was influenced by Bullitt other than some similarities in their narratives. On the other hand, Cassella-Blackburn tempers his assertion about Bullitt's significance. He admits that it is difficult to measure how much influence Bullitt had on the public (30). He notes that Bullitt failed to make a huge impact on American public opinion because the public cared more about domestic and European issues than China (35, 87). He also believes that Bullitt and the China Lobby failed to convince Truman, who preferred advice from the State Department (67). Cassella-Blackburn's conclusion that "The Korean War changed everything" because the war materialized the Soviet conspiracy theory for the public, makes his readers further question the historical significance of Bullitt (120, 17).

There are several other places in the book that Cassella-Blackburn could have improved. First, scholars of U.S.-China relations would want to learn more about the interaction between Bullitt and other members of the China Lobby. Cassella-Blackburn gives some attention to the correspondence between Bullitt and Alfred Kohlberg and Henry Luce in the late 1940s. But most of the time he uses the phrase "Bullitt and the China Lobby" without differentiating the actions and impact by individuals. Second, readers would like to know what Cassella-Blackburn means by "radical anti-Communism" in the book's title. Cassella-Blackburn should have explained what qualified as "radical" anti-communism and how this concept was different from conservative or liberal anti-communism that scholars have catego-

rized.² Moreover, readers would want Cassella-Blackburn to address how Bullitt's anti-communism campaign fit into a longer history of anti-communism in the U.S., especially the question of how Bullitt's story about a Soviet conspiracy to control China was connected to or different from similar views in the 1920s. Finally, Cassella-Blackburn should have clearly stated this book's historiographical interventions in the introduction. Contributing to the developing scholarship on the history of emotions, especially the history of fear, Cassella-Blackburn's work encourages future scholarly discussion on how fear and the use of fear have influenced domestic politics and international relations.³

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V.V. Noskov, *Amerikanskie Diplomaty v Sankt-Peterburge v Epokhu Velikikh Reform*, Sankt-Peterburg: Dmitrii Bulganin, 2018. 832 pp. Index. Illustrated. Hardcover.

In recent decades, the field of diplomatic history has significantly broadened the scope of its investigation. Researchers are increasingly recognizing that the daily routines, living conditions, and cultural environment in which diplomats immersed themselves abroad are not matters of tangential interest. Examination of these details is invaluable for a better understanding of diplomats' actions and for reconstructing a fuller picture of diplomacy in past eras. V.V. Noskov of the Russian Academy of Sciences has used this approach successfully in his new book about American diplomats in St. Petersburg.

Mr. Noskov's study is focused on the 1860s, a time of trials both for America and Russia. While the US was torn by the Civil War, the Russian Empire struggled through the Great Reforms, the surge of terrorist groups, and the Polish rebellion. Noskov demonstrates that these difficult times brought to St. Petersburg the kind of American diplomats that were rarely seen there in the 19th century: those who specifically wished to serve in the land of the Tsars. Due to the bad climate and high cost of living, US representatives usually considered Russia an undesirable assignment. However, in the 1860s, Cassius M. Clay, Bayard Taylor, and Jeremiah Curtin actively sought appointments to St. Petersburg and competed with others to obtain them. When analyzing the factors that caused these men to do so, Noskov relies on a variety of American and Russian sources including rare memoirs and unpublished documents from Russian State Historical Archive and Russian State Navy Archive. The author argues that business interests were a strong motivation for Cassius Clay. In the era of reforms Russia was undergoing major economic transformations and was eager to acquire new technologies. Clay, whose initial ambition was to serve in London or Paris, quickly recognized business opportunities in St. Petersburg. Noskov provides a detailed description of engineering projects that he lobbied. Among them was Laslo Chandor's kerosene lighting for the streets of the Russian capital, and oil drilling in Kuban that

Clay hoped to turn into family business.

During the Civil War, US government valued Russia's support. More than ever, in St. Petersburg it needed representatives who would establish good rapport with the Russians, and promote positive image of the American mission. This created great opportunities for Taylor and Curtin who wanted to come to Russia to study language and culture. With the help of voluminous Russian sources Noskov threads a fascinating narrative of the daily lives and activities of these diplomats, showing that the Russians appreciated sincere interest in their homeland. Taylor and Curtin became popular in St. Petersburg, creating good publicity for the US. Curtin, whom Russians affectionately called Eremai Davydovich, enjoyed enormous respect both in St. Petersburg and Moscow. Noskov argues that his efforts were instrumental to the success of the 1866 Gustavus Fox mission. The chapter dedicated to the Fox mission regales the readers with amusing stories about hospitality that the Russians showered upon the American navy men. By contrast, Admiral David Farragut's naval squadron a year later did not get a lavish reception. Noskov explains such changes by the fact that by 1867 the critical days of the Civil War and the Polish crisis were well in the past. Relations between the US and Russia returned to routine. Charismatic unlikely diplomats of the 1860s faded from St. Petersburg's horizon.

V.V. Noskov's monograph is written in an elegant narrative style. While the chapters discussing the Clay, Taylor, Curtin, and the Fox mission are the highlights of the book, on the 832 pages of this monumental work one will also find information about Simon Cameron, Henry Bergh, J.D. Arnold, and George Pomutz. The setting where the US diplomats lived and worked, the city of St. Petersburg itself, turns into the object of Noskov's study. In the introductory chapter and numerous vignettes the author provides captivating descriptions of the city's streets, squares, and palaces, immersing the reader in the atmosphere of the 19th century. Fascinating Russian sources and engaging prose make Noskov's work an appealing read both for professional historians and the general audience.

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Douglas Smith, *The Russian Job: The Forgotten Story of How America Saved the Soviet Union from Ruin*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2019. 303pp., illustrations and index. Hardcover, \$28.00.

The story of the American Relief Administration (ARA) in Russia from 1921 to 1923 is a lesser-known interlude in the long history of Russian-American relations. Douglas Smith's new book, *The Russian Job: The Forgotten Story of How America Saved the Soviet Union from Ruin*, tells the story of how the United States helped slow the famine devastating Soviet Russia in the early Soviet period.

Smith tells the story of the ARA in Russia through the lives of several Americans who took part. J. Rives Childs, William Haskell, Frank Golder, Walter Bell,

William Kelly and several other Americans played key roles in how the ARA was brought into Soviet Russia, how it functioned, and how successful it was. These Americans sacrificed personal and professional lives in order to create one of the largest (perhaps the largest) humanitarian efforts in history. Smith illuminates the range of challenges these Americans encountered. The first difficulty was simply negotiating the terms that would allow the ARA to enter Soviet Russia. This agreement was agreed to in Riga, Latvia in August, 1921 followed by an appropriation of \$20m under the Russian Famine Relief Act. This was followed by two years of service by several hundred Americans and thousands of Russians who fed as many as 10 million people. These Americans traveled tens of thousands of miles across Russia trying to mitigate the famine and its impact. In addition to food relief, the ARA also brought in medical supplies to help the Russians overcome a typhus epidemic that was also ravaging the country. The program was terminated in Soviet Russia on June 15, 1923 after the United States government learned that Lenin's government had been exporting grain during the famine.

Smith organized the book by years starting in 1921. His work is based on archival material from the United States and Russia, newspapers, memoirs, and secondary material. His work tells the story of American humanitarianism in a critical moment of Russian-American relations. The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 disrupted the course of World War I and Russia's relations with Western nations. Allied intervention in the Russian Civil War further strained the new Soviet state leaving offers of humanitarian relief suspect in the minds of Soviet officials. Russia's turmoil from 1914-1921 left Lenin with few options to remedy the ills plaguing the fragile new nation. Smith's book is engaging and well-written. It reveals the personal side of the relief efforts for many of the key Americans who were involved.

For the general public, this event in Russian-American relations is lesser known, but to scholars of Russian-American relations Bertrand Patenaude's definitive account of the ARA in Russia in 2002 entitled *The Big Show in Bololand: The American Relief Expedition to Soviet Russia in the Famine of 1921* published by Stanford University Press still stands as the definitive study.

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Jennifer M. Hudson, *Iron Curtain Twitchers: Russo-American Cold-War Relations*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Publishers, 2019. 368pp. Notes, index. Hardcover, \$115.00.

Is there a need for another book on the cold war? The answer is a definite "yes" the way Jennifer Hudson, who teaches at the University in Dallas, does it by concentration on direct contacts between the two countries from 1870 to 1991, from individual visits such as that of Theodore Dreiser and Vladimir Mayakovsky to the mass presence of the American Relief Administration in the early 1920s and in regard especially to films. I had forgotten there were so many. Hudson not only meticulously describes the contents of both Russian and American, but also takes

to into account that predecessors, such as that of predecessors such as *Ninotchka* for several American films. Few reached the level of *Ninotchka*, however.

Hudson was fortunate to have excellent reviewers such as Bosley Crowther and Vincent Canby on the American side, writing in major newspapers, and the direct exchange of films between the two countries, beginning in 1959, nations packed with movie fans, and an adept industry focused on propaganda, that is on showing the best of each other's society. If one needed a topic of conversation to share with railroad workers from Sverdlovsk, one could find it with mentioning a movie, as my wife and I discovered in sharing a compartment on a train from Moscow to Kiev in January 1991. Marred by a fog of tobacco smoke and far too much alcohol, we developed a game: they would describe a foreign film and I would guess the title. They had the advantage since they had seen many more films than I had that year.

The film exchange, part of the cultural exchange was more widely effective, for example many showings in Sverdlovsk. There were still some anomalies. The American musical *Oklahoma* was shown in two parts, one one week and a second the next week (few saw both because of its popularity), and also the speaking parts were dubbed in Russian while the singing was left in the original sound track. It was weird to hear Gordon MacRay speaking along in fluent Russian and then bursts out in an English solo, but the audiences seemed to like it. A Mongolian student in the dormitory came back with tears in his eyes saying how much it reminded him of home.

The book probably tries to do too much, including political events as well as cultural and neglecting economic. The substantial contribution to the First Five Year Plan is certainly neglected. The major construction of Autostroi outside Nizhni Novgorod is ignored, yet there is ample information, including movie film available from the Austin Company Records in Cleveland on it. The factory built a likeness of the Model A Ford and is still making rolling stock today.

Another area of neglect is failure to provide an overall assessment of the cumulative of the impact of the widening and expanding of the cultural exchange on the Soviet Union that some would say eventually brought an end to the Soviet Union and Communism. Professor Hudson ties everything up with a balanced conclusion.

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