

Hosting in the Heart of Moscow: Selling Consumer Culture to Russian Women through the American National Exhibition, 1959

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Abstract

During the early Cold War, America's normative gender roles and consumption-oriented culture became intertwined with its foreign policy goals in rivalling its primary "threat," the Soviet Union. This paper will discuss the American National Exhibition, a grand spectacle that took place across six weeks in Moscow during the summer of 1959, and was attended by 2.7 million people. Filled with glittering displays of American consumer culture, the exhibition was rife with representations of happy, fulfilled, and feminine women. This event symbolized the pinnacle of US government efforts to undertake a unique form of female oriented cultural diplomacy and soft power as a means to convince the "other" – Russian women - that the American way of life could improve their own lives, due to its consumer goods and their accompanying comforts and conveniences. It is part of a larger study on the American National Exhibition which seeks to demonstrate that cultural diplomacy and soft power should be considered an important element in the gradual erosion of the Soviet government.

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No propaganda operation of the US government since the war will be under as intense a spotlight of press, public and Congressional attention as will this Exhibit. It will be watched carefully and critically by a whole country eager at long last to present a clear, uncensored, and unjammed image of America to the Soviet peoples.¹

During the summer of 1959, Moscow's Sokolniki Park was transformed into a glittering spectacle of American consumption and culture. For six weeks - from 24 July to 4 September 1959 - the US government hosted an American National Exhibition (ANEM), the first foreign event of its kind since the Russian Revolution. With more than 2.7 million visitors flooding the park gates, the ANEM became a watershed event in US-Soviet cultural relations.² It is most often remembered for its opening day "Kitchen Debate" between US Vice-President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, two impromptu exchanges during which they debated the relative merits of capitalism and communism, culminating in an agreement to acknowledge their differences and have a toast "to the ladies."³ However the exhibition was much more than this debate. The ANEM provided a rare opportunity for the US government to directly interact with Russians, particularly women, in the hopes of providing them with an understanding of American women, their way of life, and the benefits a capitalist consumer culture

¹ Policy Guidance for the US Exhibit in Moscow in 1959; Box 7; Exhibits – American National Exhibition, Moscow, 1959 (Cables) Thru Exhibits: General Plan, etc; Records Relating to the American National Exhibition, Moscow, 1957-1959; General Records of the US Information Agency, Record Group 306 (RG 306); National Archives at College Park, MD (NACP).

² Harold C. McClellan, "The American National Exhibition in Moscow, 24 July – 4 September 1959," December 1959; Box 51; Special Report on Spain and French Morocco, 1954 to The Media and Foreign Policy in the Post Cold War, 1993, Records Relating on Select United States Information Agency (USIA) Programs, 1953-1999; General Records of the US Information Agency, Record Group 306 (RG 306); NACP.

³ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 18.

could afford them.⁴ It helped to create what became known as a “living standards war” that further intensified the rivalry between the two nations, with women positioned at its core.

During the early Cold War, the US government had limited access to Russians, with the exception of two methods. The first was radio programming, through the Voice of America (VOA). The VOA was established in 1942 and began broadcasting to Russians in 1947. However, its ability to reach them was precarious, as it was frequently jammed by the Soviet government beginning in 1949.⁵ The second was print material, through *Amerika* magazine. *Amerika* was published from 1945 until 1952, and then again beginning in 1956. Similar to *Life*, it was a glossy Russian language magazine filled with stories and pictures on American life and culture. In contrast to the VOA, it had the added benefit of including visual representations, often in color, to foster an appealing image of the US.⁶ So when the ANEM was held in 1959, it represented a unique period in US-Soviet relations, as it became the first time Russian women could directly witness, touch and use the vast amounts of consumer goods and services they had heard of while listening to the VOA and saw in *Amerika*.⁷

⁴ Although The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was composed of fifteen diverse republics this study will focus on US activities targeting those citizens residing in the heart of the Soviet Union, the ones who felt the ramifications of the “Soviet Experiment” from its beginning: the Russian people. It will refer to them as Russians rather than Soviets, as the latter can apply to the citizens residing in any of the fourteen other republics. The Soviet government will still be referred to as such.

⁵ The VOA was created in 1942 to inform foreigners of US war aims. It began broadcasting to Russians in 1947 to discredit the Soviet government and counter Soviet propaganda. For more on the VOA during its early Cold War years, see David F. Krugler, *The Voice of America and the Domestic Propaganda Battles, 1945-1953*. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000); and A. Ross Johnson and R. Eugene Parta, ed., *Cold War Broadcasting: Impact on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* (New York: Central European University Press, 2010); It should be noted that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) also ran Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) as a method to communicate with citizens of the Soviet Union and its satellite states. RFE was created in 1949 to broadcast to Soviet satellite states, and RL in 1951 to broadcast to the Soviet Union itself. They merged in 1976. For more on RFE/RE, see A. Ross Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: The CIA Years and Beyond* (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Press, 2010); Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington, KY, 2000); Gene Sosin, *Sparks of Liberty: An Insider's Memoir of Radio Liberty* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999).

⁶ For more on *Amerika*, see: Diana Cucuz, *Winning Women's Hearts and Minds: Cold War Culture in the US and the USSR* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2023); and Walter Hixson, *Parting the Curtain* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

⁷ From 1959 to 1991, the USIA brought twenty-three exhibitions to nine cities in the Soviet Union. For more on these exhibitions, see Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain* (Philadelphia: The Pennsylvania State University, 2003); Jenny and Sherry Thompson, ““Dueling Exhibitions” in *The Kremlinologist: Llewellyn E. Thompson, America's Man in Cold War Moscow* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2018), 180-189; Tomas Tolvaisas, “Cold War ‘Bridge-Building’: Exchange Exhibits and Their Reception in the Soviet Union, 1959-1967,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* (12.4), 1959-1967, 3-31; and Andrew James Wulf,

The ANEM was integral to America's early Soviet information program. It serves as a case study to explore how the US government drew on traditional gender norms and deployed images of supposedly happy and fulfilled American women as feminine wives, mothers and homemakers living under a capitalistic consumer culture in order to win women's hearts and minds. More broadly, it serves as a microcosm of the significance of women, gender and consumption to international politics during the early Cold War. A large portion of the events and displays at the ANEM, either advertently or inadvertently, involved women. They were used to promote an American style consumer culture which could supposedly better serve the needs and desires of Russian women. This article will demonstrate two things: first, that US government officials believed these images would resonate with Russians, particularly women, and create in them a desire for consumption. They sought to instill in Russian women the belief that they not only *wanted* the consumer goods that American women supposedly had at their disposal, but also that they *needed* them in order to make their lives more comfortable and convenient. Second, that officials believed these newfound wants and needs would contribute to the gradual destabilization of a Soviet regime that not only failed to offer what the US government supposedly provided for its women – namely, “special privileges” characterized by consumer goods – but also a level of gender equality that promised to alleviate “domestic slavery” through socialized housework. Ultimately, through the ANEM, this article will demonstrate the effectiveness that US government officials attributed to cultural diplomacy, or “soft power,” during the early Cold War.

A New Approach to Cold War Diplomacy

During the early Cold War, the Soviet government initiated an “anti-American” campaign that limited the US government's ability to maintain a presence in the Soviet Union and its satellite states. In response, the US government adopted a program of gradual “cultural infiltration.”⁸ After President Dwight D. Eisenhower's 1953 inauguration, he began to prioritize this approach. While serving as Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force during World War II, he became aware of the power of public opinion and had a strong desire to develop connections with ordinary people. This opportunity presented itself just two months after his inauguration when long-time Soviet leader Josef Stalin died and Khrushchev rose to power. Khrushchev's 1956 “Secret Session” speech denouncing Stalin and his cult of personality before the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party (CP) of the Soviet Union led to a new era in its diplomatic relations. Khrushchev's move away from Stalinist policies included “peaceful coexistence” and increased contact with the West. This change, which aligned with Eisenhower's goal of increased contact, stemmed from the changing methods of international relations. Until the beginning of the Cold War the US government, like other peacetime governments, practiced traditional diplomacy,

US International Exhibitions during the Cold War: Winning Hearts and Minds (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

⁸ *Ibid*, 10.

the process of forging relationships with other nations, often relying on the interaction of high-ranking officials in order to reach a formal agreement based on a particular foreign policy decision.⁹ After World War II, new transportation and communications technologies altered the nature of international relations, allowing governments to connect and interact with people more frequently and exchange knowledge. Eisenhower recognized that in light of the ideological battle of the Cold War, public opinion was important and had the potential to stimulate policy formulation.¹⁰

In 1953, Eisenhower created the United States Information Agency (USIA), which reflected this new strategy.¹¹ It became America's first ever peacetime propaganda agency. However, in order to win government support for the USIA and its initiatives, the administration distinguished its "information" program from that of the Soviet Union, which it called "propagandistic" and tied to lies and deception.¹² Eisenhower went to great lengths to separate America's overseas information program from the Soviet Union's activities, stating that the agency would concentrate on objective, factual news and commentaries.¹³ Other officials reiterated these claims, indicating that the USIA neither practiced psychological warfare nor utilized propaganda techniques, but did admit it was attempting to win people over. This process became known as "cultural diplomacy," a method carried out by official government agencies to promote American culture abroad. That culture may consist of a "high" culture including literature, theatre, classical music and the fine arts, or a "low" culture including film, television, and popular music.¹⁴ This study will center on the consumer culture that was prevalent in postwar America and throughout the exhibition, as the US competed with the Soviet Union in a "living standards war" alongside the Cold War. Fittingly, the

⁹ Hans N. Tuch, *Communicating with the World: US Public Diplomacy Overseas* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 6.

¹⁰ International Educational Exchange Program, "The Citizens Role in Cultural Relations," September 1959; Box 2, p. 1; Organization, News Articles, 1955-1974 to Agency Mission, 1947-1969; Subject Files, 1953-2000; RG 306; NACP.

¹¹ For more on the history of the USIA, see Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Nicholas J. Cull, *The Decline and Fall of the United States Information Agency: American Public Diplomacy, 1989-2001* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); See Wilson P. Dizard, Jr., *Strategy of Truth: The Story of the US Information Service* (Washington D.C: Public Affairs Press, 1961); Wilson P. Dizard, Jr., *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder: Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2004); Allen C. Hansen, *USIA: Public Diplomacy in the Computer Age*, second ed., (New York: Praeger, 1989).

¹² Theodore C. Streibert, The New US Information Agency Program; Box 2, p.2; Organization, News Articles, 1955-1974 to Agency Mission, 1947-1969; Subject Files, 1953-2000; RG 306; NACP.

¹³ Statement by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, 28 October 1953; Box 2; Organization, News Articles, 1955-1974 to Agency Mission, 1947-1969; Subject Files, 1953-2000; RG 306; NACP.

¹⁴ Michael L. Krenn, *The History of United States Cultural Diplomacy: 1770 to the Present Day* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 2.

USIA's first director, Theodore Streibert, was a seasoned professional in the media industry.¹⁵ According to him, the agency's purpose was to show foreigners that US policies and objectives aligned with their own aspirations for freedom, progress and peace, as well as to counter falsities directed by the "Soviet propaganda machine."¹⁶ The USIA's Soviet information program was characterized by two primary principles. First, it sought to reach Russian citizens to convey broad information and ideas about American democratic values. During that time, this included traditional ideas surrounding gender roles and the family. Second, it sought to introduce those citizens, particularly women, to the American "way of life" and consumer culture, so they could develop a positive perception of the US. Both were on display at the exhibition.

In January 1958, the US and Soviet Union signed an "Agreement Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on Exchanges in the Cultural, Technical, and Educational Fields." Commonly known as the Lacy-Zarubin agreement after its chief negotiators, William S.B. Lacy, the President's Special Assistant on East-West Exchanges, and Georgi Z. Zarubin, the Soviet Ambassador to the US, the agreement called for exchanges in the cultural, technical, and educational fields that would contribute to the "betterment of relations between the two countries, thereby also contributing to a lessening of international tensions."¹⁷ Section XIII called for the "Exchange of Exhibits and Publications." Both sides agreed on the "usefulness of exhibits as an effective means of developing mutual understanding between the peoples of the Soviet Union and the United States."¹⁸ In September 1958, the Soviet Embassy and the US State Department signed a "protocol agreement" that called for the exchange of exhibitions demonstrating the scientific, technological and cultural developments of each country. In the summer of 1959, a Soviet exhibition would take place in New York City, and an American exhibition in Moscow.¹⁹

The opportunity to conduct an exhibition sanctioned by the Soviet government in Russia's capital city cannot be understated – it was immense. The exhibition's objectives highlighted the extent to which fairs had become important tools in creating new markets. Publicly, the exhibition's purpose was to "increase understanding in the Soviet Union of the American people, the land in which they live, and the broad range of American life, including American

¹⁵ Don North, Oral History Interview with Theodore Streibert, 10 December 1970; DDE Library.

¹⁶ Theodore C. Streibert, *The New US Information Agency Program*; Box 2, p.2 ; *Organization, News Articles, 1955-1974 to Agency Mission, 1947-1969*; Subject Files, 1953-2000; RG 306; NACP.

¹⁷ Joint US – USSR Communiqué on Agreement on Exchanges, January 27 1958; Box 4; *Records Relating to the ANE, Moscow, 1957-1959*; RG 306; NACP.

¹⁸ Agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States, September 10 1958; Box 4; *Records Relating to the ANE, Moscow, 1957-1959*; RG 306; NACP.

¹⁹ Memorandum of Agreement between US-USSR. Representatives Pertinent to the Staging of US Exhibit in Moscow; Box 1; *Records Relating to the ANE, Moscow, 1957-1959*; RG 306; NACP.

science, technology and culture.”²⁰ Privately, the exhibition’s objectives were to counter communist propaganda and undermine the Soviet regime. It sought to do this first, by emphasizing America’s freedom of choice and expression and the constant flow of diverse ideas and consumer goods; second, by emphasizing the “peaceful orientation of the US economy,” showing Soviets that in contrast to their own regime, American science and technology worked for the consumer and should not be perceived as a threat; and finally, seeking to “modify negative stereotypes” of Americans, particularly regarding women, through the displays, and the guides.²¹ They worried Europeans believed that American women were fixated on material wealth and lacked a strong work ethic. In effect, that they were superficial and lazy. ANEM organizers intended to sell images of American women that would alleviate or contradict these “misunderstandings.”²² In doing so, they emphasized what they saw as universal themes that encompassed a woman’s life: fashion and femininity, and the home and homemaking. Thus, the materialism of the former would be offset by the hard work and wholesomeness of the latter.

At 1,500-acres and 400,000 square feet, and located in the Moscow suburbs, Sokolnik Park seemed a fitting venue to host the exhibition (Figure 1).²³ It held two main exhibition buildings. The first was a seventy-eight-foot high, thirty thousand square foot geodesic dome. It was called the “idea” building because it contained information about America. This included a film called *Glimpses of the USA*, on everyday life, an IBM RAMAC computer that answered four thousand questions about the country and a “Gallery of Americans” showing notable, but non-controversial figures such as Abraham Lincoln.²⁴ The second was a twenty-eight-foot high, fifty thousand square foot fan shaped exhibition hall with a glass front and rear.²⁵ It was called the “Jungle Gym” because of its steel frame that allowed for two floors and spaces where visitors could see displays from different angles. Each space was allotted a different product, and

²⁰ Facts About the American National Exhibition in Moscow 1959; Box 5, p. 1; IBM Reports through VIP Visitors; Records Relating to the American National Exhibition, Moscow, 1957-59; RG 306; NACP.

²¹ Policy Guidance for the US Exhibit in Moscow in 1959; Box 7 ;Exhibits – American National Exhibition, Moscow, 1959 (Cables) Thru Exhibits: General Plan, etc; Records Relating to the American National Exhibition, Moscow, 1957-1959; RG 306; NACP. The seventy-five guides, forty-eight male and twenty-seven female, were selected from six hundred candidates, and ranged between the ages of twenty and thirty-five. They were chosen based on their personality, knowledge of Soviet and American affairs, and command of the Russian language. Additional guides were hired by the private sector to work at their displays, but little is written of them in USIA records.

²² Brussels Fair Theme Committee, Interview with Mrs. Eugenie Anderson, 11 January 1957; Box 9; Abbott Washburn Papers, 1938-2003; DDE Library.

²³ Facts About the American National Exhibition in Moscow 1959; Box 5, p. 2; IBM Reports through VIP Visitors; Records Relating to the American National Exhibition, Moscow, 1957-59; RG 306; NACP.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 3.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 3.

companies agreed to fund, design, supply and install their exhibits.²⁶ In addition, there was an outdoor area, where organizers intended to duplicate an “American experience” that resembled a carnival. They gave visitors little direction in terms of where to go and an array of choices. They also provided Russian women with interactive or hands-on experiences. USIA officials aimed for the exhibition to contrast the Soviet Union’s rigidly structured society, where a female shopper rarely had the opportunity to witness, touch and use the products that might peak her interest. Instead, products were located behind counters and women had to wait in line three times to purchase an item: once to select it, once to pay for it and once to obtain it.²⁷

Showcasing Femininity through Fashion Shows and Beauty Products

The exhibition showcased a variety of displays related to science, technology and culture; however, the former were most predominately depicted in such a way that they were intertwined with everyday life to show the comfort, convenience and abundance they brought Americans.²⁸ Within this structure, the USIA emphasized the universal themes that supposedly encompassed women’s lives, including fashion and femininity. USIA officials hoped that the lure of fashion and beauty products could appeal to Russian women and their supposed desire to appear feminine in a nation that denied them these opportunities. In essence, that with the appropriate products to enhance their dress and appearance, they could appear just as feminine and attractive as their American counterparts.

Throughout the 1950s, fashion played a prominent role in accentuating the supposed differences between American and Russian women. As Djurdja Bartlett has argued, Americans believed that fashion was emblematic of the sophistication of modern American women.²⁹ At the exhibition, the strongest piece of fashion inspired diplomacy appeared through the half-hour fashion show, which ran four times a day for thirty-five minutes each. For USIA officials, the fashion show would allow Russian women to see firsthand how one could dress fashionably, yet affordably. These fashions were intended to provide a contrast with the images of Russian women that pervaded American mass media, ones that depicted them as being dressed in warm, but frumpy, unfashionable and unfeminine clothing (Figure 2). This is an image that Robert L. Griswold has referred to as “graceless, shapeless, and sexless.”³⁰ USIA officials drew on these images when establishing

²⁶ Jack Masey and Conway Lloyd Morgan, *Cold War Confrontations: US Exhibitions and their Role in the Cultural Cold War* (Zurich, Switzerland: Lars Muller Publishers), 188.

²⁷ Masey and Conway Lloyd Morgan, *Cold War Confrontations*, 211.

²⁸ The ANEM’s counterpart, the Soviet Exhibition of Science, Technology and Culture, took place from 28 June – 10 August, 1959 in New York City’s Coliseum, a staid concrete building in comparison to what was erected at Sokolniki Park. Its organizers took a decidedly different from the ANEM, focusing heavily on scientific, technological achievements, particularly in outer space.

²⁹ Djurdja Bartlett, *FashionEast: The Spectre that Haunted Socialism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2010), 138.

³⁰ Robert L. Griswold, “‘Russian Blonde in Space:’ Russian Women in the American Imagination, 1950-1965,” *Journal of Social History* 45 no. 4 (2012): 882.

the framework and content of the fashion show. Its theme focused on how Americans dressed for their everyday lives, and its purpose was threefold: first, to increase Soviet understanding of the American way of life, highlighting the fashion industry and its contributions; second, to show the cooperation between the public and private sectors and the fashion industry in organizing the show; and finally, to facilitate future cultural and trade exchanges.³¹ According to the planning committee, the show predominately emphasized credibility and availability. Fashion show commentators emphasized the benefits of mass production, good fabric and construction and design. They noted that clothing and accessories were available to all American women, who could purchase a wardrobe within any budget directly in stores or by mail.³²

Fashion shows were not unheard of in the Soviet Union. Accounts indicate that they were traditional in nature, consisting of individual models walking down a runway wearing practical fashions in neutral colours, none of which were made available to the public.³³ In contrast, the ANEM's fashion show consisted of eleven skits set to background music, highlighting everyday scenes or special events in the lives of American women. Fashions were creative and colourful, without being overly ostentatious. The first skit began with models in clothing they wore in their everyday lives, whether at home, work or school. The second focused on leisure clothing, including bathing suits, camping clothes, golf attire and ski wear (Figure 3). Other skits included high fashions, travel attire, clothing for teenagers, a rock 'n' roll routine, a barbeque, a square dance, and the little black dress accessorized in different ways. The show concluded with a church wedding.³⁴ The *New York Times* wrote that the wedding drew the most enthusiasm among visitors. Russian women watched it with smiles, sympathized with the mother of the groom as she wiped away her tears and cried "Gorko," a custom calling for the bride and groom to kiss.³⁵ The assumption was that in the Soviet Union, just like everywhere else, weddings were joyful occasions that warranted grand celebrations. This skit centered structure appeared both unique and entertaining to Russian women. As one commented "We love the way you show your clothes – it's like going to the theatre." A salesgirl was said to exclaim "We have never seen such way to show clothes. We see not only clothes but through your music and pantomime understand American way of life."³⁶

³¹ "Fashion Industries Presentation of the American National Exhibition, 25 July through 5 September 1959;" Box 2; Arrivals – Exhibit Representatives Through Chron June; Records Relating to the American National Exhibition, Moscow, 1957-1959; RG 306; NACP.

³² Ibid.

³³ See John Steinbeck and Robert Capa, *A Russian Journal* (New York: Penguin Books, 1948); Emmett John Hughes, "A Perceptive Reporter in a Changing Russia," *Life*, 8 February 1954.

³⁴ Gloria Emerson, "US Show Marked by Wide Variety," *New York Times*, 13 July 1959.

³⁵ Tobia Frankel, "US Fashion Show Baffles Russians," *New York Times*, 27 July 1959.

³⁶ Telegram from Freers to Secretary of State, 8 September 1959; Box 7; Exhibits – American National Exhibition, Moscow, 1959 (Cables) Thru Exhibits: General Plan, etc; Records Relating to the American National Exhibition, Moscow, 1957-1959; RG 306;

US media reported on the immense popularity of the fashion show, claiming that Russian women were pleased with both the fashions and appearance of the models. Indeed, each show attracted an audience of three to five thousand visitors.³⁷ USIA writer Linda Salzman reported that Russians admired the quality and affordability of the clothing. She wrote that “typical” clothing Russian women may wear themselves, such as work clothes and shoes, sparked the most interest, while lavish clothing such as evening gowns and bridal wear seemed to be less popular (Figure 4). Although the audience enjoyed viewing the latter, they could not imagine owning such things themselves. Instead, one Russian woman claimed that the clothing seemed “like something we see in a picture book.”³⁸ The only aspect of the fashion show that Russian women seemed disappointed in was the fact that the clothing was not for sale, with Salzman reporting they inquired where they could purchase the clothing for themselves.³⁹ Visitor comment books, placed throughout the exhibition, can also tell us much about women’s views of the fashion show and perhaps the overall effectiveness of the exhibition. The CP encouraged visitors to tow the official party line regarding the exhibition. However, there is strong evidence that women enjoyed those displays that were geared towards them specifically, particularly in a society that minimized their femininity in favour of a promised “gender equality.” For example, one woman wrote, “I liked very much your fashion show. Elegant, beautiful.” Another commented that she was “very pleased with the fashion show; wish you great success.”⁴⁰

The fashion show’s forty-seven models also proved popular. *The New York Times* reported that organizers carefully selected attractive individuals that not only presented well, but also conveyed a wholesome, all-American image that could more easily relate to the audience. Thirty-nine had never worked professionally, including three entire families, and varied in their ages, sizes, socio-economic backgrounds and geographical locations.⁴¹ The issue of race became an important one given the state of domestic race relations. Three African American models were hired: Jacqueline Clay, a student at the Fashion Institute of Technology, Gilbert Noble, an office worker, and his fiancée, Norma Jean Johnston, a registered nurse.⁴² Organizers included them in two skits, at a barbeque and a wedding. At an advanced viewing, New York City fashion editors criticized their inclusion as guests at the wedding, arguing that it did not reflect “real life” in America.

NACP.

³⁷ Frankel, “Russians Swarm through US Fair.”

³⁸ Linda Salzman; Box 1; Airgrams and Cables Through Radio and TV Coverage; Records Relating to the American National Exhibition, Moscow, 1957-1959; RG 306; NACP.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Visitors Comments on ANE in Moscow 25 July – 5 September 1959; Box 11, p. 11; Comment Books and Lists of Visitors Related to US Exhibits in the USSR, Rumania and Bulgaria; Office of Exhibits; RG 306; NACP.

⁴¹ Emerson, “47 American Models Going to Russia are Survivors of Rugged Competition.”

⁴² “Models in Russia: Three Negro Models Share Spotlight with 47 Others at Moscow Exhibit,” *Daily Defender*, 27 July 1959.

However, the organizing committee rebuffed these criticisms, choosing to keep the integrated scene.⁴³ This decision reflected the organizers' overall approach to race relations, not just at the fashion show, but throughout the exhibition: seldom addressed, but when it was, it was presented in such a manner that conveyed a portrait of harmonious race relations. This approach lent itself to a more positive narrative of American life rather than its reality.

No matter the model, their appearance elicited a degree of curiosity. Salzman noted that perhaps the most popular model was Grace Moran, who represented the typical American grandmother. She was especially popular amongst "babushkas," the Russian term for a grandmother. They loved her figure, wanted to see pictures of her grandchildren and were amazed at how young and active she seemed at age sixty. One Russian woman told Salzman that Moran reminded them of Catherine the Great, but with a better figure.⁴⁴ Another commented that she was "an example to us of how we can look."⁴⁵ According to Salzman, Russian women asked the models a plethora of questions, such as how they maintained their soft skin, the types of cosmetics they used, and if they actually dressed as portrayed in the show.⁴⁶ Others admired their slender frames, with one Russian woman observing "You look thin but healthy. We are glad you are not like macaroni. But you could be a little fatter anyways!"⁴⁷ To the media, there was no denying the desire of Russians to speak to the models, which they likened to the American fascination with celebrity culture. In fact, unlike the guides who already had a knowledge of Russian, the models were taught the language on a basic level so they could communicate with visitors.⁴⁸ Clay recalled that they gathered after the shows to ask for autographs and invite them to restaurants and clubs.⁴⁹

In addition to fashion, the ANEM showcased hair and beauty treatments. Coiffures Americana, a hair salon, had stylists who provided complimentary haircuts and permanent waves. The *New York Times* reported that Russian women eagerly volunteered to fill the chairs to have their hair done in a "new look from the New World."⁵⁰ Klava Verkasova, a thirty one year old electrician who helped to construct the display, and her eight-year-old daughter Alla, were among the females who visited. Klava was so pleased with her daughter's haircut that she asked the stylist to take a Polaroid picture of her.⁵¹ The hair salon shared a circular pavilion run by Helena Rubenstein. Beauty experts from her Fifth Avenue salon in New

⁴³ "Racial Mixing Assailed in Fashion Show for Moscow," *New York Times*, 20 July 1959.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Linda Salzman; Box 1; Airgrams and Cables Through Radio and TV Coverage; Records Relating to the American National Exhibition, Moscow, 1957-1959; Records of the US Information Agency, RG 306.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Frankel, "Russians Swarm through US Fair."

⁴⁹ Nedra Rhone, "Black Model Remembers Time in Russia during Cold War," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 23 March 2012.

⁵⁰ "Soviet Women Delighted by Fair's Beauty Salon," *New York Times*, 27 July 1959.

⁵¹ Ibid.

York serviced not only the models in the fashion show but also Russian women, who were invited to receive complimentary skin treatments and makeovers. It had an open circular booth with chairs and makeup tables facing outward from the center, allowing Russian women in the crowd to observe.⁵² Coty, Inc., the cosmetics and perfume manufacturer, also operated a beauty salon where women received a complexion analysis and a free makeover, with options to choose from fourteen shades of face powder and eighteen shades of lipstick.⁵³ Furthermore, Coty intended to distribute one million free samples of these products.⁵⁴ These beauty displays and giveaways were intended to demonstrate to female visitors the vast array of beauty products available to American women, as well as to enable them to take these products home, where they could be shown to female family and friends who may not have attended the exhibition, thus generating curiosity and even demand for these products. Companies such as Coty sought expansion, and an event such as the ANEM offered an opportunity to potentially penetrate the Soviet market. However, shortly before the exhibition began Soviet officials prohibited the distribution of all cosmetics and food samples, effectively stifling any potential for this expansion.⁵⁵ At the time, there was little explanation provided for this decision; however, the ban on both cosmetics and food samples underscores the importance that both American and Soviet officials placed on women as consumers. As the primary, if not the exclusive buyers of beauty products and food, they possessed the power to exert considerable influence in these sectors, which were perceived as lacking in the Soviet Union.

The US media often asserted that Russian women were unfeminine not due to their personal choice to forego cosmetics, but rather because the Soviet government failed to provide these products, as the above mentioned circumstances suggest. In reality, beauty products were accessible to Russian women, but only through *TeZhe*, a state run manufacturer created in 1921; however, as Olga Kravets and Ozlem Sanikci note, they bore little comparison to the more luxurious beauty products available in the West.⁵⁶ To Americans, the prohibition of Coty products at the ANEM appeared to signify yet another instance of the Soviet government's stronghold on their women, through depriving them of suitable beauty products. Joyce Klain, a twenty-two year old Radcliffe College student who worked at the beauty salon indicated that Russian women indeed aspired to appear feminine. She observed that those she saw at the exhibition and in her travels throughout Moscow seemed to use even more cosmetics than American women, although the products were inferior and more expensive than in America. While stationed at the beauty salon, Klain noted that it was extremely popular with female

⁵² Ruth Wagner, "Soviet Women to Get Free Looks," *The Washington Post*, 12 July 1959.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ "Russians Feel, Thump, Sit Upon and Above All Price US Goods," *New York Times*, 1 August 1959.

⁵⁵ The only US product that was permitted for distribution at the exhibition was Pepsi-Cola.

⁵⁶ Olga Kravets and Ozlem Sandikci, "Marketing for Socialism: Soviet Cosmetics in the 1930s," *Business History* 87 (Autumn 2013): 465.

visitors requesting up dos, facials and cosmetics and in general going “wild” over American cosmetics and clothing. (Figure 4).⁵⁷ Similarly, a State Department telegram seemed to reinforce the notion that Russian women lacked access to cosmetics and wanted to appear feminine, as it reported that women watched the application of eye makeup and mascara with interest, asking the beauticians if all American girls wore such makeup. The response was “Yes, of course.” When Russian women inquired if all American girls looked like the models, the common reply was “Many American girls are beautiful but are more attractive through the use of cosmetics.”⁵⁸ These replies would instill in Russian women the notion that beauty was only enhanced through the application of cosmetics. Reports of this nature suggested that women everywhere sought beauty products, and Russian women were no exception to this desire. If given the opportunity, every woman would eagerly embrace the opportunity to appear more beautiful, and as a result, more closely aligned with Western notions of femininity.

Highlighting the Happy and Hard-Working Homemaker

The home, and the wife and mother at the center of this home, also assumed a central role at the ANEM. The ANEM’s inclusion of a single-family model home and model apartment acted as an advertisement for the American dream of home ownership. Cristina Carbone argues that the model home, and its kitchen in particular, became the USIA’s most crucial instrument of cultural diplomacy at the exhibition and even during the Cold War. It became an iconic symbol in the American and Soviet race toward scientific, technological and cultural domination.⁵⁹ Built by All-State Properties Inc., it was priced at fourteen thousand to reflect the home of an average American family living in the suburbs (Figure 5).⁶⁰ Its main floor consisted of a front corridor with a coat closet, a kitchen, open living and dining room, three bedrooms and two bathrooms. (Figure 6).⁶¹ All-State paid for the cost of construction and shipping the home to Moscow and re-constructing it.⁶² The home also contained five thousand dollars in furnishings provided by Macy’s.⁶³ Famously, it became known as “Splitnik” because it was split down the middle with a ten-foot wide corridor so visitors could walk through

⁵⁷ Rose O’Brien, “Norway Girl Tells Experiences as US Guide in Moscow,” *Lewiston Journal*, 26 September 1959.

⁵⁸ Telegram from Llewellyn Thompson, 27 July 1959, Box 7; Exhibits – American National Exhibition, Moscow, 1959 (Cables) Thru Exhibits: General Plan, etc; Records Relating to the American National Exhibition, Moscow, 1957-1959; RG 306; NACP.

⁵⁹ Cristina Carbone, “Staging the Kitchen Debate: How Splitnik Got Normalized in the United States,” in Ruth Oldenziel and Karin Zachmann (eds.) *Cold War Kitchen: Americanization, Technology and European Users* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2009), 61.

⁶⁰ “America Goes to Moscow;” Box 3; Records Relating to the ANE, Moscow, 1957-1959; RG 306; NACP.

⁶¹ David L. Bowen, “‘Luxury’ \$14,000 American ‘Splitnik’ Off to Moscow Fair: Official Consternation Basement Version Provided,” *Washington Post*, 6 June 1959.

⁶² Walter H. Stern, “Moscow Will See L.I. Ranch House,” *New York Times*, 12 March 1959.

⁶³ A.E. Hotchner, “Mr. Mac Goes to Moscow,” *This Week Magazine*, 19 July 1959.

it. Naturally, the model home generated criticism from the Soviet media before the exhibition even opened. The Soviet media went to extraordinary lengths to assure people that the home's pristine furnishings and advanced technological displays were not widely available to the average American.⁶⁴ The Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS), the official news agency of the Soviet Union, warned its readers that there was "no more truth in showing this as a typical home of the American worker than in showing the Taj Mahal as the 'typical' home of a Bombay textile worker."⁶⁵ Despite the controversy surrounding Splitnik, it became one of the ANEM's most visited exhibits, consistently attracting long lines.⁶⁶ Of course, long lines do not necessarily signify approval, but they do reflect a degree of interest. In addition to the Soviet media's rapid dismissal of Splitnik's supposed reflection of the typical American home, it has been well documented that a devastated postwar Moscow lacked the housing and infrastructure to accommodate its rapidly growing population. Urbanites often had little choice but to live in small communal apartments, known as *kommunalka*, where tenants shared kitchens and bathrooms.⁶⁷ As a result, it was almost inevitable that this comparatively spacious single-family home would generate curiosity.

USIA officials and exhibition organizers also showcased technological advancement in areas where it assisted homemakers in alleviating their daily tasks. These displays reflected how technology was used to raise their standard of living and provide comfort and convenience. They did this most prominently through the exhibition's four kitchens. Both the model home and model apartment contained kitchens, each sponsored by General Electric and Westinghouse, and known as the "kitchen of today." They showed Russian women the electric appliances that were used in millions of American homes. A third kitchen was known as the RCA Whirlpool Miracle Kitchen, or the "kitchen of tomorrow." It contained a minimalist design with futuristic appliances and gadgets that operated with the touch of a button. A woman could prepare a complete meal without leaving her seat with the help of a "mechanical maid" and an "automatic meal maker."⁶⁸ For cleaning, she had a mobile dishwasher and a self-propelled floor cleaner (Figure 7).⁶⁹ Finally, the exhibition also included a General Foods-General Mills demonstration kitchen where women prepared convenience foods as well as classic comfort foods (Figure 8). A mock supermarket showed Russian women how American women could enter and purchase a variety of

⁶⁴ Osgood Caruthers, "US Fair Whetting Soviets Curiosity," *New York Times*, 12 July 1959.

⁶⁵ Hotchner, "Mr. Mac Goes to Moscow."

⁶⁶ Osgood Caruthers, "US Fair Whetting Soviets Curiosity."

⁶⁷ For more on postwar Soviet housing, see Steven E. Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street: Mass Housing and Everyday Life After Stalin* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2013) and Christine Varga-Harris, *Stories of House and Home: Soviet Apartment Life During the Khrushchev Years* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ "Electronic 'Kitchen of Future' Slated to East Household Tasks," *New York Times*, 12 February 1959.

convenient items, such as frozen foods, canned fruits and vegetables and cake mixes at affordable prices. They could then turn to the demonstration kitchen to see how an American woman could create a full dinner using these products within minutes. General Mills and General Foods, two of America's largest food manufacturers, collaborated and shipped more than seven tons of food to be prepared. USIA officials intended to distribute these food items and meals to visitors; however, as Soviet officials banned their distribution shortly before the exhibition, just as they had with cosmetics, these food items were made and simply put on display.⁷⁰ They pointed out that since they were not in charge of the refreshment stands provided at their own New York exhibition, reciprocity would have to be observed.⁷¹ As a result, these foods were made and simply put on display. Marylee Duerhing, General Mill's supervisor of product counsellors in the Betty Crocker Kitchens at General Mills, and Barbara Sampson of General Foods, oversaw the demonstration kitchen. They led a nine-person team that showed Russian women how easily American women could prepare meals using convenience foods. Duerhing spent her time at the exhibition baking, making General Mills pre-packaged layered cake mixes and pies, while Sampson prepared Birdseye frozen foods including potatoes, squash, green peas and beans.⁷² The kitchen's team also prepared and displayed classic comfort foods such as fried chicken and biscuits.

According to a USIA press release, these food demonstrations were extremely popular. "The demonstrating, the processing, handling and preparing of foods command rapt attention. The kitchen where these convenience foods are demonstrated is jammed from morning until night. The cake mixes and frozen foods are of deep interest not only to housewives but to Soviet food processors."⁷³ Duerhing and Sampson described scenes where Russian women crowded around them, sometimes waiting up to two hours to ask questions and view their finished products.⁷⁴

Indeed, according to USIA reports, each of these kitchens were crowded from morning until night.⁷⁵ The model home's kitchen had been heavily criticized

⁷⁰ "Russians Veto Handouts of US Food and Cosmetics," *The Washington Post*, 10 July 1959.

⁷¹ "Soviets Feel, Thump, Sit Upon and Above All Price US Goods," *New York Times*, 1 August 1959.

⁷² Telegram from Llewellyn Thompson to John Foster Dulles, 27 July 1959, Box 7; Exhibits – American National Exhibition, Moscow, 1959 (Cables) Thru Exhibits: General Plan, etc. Records Relating to the American National Exhibition, Moscow, 1957-1959; RG 306; NACP.

⁷³ Ellen Mickiewicz, "Evaluating US Goals at the American National Exhibition in Moscow," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 13 no.4 (Fall 2011): 155.

⁷⁴ Telegram from Freers John Foster Dulles, 28 August 1959, Box 7; Exhibits – American National Exhibition, Moscow, 1959 (Cables) Thru Exhibits: General Plan, etc; Records Relating to the American National Exhibition, Moscow, 1957-1959; RG 306; NACP.

⁷⁵ Telegram from Freers to Secretary of State, 8 September 1959; Box 7; Exhibits – American National Exhibition, Moscow, 1959 (Cables) Thru Exhibits: General Plan, etc; Records Relating to the American National Exhibition, Moscow, 1957-1959; RG 306; NACP.

by Khrushchev for its “capitalistic” attitude which suggested that women were relegated to household work. However, visitor comment books are rife with statements indicating Russian women enjoyed viewing household displays and desired the products within them, believing that they could alleviate their daily burdens. A female teacher wrote, “At your exhibition I liked the machines which facilitate the work of women. I especially liked the Miracle Kitchen. It would be nice if such kitchens were mass-produced. And if we could have trade with you.”⁷⁶

Another female visitor wrote:

I came specially from the city of Kursk to see the exhibitions, ours and yours. As a housewife, I want to thank you for your household appliances. I am deeply impressed by the quality of these products and also by the fact how much they facilitate the work of a housewife. I wish that our housewives had the chance to own such things.⁷⁷

Russian women expressed a degree of hope that they too could one day obtain the kitchen technology that assisted American women in their daily lives. One female student wrote, “The miracle kitchen is wonderful! It would be nice to have one.”⁷⁸ Another woman wrote, “I was most impressed by the miracle kitchen (I am a woman). And in conclusion – we all want peace. You are very kind and pleasant.”⁷⁹ To Russian women dissatisfied with their daily household chores these displays may have, in fact, produced envy.

In contrast, visitor comments in which men identified themselves as such reflected a disapproval at the exhibition’s emphasis on the home and kitchen, even suggesting the items within them were frivolous. In his review of the exhibition, one man wrote, “You Americans want to surprise us with the glitter of your kitchen pans and the fashions which do not appeal to us at all.”⁸⁰ Another commented, “Leaving the exhibition I carry with me an impression of glittering metal saucepans.”⁸¹ Others appeared to have been offended by the manner in which the food was prepared and displayed, writing, “Is it possible that you imagine that our women do not know from what to make good and tasty dishes

⁷⁶ Visitors Comments on ANE in Moscow 25 July – 5 September 1959; Box 11, p. 11; Comment Books and Lists of Visitors Related to US Exhibits in the USSR, Rumania and Bulgaria; Office of Exhibits; RG 306; NACP.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Visitors Comments on ANE in Moscow July 25 – September 5 1959; Box 11, p. 17; Comment Books and Lists of Visitors Related to US Exhibits in the USSR, Rumania and Bulgaria; Office of Exhibits; RG 306; NACP.

⁸¹ Ralph White, “Soviet Reactions to Our Moscow Exhibit.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 23 no.4 (Winter, 1959-1960): 467.

in our conditions?”⁸² Meanwhile, others used this focus on household technology as an opportunity to address gender equality, asserting, “The ‘Miracle Kitchen’ was brought here unnecessarily; we don’t need it, because we are striving to free our women from kitchen work entirely.”⁸³ These are just several examples of the numerous comments visitors articulated in these books. In evaluating them, it becomes evident that for large numbers of men these displays appeared to represent yet another example of American excess, particularly those in relation to the home and kitchen, spaces for which men were still not expected to take responsibility, and naturally, may have lacked interest.

Yet, when women explicitly identified themselves as such, they appeared to *approve* of these displays, which were directed to them by a US government that continued to believe the home and kitchen were their domains, and ones for which they wanted responsibility, particularly as modern household technology brought with it increased ease. Moreover, the Soviet government, despite decades long assertions of gender equality, had not yet succeeded in socializing domestic labor, thereby ensuring that household tasks did indeed remain women’s responsibilities. It is evident from visitor comments that both men and women acknowledged this reality of Soviet life, and contributed in perpetuating it. These realities were exacerbated in a postwar Russia characterized by overcrowded communal living conditions, a scarcity of consumer goods, and food shortages. For women in particular, the American home and kitchen, household technology, and convenience foods within it, may have contributed to alleviating the difficult daily responsibilities, or in other words, the “domestic slavery” they continued to face as working wives and mothers.

Assessing the American National Exhibition and its Approach to Cultural Diplomacy

One of the most useful methods of assessing the effectiveness of the exhibition is by viewing it within a framework that emphasizes the importance of cultural diplomacy, or soft power, and most notably its relationship to women and gender. Ultimately, the final assessments made by government officials regarding the exhibition on each side of their respective aisles were rather predictable. Although Eisenhower did not attend the exhibition, he wrote in his 1963 memoirs that “Our Moscow exhibition served a constructive purpose by bringing thousands upon thousands of Soviet men, women and children face to face with the products of American industry and above all with American citizens.”⁸⁴ In contrast, Soviet leaders believed the exhibition was largely a failure. In his own 1970 memoirs, Khrushchev expressed his belief that the US was not serious about displaying

⁸² Visitors Comments on ANE in Moscow July 25 – September 5 1959, 27; Box 11, p. 27; Comment Books and Lists of Visitors Related to US Exhibits in the USSR, Rumania and Bulgaria; Office of Exhibits; RG 306; NACP.

⁸³ Visitors Comments on ANE in Moscow, August 8 – 21 1959; Box 11; Comment Books and Lists of Visitors Related to US Exhibits in the USSR, Rumania and Bulgaria; Office of Exhibits; RG 306; NACP.

⁸⁴ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *White House Years: Waging Peace, 1956-1961* (Garden City: Double Day, 1963), 410.

American life and culture, and instead “They were more interested in drumming up a lot of propaganda.” He criticized the USIA’s strategy of showcasing American products in a manner that reflected modern advertising techniques, claiming that everything was laid out attractively to impress the public, but it was too “showy and promotional.”⁸⁵ This assessment differed from his opening night remarks, a speech that appeared on the front of *Pravda*, the Soviet Union’s leading newspaper, the following day. He stated that it “was very large and, in general, made a good impression,” pointing out that it had many interesting items, rather notably referring to household goods. He admitted that in attending the exhibition he experienced a degree of envy, but a good envy, because he wanted to have the same items available in his own country as soon as possible.⁸⁶ In making such statements, Khrushchev admitted that the Soviet government aspired to one day obtain the material items that America’s private sector was already producing for its citizens. Interestingly, following the exhibition, Khrushchev embarked on a two week, fifty-four member tour of the US where he attended various engagements and events that reflected the life and consumer culture he derided during the exhibition.⁸⁷

Considering the often biased nature of official pronouncements, it can be argued that one of the most useful methods of assessing the effectiveness of the exhibition is by viewing it within a framework that emphasizes the importance of cultural diplomacy, or soft power, and most notably its relationship to women and gender. This can be done in analyzing the visitor comment books, which showcase the opinions and writings of ordinary Russians - the ones that US government officials were so eager to reach. Susan Reid, a historian who was also a guide at the exhibition, notes that it would be naïve to see comment books as direct reflections of “what the viewer really thought.” Indeed, it should be acknowledged that analyzing the visitor comments books presents several problems. First, they were placed in public spaces where Soviet officials could watch, read comments and potentially identify those who wrote them. Second, it is probable that some of the comments, at least the unfavourable ones, were those of agitators whose goal was to attend the exhibition and pose as ordinary visitors.⁸⁸ Third, positive reactions to the exhibition may have been written as polite comments expressing gratitude to Americans, as their hosts, for holding such an exhibition.⁸⁹ In reviewing the comments collectively, it is evident that visitors

⁸⁵ Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers* (New York: Little Brown & Company, 1970), 364.

⁸⁶ “Speech of N.C. Khrushchev on the Opening in Moscow of the American National Exhibition,” *Pravda*, 25 July 1959, 1-2.

⁸⁷ For more on this topic, see Peter Carlson, *K Blows His Top: A Cold War Comic Interlude, Starring Nikita Khrushchev, America’s Most Unlikely Tourist* (New York: Public Affairs, 2009).

⁸⁸ Susan E. Reid, “Who Will Beat Whom? Soviet Popular Reception of the American National Exhibition in Moscow, 1969.” *Kritika* 9 no.4 (Fall 2008): 874. See also Susan E. Reid, “‘Our Kitchen is Just as Good’: Soviet Responses to the American Kitchen” in *Cold War Kitchen: Americanization, Technology, and European Users*, edited by Ruth Oldenziel and Karin Zachmann, 83-112. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 873.

did criticize the exhibition. However, a significant number of comments were positive and reflected a semblance of hope for the future of US-Soviet relations. Even if Russians left the exhibition with their opinions of the American political system itself relatively unchanged, it was clear that many of their comments reflected a desire for the consumer-oriented lifestyle displayed at the exhibition. These sentiments appear to be even more pronounced in the comments written by women. The ANEM's interactive atmosphere, with its countless displays of products that Russian women could witness, touch and use firsthand underscored the notion that consumer goods were accessible, affordable and desirable because of the comfort and convenience they provided. While official pronouncements warrant careful analysis, the individual guides and models further confirmed, through their observations and conversations, that these desires appeared to be present in the many Russian women who visited the exhibition.

The ANEM closed its gates for the final time on 4 September 1959. From the opening day of the exhibition when Nixon and Khrushchev engaged in their famous Kitchen Debate, to the last, the significance of women, gender and consumption to early Cold War international politics was central. For the USIA, its information program and cultural activities within the Soviet Union were integral to spreading information related to traditional gender norms and consumer culture for the purposes of winning women's hearts and minds. Through the ANEM, the USIA was able to utilize images of white, middle-class women as feminine wives, mothers and homemakers to demonstrate to Russian women the supposed advantages of the "American way of life." USIA and other government officials that attended the exhibition firmly believed that this extraordinary event whetted the appetites of Russian women for consumer goods and a higher standard of living. In 1960, the Operations Coordinating Board, created in 1953 as an adjunct body of the National Security Council, affirmed that international fairs and exhibitions played an important role in Free World-Communist Bloc competition.⁹⁰ While previous fairs promoted trade between nations and businesses, by 1959 they had become crucial platforms for the exchange and competition of ideas and values.⁹¹ These factors, combined with Khrushchev's openness toward consumer reform, contributed to the Soviet government's subsequent efforts under his leadership to increase the availability of consumer goods and raise living standards. In these ways, cultural diplomacy and its accompanying initiatives, although perceived as trivial by some, should be reconsidered and given greater prominence in discussions surrounding the Cold War. While a short-term event, the effects of the American National Exhibition in Moscow, with its vast consumer displays intended to appeal to women, had long-term ramifications. It acts as a microcosm demonstrating the effectiveness of "soft power" in selling culture, swaying public opinion, and sowing the seeds of unrest, all of which ultimately contributed to the destabilization of the Soviet Union.

⁹⁰ "A Report on Trade Fair Program Fiscal Year 1960." 5 October 1960; Box 2, p. 1; White House, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs: Records, 1952-1961; Operations Coordinating Board Central Files; DDE Library.

⁹¹Ibid.

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Diana Cucuz is currently an adjunct professor in the Department of History at Toronto Metropolitan University. She received her PhD in history at York University in 2017. She specializes in American, women's and cultural history, and the intersections of foreign policy with domestic politics, society, and culture. Her first book, *Winning Women's Hearts and Minds: Selling Cold War Culture in the US and the USSR* (2023), focuses on the ways in which the US government and media politicized women, traditional gender roles, and consumer culture during the early Cold War. It used print culture, through *Amerika* magazine, to persuade Russian women of the superiority of the American way of life. She is currently working on her second manuscript, on 1959's American National Exhibition in Moscow, to further demonstrate the ways in which the US government's use of cultural diplomacy and soft power, through the exhibition, were integral to early Cold War efforts to gradually undermine and destabilize the Soviet regime.



Figure 3. American models ranging in ages displaying their leisure wear at the ANEM.
Source: Library of Congress.



Figure 4. Russian women waiting in line to receive makeovers at the ANEM.
Source: NACP

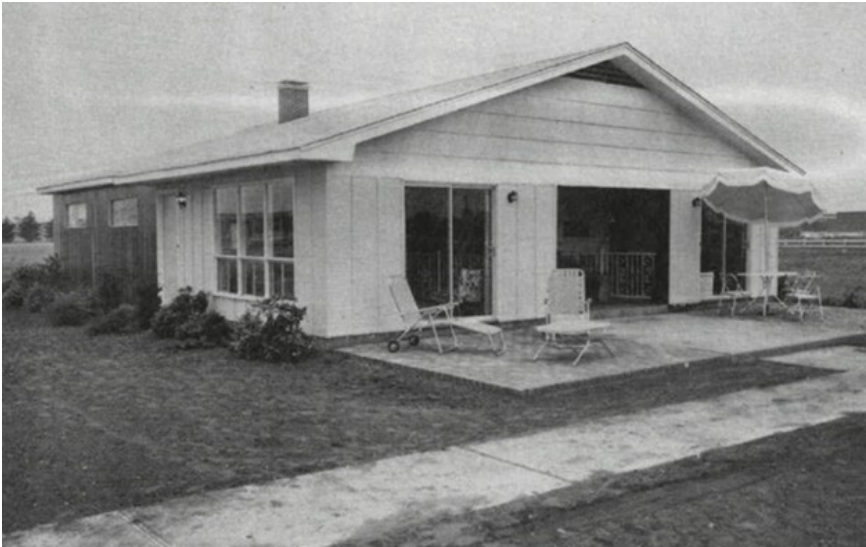


Figure 5: Exterior of the model home with its gates splitting it down the middle, giving it the nickname “Splitnik,” shown at the ANEM. Source: NACP

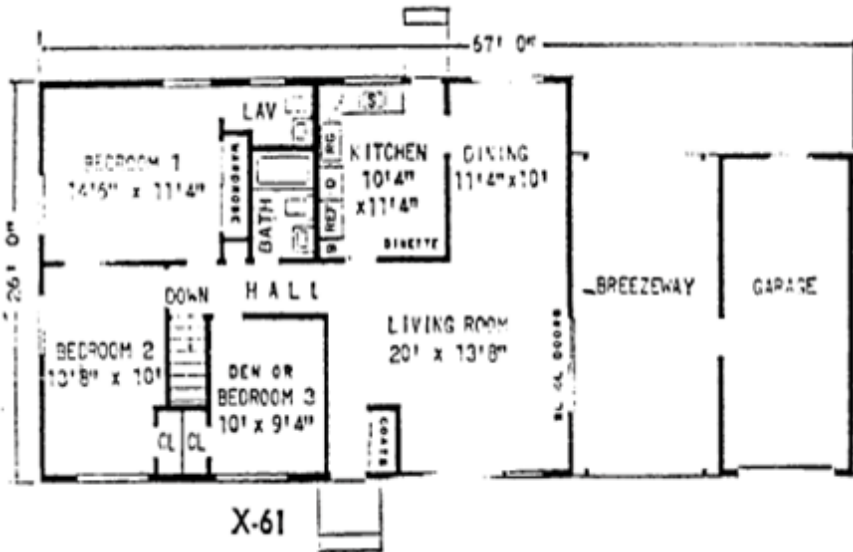


Figure 6. Floor plan of the model home shown at the ANEM. Source: *Washington Post*, 6 June 1959.



Figure 7. Overview of the RCA Whirlpool Miracle Kitchen displayed at the ANEM. Source: NACP.



Figure 8. Marylee Duerhing, General Mills' supervisor of product counsellors in the Betty Crocker Kitchens, prepares convenience foods before a Soviet audience at the ANEM. Source: NACP.