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On the cover: "Pushkin and the Muse" by Konstantin Alexeevich Korovin, 1930

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An American in His Native Land: John Cournos in Petrograd*

(Part 2 of the story started in JRAS 5.1)**

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Introduction

In August 1917, head of the British government's Anglo-Russian Commission in Petrograd, Sir Hugh Walpole (1884-1941) invited an American living in London, John Cournos (1881-1966), to join the Commission as an "assistant for journalistic work." As Rebecca Beasley writes, "Cournos's task in Petrograd would be, Walpole told him, 'to inform the Russians of English democratic institutions and English culture, the object, of course, being to bring friendliness between the two peoples'."[1] In one sense, the appointment of an American citizen to a British government propaganda operation was a curious choice. In another sense, the choice of Cournos was excellent, given his professional skill set, array of activities spanning cultural boundaries, and ability to inhabit simultaneously worlds potentially antagonistic.

The story of Cournos's sojourn in revolutionary Petrograd, from 14 October 1917 to late February/early March 1918, opens a window onto a broad arena of interconnected topics. It encompasses the complexities of war-time Allied relations, the internal politics of a nation at war both without and within, and the relations of literature and politics. This paper demonstrates how – in the person of John Cournos, a Russian-Jewish immigrant to the U. S. - politics and literature

*Saint Petersburg was founded as the Russian imperial capital on 27 May 1703 by Peter the Great. At the onset of WWI the name was changed to Petrograd. After the death of Lenin, the city was renamed Leningrad in his honor. The name reverted to St. Petersburg in June 1991.

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1. Rebecca Beasley, *Russomania: Russian Culture and the Creation of British Modernism, 1881-1922* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2020), 377, 378. On the Anglo-Russian Commission, see Chapter 4.3 "The Russian Revolutions and the Anglo-Russian Commission," 374-97.

were intricately interwoven at that crucial time and place. Numerous histories exist detailing individual lives in Petrograd. Cournos's story touches on and combines political, literary and cultural history.

Born Ivan Grigorevich Korshun in Zhitomir, Ukraine, John Cournos immigrated to Philadelphia in 1891 at the age of 10, settling in the city's Jewish Quarter with his mother and siblings. He was withdrawn from school after the 8th grade by his stepfather, Bernard Cournos, to work in a textile mill outside the city. When the family returned to the city, Cournos drew on his experience selling newspapers on the street when in grammar school to get hired by the *Philadelphia Record*. He was essentially self-educated, taking advantage of the city's Free Library, then located at 1217-1221 Chestnut Street in Center City three blocks west of the *Record* building.

When he left for London in 1912, Cournos had already begun his life-long avocation of translating from the Russian, publishing with Lippincott's and with Brown Bros. He established himself as an art critic, shuttling between Philadelphia with its established art community anchored by the Pennsylvania Academy of Art and the avant-garde scene in New York City's Greenwich Village, and rose to the position of week-end arts editor at the *Record*. Though embraced by Ezra Pound and the Anglo-Americans in London, Cournos remained subject to the poverty and anti-Semitism that had defined his adolescence and early adulthood in the United States. He would scrape together a meagre livelihood in London as translator, journalist and critic.[2] These skills would be put to use in Petrograd.

Petrograd in War and Revolution.

When interviewing Cournos for the position with the Anglo-Russian Commission, Hugh Walpole dutifully warned him of the deteriorating conditions in Petrograd. Both the war and the 1917 March/February revolution had placed the country and the city in difficult straits.[3] Summarizing the situation of the eve of revolution, Nicholas Riasanovsky writes:

> To cite Golovin's figures, in the course of the war the Russian army mobilized 15,500,000 men and suffered greater casualties than did the armed forces of any other country involved in the titanic struggle: 1,650,000 killed, 3,850,000 wounded, and 2,410,000 taken prisoner. The destruction of property and other civilian losses and displacement escaped count. The Russian army tried to evacuate the population as it retreated, adding to the confusion and suffering. [. . .] [T]he Russian minister of war and many other high officials and generals failed

2. See Marilyn Schwinn Smith, "John Cournos Among the Imagists: Prelude to Petrograd," *Journal of Russian American Studies* v. 5, no. 1 (May 2021): 24-47.

3. Significant historical events are assigned dual-dates—the Western date appearing before the Russian. Unglossed singular dates represent the Gregorian; Julian dates are glossed with (O. S.)—old style. After Russia adopted the Gregorian calendar—31 January 1918 was followed by 14 February 1918—all dates are Gregorian.

> miserably in the test of war, Russian weapons turned out to be inferior to the enemies', Russian ammunition in short supply. Transportation was generally bogged down and on numerous occasions it broke down altogether. In addition to the army, the urban population suffered as a result of this, because it experienced serious difficulties obtaining food and fuel. Inflation ran rampant. Worst of all, the government refused to learn any lessons . . .[4]

The situation only deteriorated under the Provisional Government, established 12 March/27 February, 1917. Members of the Provisional Government belonged to several of the country's revolutionary parties: the Constitutional Democrats (Cadets) were the largest party in the original composition of the new government, with Pavel Miliukov named as minister of foreign affairs; Aleksandr Guchkov, leader of the Octobrist party (adherents of the 1905 October Manifesto establishing a constitutional monarchy), served as minister of war and navy; Aleksandr Kerensky, representing the most left-wing of the progressive parties (he had officially rejoined the Socialist Revolutionary Party--the SRs--in March), was minister of justice. Over the course of the spring and summer, the government underwent a series of changes. Backlash during the "April Days" over Miliukov's declaration of firm support for the Allied war aims, led to his, and then war minister Guchkov's, resignations. The majority of ministers were now socialists, Kerensky taking over the ministry of war and the navy. The government continued the war despite worsening conditions. In June (17 June/4 June), Kerensky and General Aleksis Brusilov initiated an offensive on the southeastern front. Despite the overall success of the campaign, the high number of casualties severely diminished both fighting ability and morale. Riasanovsky writes:

> The general crisis and unrest in the country and, in particular, the privations and restlessness in the capital led to the so-called 'July days,' from the sixteenth to the eighteenth of July 1917 [16 July/3 July], when radical soldiers, sailors, and mobs, together with the Bolsheviks, tried to seize power in Petrograd. [. . .] On the twentieth of July [7 July] [prime minister] Prince Lvov resigned and Kerensky took over the position of prime minister.[5]

Walpole's biographer states that he had been recalled to London toward the end of June. "He was welcomed in London by John Buchan, Hubert Montgomery and others, given a room of his own at the Foreign Office, and treated there as an expert on Russia. [. . .] Hugh expected to return to Russia in August, but there arose 'complications at the F.O. . . . wires from Petrograd, every sort of trouble'."[6]

4. Nicholas V. Riasanovksy, *A History of Russia* 2nd edition (New York: Oxford UP, 1969), 505.

5. Riasanovksy, *History*, 509.

6. Rupert Hart-Davis, *Hugh Walpole: A Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1952), 162, 163. John Buchan, 1st Baron Tweedsmuir (1875-1940) wrote for the British War Propaganda

The July days and the rise of Kerensky to Prime Minister would have greatly troubled the British Foreign Office - those "wires from Petrograd, every sort of trouble." A man with Cournos's credentials and capabilities – familiarity with British-Russian war cables through his work at Marconi House, linguistic fluency, literary and cultural affinities – was more important than ever.

The Allure of Petrograd

Given Walpole's warning about conditions in Petrograd and the increasing fluidity of the political situation in the capital city, why would Cournos choose to accept the position? When deciding to abandon his career in Philadelphia and move to London, it was with the aim of becoming a writer in the "English tradition," and he had recently received a monetary subsidy from his friends Elena and Eugene Somoff to begin work on his first novel. An incentive, however, was the prospect of expanding his work as a translator from the Russian. The war had brought about a "Russian Boom," creating a market for his translations. Residence in Petrograd would enable Cournos to meet with both authors he was already translating and those with whom he sought closer relations, notably, Anna Akhmatova (1889-1966), Petrograd's leading woman poet.

There was also the matter of political sentiment. The March/February 1917 revolution had reinvigorated the hopes of an earlier generation of activists. Looking back, Cournos wrote in his *Autobiography*: "When the March revolution of 1917 took place and the Tsar was deposed, these political exiles in England took new heart [. . .] men who, in 1905 and thereabouts at the risk of their lives had fought to make Russia free."[7] Insight into Cournos's own politics may be gleaned from the advice given by his friend and fellow ex-pat, John Gould Fletcher in regard to joining the Commission. Fletcher wrote to Cournos on 16 August 1917: "[Y]ou will have to keep most of your revolutionary opinions to yourself."[8]

Political Sentiments - The Philadelphia years

During the first decade of the 20th century, Cournos himself was engaged in a number of left-leaning groups in Philadelphia – a not uncommon response among eastern European immigrants to industrializing American cities. Cournos was among the seven founding members of a Socialist-Zionist group (Poale Zion), formed in Philadelphia 14 June 1904[9] and associated with other Zionist activities

Bureau. By June 1916 he was drafting press communiques for the Intelligence Section. He was appointed Director of Information in 1917, and Director of Intelligence in 1918. Like Walpole, Buchan published novels during the war, including his two most famous, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915) and *Greenmantle* (1916). Sir Charles Hubert Montgomery KCMG, KCVO, CB (1876-1942) had worked in the Foreign Office since 1900 and was appointed Assistant Secretary in 1919.

7. John Cournos, *Autobiography* (New York, NY: Putnam, 1935), 291-2.

8. Quoted in Beasley, *Russomania*, 378.

9. Maxwell Whiteman, "Zionism Comes to Philadelphia," *Early History of Zionism in America*, ed. Isidore S. Meyer (New York: American Jewish Historical Society, 1958), 191-218, 205. On the Poale Zion, see Moses Freeman, *Fuftzig yohr geschikhte fun iddischen leben in Filadelfia*, v. 2 (Phila, 1934) 91, 93. The original members were Hayim Feynman,

in city. "The Zionist movement under the leadership of Herzl was then in full swing, and I used to attend some of the meetings."[10]

> At this time, too, both in New York and Philadelphia, I used to see something of Naphtali Herz Imber [1856-1909], the Hebrew poet once rescued from a Turkish prison by the correspondent of the London *Times*, Laurence Oliphant, and caricatured by Zangwill in the figure of the poet in *The Children of the Ghetto*, which Imber never forgave. Imber wrote "Hatiqua," the Hebrew song adopted by the Zionists as their national anthem. (Imber was particularly proud of his "pure Hebrew.") I remember him, at a Zionist convention in Philadelphia, while the hundreds were singing his famous song, standing in the background, a lone figure with his Voltairean face framed within longish hair, mocked by some of the auditors.[11]

As a Russian, Yiddish and German speaker, Cournos was frequently assigned by his Philadelphia newspaper to cover foreign activists on fund raising tours. Notably, he was assigned in 1904 to interview Catherine Breshkovskaya before her public appearance.[12] In his *Autobiography*, Cournos writes:

> It is true, the *Record* now and then brought me into contact with other worlds. There were not only the articles I wrote on art and artists, but also the occasional assignments I had to interview distinguished personages from the old world. [. . .] There was my assignment to interview the famous Katherine Breshkovskaya, "Mother of the Russian Revolution," then recently escaped from Siberia and collecting money for the cause on her way back to zones of danger. I do not now remember what I said, nor

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Dr. Slonimsky (Cournos's close friend), Yekhezkel Edelshteyn, Cournos, Michael & Meir Brown, Brick. I thank Raphael Halff for help with Yiddish text.

10. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 152. Theodor Herzl (1860-1904) founded the Zionist Organization at the first Zionist Congress, held in Basel Switzerland in 1897.

11. Cournos, *Autobiography,* 173.

12. Ekaterina Konstantinovna Breshko-Breshkovskaia (1844-1934) was founding member with Gershuni of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party (1901). Nicknamed "Babushka," Grandmother of the Russian Revolution, Breshkovskaya spent many years in Siberian prisons, touring the United States in 1904 between prison terms. Invited back to Petrograd from exile in Siberia by the Provisional Government, she was welcomed by Kerensky, elected to the Pre-Parliament in October 1917 and appointed its chair. A supporter of the Kerensky government, she left Russia in 1918.

Cournos's story on Breshkovskaia's talk, "For Russian Freedom. Remarkable Enthusiasm at Meeting of Local Revolutionist. Woman Leader Arouses It. Mme. Breshkovskaya is Carried on the shoulders of Enthusiasts and Gives Kisses to Impromptu Speakers," appeared in *The Philadelphia Record* (Nov. 28, 1904), 5. Quotes from the story include: "How the Socialist-Revolutionist party came into being was the subject of Mme. Breshkovskaya's address, which was the last on the program. She spoke in Russian." "She also denied that the present Minister of the Interior, Mirsky, was a man of liberal tendencies."

> what there was about me to attract her affection, but suddenly, without warning, she flung her arms about my neck and kissed me in the presence of a large gathering come to greet her. [13]

Referring again to his work at the *Record*, Cournos writes: "There was the embarrassing list of questions I had for Israel Zangwill, which seemed half to amuse him, while other reporters sat around wondering what to ask."[14]

The important Philadelphia anarchist, Natasha Notkin, figured among his acquaintances.[15]

> I remember I made the acquaintance of the well-known Anarchist, Natasha Notkin, a charming personality in many ways; and I used to visit her house because I was likely to meet interesting people there and hear interesting talk (It was there, by the way, I first met Emma Goldman, then a dynamic personality, sturdy as you make them, one would scarcely recognize these features in the respectable, bourgeois looking little old lady she is now.)[16]

Another passage in the *Autobiography* suggests a fair degree of socialist activity.

> At a somewhat later period it was to be conveyed to me in a gossipy way that this or that woman admired me and 'wanted to see more of me.' I was a dunce, and the significance of these friendly hints rather escaped me, until one evening a female Socialist orator, who used to address crowds from a soap-box, invited me not merely, as Mae West would say to 'come and see me sometime,' but while I was waiting in the Philadelphia orchestra queue named a definite evening. She was somewhat over forty and had two attractive grown daughters, and she was like a dynamo and had the energy of a dozen. I called on her on the appointed evening in the late Autumn. We sat before the grate in which a log fire was flaming, and in the room was a large bed in which her two young children were asleep—Walt Whitman Crescenzo and Charlotte Corday Crescenzo. We sat by the fire and talked. First about Socialism and dreams of human social justice. [. . .] She is now a nice old lady high in the counsels of the Communist party.[17]

13. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 173.

14. Cournos, *Autobiography,* 173. Cournos continued his acquaintance with Zangwill (1864-1926), a British Zionist and author of *Children of the Ghetto*, once he moved to England. Zangwill wrote recommendations to British publishers for Cournos's novels.

15. Natasha Notkin (1870-1930?) emigrated from Russia at age 15, was a pharmacist, a leading figure among Philadelphia anarchists, and a friend of Emma Goldman. She appears in books by Paul Avrich: *The Russian Anarchists* and *An American Anarchist: The Life of Voltairine de Cleyre*.

16. Cournos, Autobiography, 152.

17. Cournos, *Autobiography,* 153.

Cournos took pride in his relation to Grigory Andreyevich Gershuni (1870-1908), founding member with Breshkovskaia of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party and founder of its Combat Organization (1902).

> Come to think of it, there was that close blood-kinsman of mine, Gershuni (Gregory), famous as a member of the Terrorist Organization, — whom Savinkov called the leader of the party and brain and soul of terrorism — the organization later betrayed by Azev; and was he not in his own fashion a surgeon who thought by a bold operation he was cutting a canker out of society? He was a Hasid transformed into a Socialist-Revolutionary.[18]

Political Sentiments - The London years

The move to London in 1912 brought Cournos into a decidedly different milieu. As an Imperial capital, London had on offer a broader array of dissonant voices than the socialists with whom Cournos comported in Philadelphia or the Russian political speakers whom he met as a journalist. In his *Autobiography*, he writes of London's Hyde Park and its orators:

> This was delicious! And all of it was as good as a show, and better. There they were, all blowing off steam, all contented, all happy. The anarchy of the world was made manifest here. Its friendly tolerance, too, without which the elements composing this anarchy might have come into conflict.[19]

Hyde Park's, and by extension, London's "friendly tolerance" led to the presence in the city of a significantly greater number of Russian political exiles than in Philadelphia. Acquaintance with these exiles influenced Cournos's own politics. By the time of his appointment to the Anglo-Russian Commission, Cournos's personal sympathies were aligned more closely with those of his new acquaintances than with the Commission's. The Commission, like the British government it represented, was conservative. Its primary interest lay in keeping Russia engaged in the war. The rise of left-leaning politicians in the Provisional Government presented a severe public relations problem that the Commission was hard pressed to address. Despite his qualifications for work with the Commission, Cournos's political sympathies would have been problematic if known by the Commission.

Kerensky's rise over the course of the spring and summer, 1917, coincided with the rise of SRs in the government. Among Kerensky's appointments was

18. Cournos, *Autobiography,* 46. Before his exposure as a double agent, Evno Fishelevich Azef/Evgenii Filippovich Azef (1869 – 24 April 1918) was a trusted leader among the Social Revolutionaries (SRs), working closely with Gershuni, Boris Savinkov and Petr Karpovich.

19. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 218.

Cournos's new friend, Eugene Somoff, who, together with his wife Elena, was contributing a pound per week so that he could continue work on his first novel.[20] Cournos may have met the Somoffs at Fanny Stepniak's home in Child's Hill, London, just west of Hampstead Heath.[21] Before moving to London, Fanny lived at Norton, Letchworth, in her cottage "Oblomovka," where she entertained Russian political exiles, possibly including Petr Kropotkin.[22] With its large Quaker community, Letchworth was a haven for passivists during the war. Its long-standing reputation for progressive politics made it both a magnet for exiles and a possible target of government surveillance. Located 38 miles from London's King's Cross Station, Letchworth was an easy train commute. After her move to Child's Hill, Russian political exiles in England gathered informally at Fanny's, where Cournos met several of the political exiles discussed below.

Of Somoff, Cournos wrote: "He was a Russian engineer who had come [to England] from Belgium, where he had lived as an exile for revolutionary activities in Tsarist Russia. [. . .] (During Kerensky's régime he was to become Governor of Archangel.)"[23] Somoff appears to have assumed the position in Archangel in July, while Kerensky was still minister of war and the navy.[24] Kerensky became Prime Minister only on 6 August/24 July. Somoff may have been involved with the SRs at the time of the 1905 Russian revolution, as was Kerensky, who was arrested 21 December 1905 under suspicion of belonging to the Combat Brigade. Kerensky remained in custody until June 1906.[25] The fact that Somoff's first wife, Evgeniia Zil'berberg, was sister of Leo Ivanovich Zil'berberg (1880-1907), an important

20. Evgenii Ivanovich Somov (24 April 1881, Kiev – 1962, U. S.) married Elena [Helen] Konstantinovna Odinets (21 January 1888, St. Petersburg – 1969, U. S.) on 20 October 1915 in Brentford, just north of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew. Their place of residence at that time was 48 Esmond Road, Bedford Park, located between Brentford and Kensington in London.

21. Fanny Markovna Stepniak (1855-1945) was widow of Sergei Stepniak-Kravchinsky (1851-1895), political assassin and author of *Underground Russia*.

22. Pat Simpson, "Prince Peter Kropotkin: Anarchism, Eugenics and the Utopian ideal of Letchworth Garden City." Conference paper (Utopia! Experiments in Perfection Conference: Spirella Ballroom, Letchworth Garden City, November 12, 2015), 6-7

23. Cournos, *Autobiography,* 288.

24. The Arkhangelsk Regional Scientific Library named after N. A. Dobrolyubov holds two documents issued by Somoff from September and November 1917 under СОМОВ, ЕВГЕНИЙ ИВАНОВИЧ (ИНЖЕНЕР, ГЛАВНОНАЧАЛЬСТВУЮЩИЙ АРХАНГЕЛЬСКОМ И БЕЛОМОРСКИМ ВОДНЫМ РАЙОНОМ (С ИЮЛЯ 1917 Г.) ; 1881–1962); Somoff's name appears under the heading ГУБЕРНСКИЕ ПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВЕННЫЕ КОМИССАРЫ (1917-1920) ГЕНЕРАЛ-ГУБЕРНАТОРЫ СЕВЕРНОЙ ОБЛАСТИ (1918-1920).http://patriot-pomor.ru/shop/index.php?productID=352] (viewed 26.vii.20). I thank Elena Yushkova for supplying me with this information.

Benjamin Rhodes cites communications by American consul Felix Cole to the effect that Somoff was the Russian naval commander-in-chief in Archangel over the course of September 1917 into February 1918. See Benjamin D. Rhodes, "A Prophet in the Russian Wilderness: The Mission of Consul Felix Cole at Archangel, 1917-1919," *Review of Politics* v. 46, no. 3 (July 1984): 388-409, 407n13.

25. russiapedia.rt.com

member of the SR Combat Organization, hanged for his activities, supports the supposition that Somoff was associated with the SRs. Somoff may have gone into exile around the time he separated from his wife, around 1905/1906. Evgeniia met Boris Savinkov soon after her separation from Somoff.[26]

Boris Viktorovich Savinkov (1879-1925) had joined the SRs in 1903. Unknowingly working with double agent Evno Azef, Savinkov headed the SR Combat Brigade (alternately known as the Combat Organization, Fighting Organization, Combat Unit) responsible for terrorist activities. He was convicted of assassinating Vyacheslav von Plehve and participating in the assassination of Grand Duke Sergei Aleksandrovich. After returning to Russia from self-exile in April 1917, Savinkov was appointed deputy war minister by Kerensky in July and served through August.[27] Kerensky would likely have known Savinkov since at least 1905 in connection with SR activities.

As noted by William Conger, the leftward shift in the Provisional Government coincided with the return of émigrés to Russia.[28] Cournos met several of these returning émigrés in England. His striking notion, re Gershuni, of Hasidism transformed into SR terrorism may be an apt formula for the trajectory of many of the Russian political exiles whom Cournos met in London. Looking back on this period between the February and October revolutions, he writes:

> While upon this subject of races (in the ethnic, not the sporting sense!) the Russian provided the real enigma of the time. I met numbers of them in London, mostly exiled revolutionaries. And a strange lot they were. Most of them had been in Russian prisons and in Siberia and, in the name of human freedom and happiness they burned with a fanatical fervor worthy of the early Christians. We too often use the word "idealism" too lightly: they were idealist in the only sense that the term meant anything: their idea, which possessed them completely, ran in their blood: they were ready and willing to die for it.[29]

26. I thank Sergei Glebov for alerting me to the relationship between Evgeniia and Somoff.

Given the surnames of Somova, Savinkova, and Shirinskaia-Shikhmatova in the Hoover Institution's Register of Okhrana (the Tsarist Secret police) Records, Evgeniia is sometimes identified as Savinkov's second wife, other times as his mistress.

27. Cournos writes the following about British response to Savinkov's presence in the city: "The British officials and residents were talking of that man of daring and mystery, Boris Savinkov, as the probable "savior" of Russia. The same Savinkov, years later, was to die by suicide in a Bolshevik prison." (*Autobiography,* 314)

28. William R. Conger, "The Root Mission." MA thesis 1980. Univ. of Richmond, 65 (https://scholarship.richmond.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2241&context=masters-theses)

On the return of Russian exiles, see also Faith Hillis, *Utopia's Discontents: Russian Emigrés and the Quest for Freedom, 1830s-1930s* (New York: Oxford UP, 2021), 210-11.

29. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 291.

Cournos writes of a one curious instance:

> [T]here was a small but sturdy Cossack by the name of Gorbunkov or Gorbunov—I forget which—whom I used to meet in the reading-room of the British Museum. This man was the strangest of all incongruities—a pacifist Cossack! Which, in those days at least, was the same as a cat that wouldn't eat mice. He was young too, with the frame of a bull-dog. […] In any event, I had completely forgotten about him. The days to come were to hold a surprise for me, for when I got to Petrograd and walked on business into the Education Commissar's [Lunacharsky] office, who should greet me but this same Gorbunkov or Gorbunov—in the role of chief secretary to the commissar?[30]

Cournos devotes considerable space to another political exile:

> Another face I remember is that of the famous Karpovitch, whom I met at Madame Stepniak's. Karpovitch, it will be remembered, had assassinated a Russian Minister, and had been used as a pawn by the infamous Azeff, *agent-provocater*, who succeeded my blood-kinsman Gershuni as the head of the Terrorist Organization of the Socialist Revolutionist party. [. . .] He was tall, dark, robust, with a placid expressionless countenance which suggested a business-man rather than a Russian revolutionary. He was the one man I met who was disillusioned with revolution [. . .] He had been in London for years, and served as a professional masseur in some hospital.[31]

After expulsion from university for participation in the student movement, Petr Vladimirovich Karpovich (15 October 1874 – 13 April 1917) enrolled in Berlin University in 1899 and became involved with the Socialist Revolutionaries. He returned to St. Petersburg in 1901, where, reacting to the new policy of military conscription of students involved in protests, he shot Nikolai Pavlovich Bogolepov (9 December 1846 – 15 March 1901), Minister of Education, on 14 February. Bogolepov lingered for a month before dying of his wound. Karpovich was sentenced to 20 years penal labor. Escaping during one of his transfers in 1907, Karpovich returned to Europe to collaborate with Azef in the Combat Brigade. Karpovich made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of Tsar Nicholas in 1908. Disillusioned after Azef's exposure as a double agent, Karpovich had abandoned political activity and "retired to England," as Cournos put it.

Through another of his London acquaintances, Cournos met Errico Malatesta (1853-1932). Fanny Stepniak's husband, Kravchinsky had been a member of "The Circle of Tchaikovsky", a literary group advocating self-education among the peasantry. Kravchinsky was arrested in 1874, the same year that Nikolai

30. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 292-3.
31. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 291-92.

Tchaikovsky (1851-1926) left Russia. After escaping from prison, Kravchinsky joined Malatesta's rebellion in Italy. Of Malatesta, Cournos writes:

> This thought [that human beings are greatest when the qualities of courage and love 'meet in these two finest human virtues'] arises from the memory of a face I met at this time, a face I shall never forget. It was the face of Malatesta, famous anarchist, exile in London from his land of Italy. Malatesta loved human beings, and he loved to see all human beings love all other human beings, and he had suffered for this love of his and this idea of his. I met him at Vera Tchaikovskaya's rooms, which were in the same house in which I lived [44 Mecklenburgh Square; 1915]. Vera Tchaikovskaya was a beautiful woman, the daughter of the Tchaikovsky who was a famous Russian revolutionary and who later became the President of the Northern Russian Republic before it yielded to Bolshevism; and Malatesta came to see her because of the friendship he felt for her father. Never before or since have I seen a face express such sadness, such inner torment. And, by the way, it was almost a perfect replica of the tortured face of Michelangelo, only infinitely more sad. [. . .] What was my sadness to his, which beheld the world he loved engaged fiercely in fratricide and falling about his ears?[32]

To Petrograd

2 October 1917 John Cournos traveled with Hugh Walpole from St. Pancras station in London to embark at Aberdeen on the northeast coast of Scotland on the *Vulture*. The *Vulture* sailed by night with extreme vigilance, following the North Sea route traveled repeatedly by Walpole on his several journeys to and from Petrograd.[33] War limited the number of routes between London and Petrograd to virtually one. Travel across the continent was not an option. German U-boats in the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Finland enforcing the blockade against Allied commercial and naval ships ruled out that route. Scandinavia remained the most viable route, despite the necessity of first crossing the still dangerous North Sea. After suspending in April 1916 its policy of "sinking without warning", Germany had reinstituted its unrestricted submarine warfare in February 1917, a resumption influencing the United States's decision to declare war on Germany, 6 April 1917.[34]

Robert Service notes the sinking of a ship carrying Russian émigrés returning home after the March/February revolution.[35] Regarding the ship noted by Service,

32. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 283.

33. An alternate route, one taken by Walpole when he returned to Petrograd just before the March/February revolution, departed from Liverpool and sailed across the Arctic before a six-day train journey down to the city. Hart-Davis, *Horace Walpole,* 158-9. Cournos would take this northern route in when returning to England in 1918.

34. See also https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-u-boat-campaign-that-almost-broke-britain

35. Robert Service, *Spies and Commissars. The Early Years of the Russian Revolution*

Cournos writes:

> When the March revolution of 1917 took place and the Tsar was deposed, these political exiles in England took new heart, and Karpovitch [. . .]—indeed a whole shipload of them—set sail for the homeland, the land of promise. And—and—cruel irony—the pen falters at the thought—the vessel carrying all these fine people with all their fine hopes was struck by a German torpedo, and only the ripples on the water remained for a little to tell a modern tragic tale.[36]

After landing in Bergen, Walpole's company travelled by train via Christiania and Stockholm to the Russian border town of Torneå, which provided a rail link between Russia and its Western allies.[37] (It was from Torneå that Lenin, then Trotsky, travelled to Finland Station.) Walpoles's group proceeded on to Petrograd, arriving about three in the morning, 14 October. Walpole retired to Konstantin Somov's house and Cournos to the *Hôtel Angleterre*. About a week later he moved to a room at 27 Zagorodny Prospekt.

Cournos's first experience of the imperial city would not have been entirely unlike the thrill of his earliest days exploring London. The *Hôtel Angleterre*, situated at 24 Malaya Morskaya Street at the edge of St. Isaac's Square, overlooked the cathedral. Just further east along the river Neva was the headquarters of the Anglo-Russian Commission, on the Admiralty Embankment.[38] Continuing east along the Neva, just beyond the Winter Palace, was the British Embassy located at House No. 4 on the Palace Embankment by the Troitskii Bridge and the Field of Mars. But the architectural grandeur of the city was tempered by the dire conditions in Petrograd.

Cournos encountered unreliable power, long lines for basic provisions, bandits roaming the streets and breaking into private homes. Yet life was ameliorated by his status as a foreigner.

> I was, of course, fortunate with my British Pounds, and was able to buy certain necessities such as bread and really excellent butter (which came from Tsarskoe Selo) at inflated prices, which were regarded by Russians as unspeakably excessive but which translated into English money were fairly reasonable.[39]

(New York: Public Affairs, 2012), 14-17.

36. Cournos, *Autobiography,* 291.

37. Oslo was renamed Christiania in 1624, reverting back to Oslo in 1925. Torneå is the Swedish name for the Swedish-Finnish border town of Tornio in Lapland. Located at the top of the Gulf of Bothnia, Tornio became a Russian garrison town after Russia annexed current-day Finland in 1809 after the Swedish-Russian war of 1808-1809. Lenin granted Finland independence in December 1917.

38. This location of the Commission's headquarters is given by Walpole's biographer, Hart-Davis (156). Cournos gives 15 Fontanka as the address for the Anglo-Russian Commission.

39. Cournos, *Autobiography,* 307

The Commission was staffed primarily with literary men, in keeping with its propaganda mission.[40] But the distinction between propaganda and intelligence is understandably slight. Being out on the streets gathering information about public sentiment, while giving shape to such propaganda as he would write, would also have been integral to any intelligence duties. Cournos was not likely involved in espionage, but it was a slim step further along the continuum from propaganda to intelligence/information to espionage. At his first meeting with Walpole in London, Cournos was introduced to Commission member, Paul Dukes, who later became agent ST 25 of the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) and the only Briton knighted for espionage.[41]

Notably, Cournos opens discussion of his work for the Commission with the following statement: "I do not suppose I ever admired any one more than my chief in Petrograd, Colonel Thornhill," with the annotatation: "Colonel Thornhill is mentioned in Lockhart's *British Agent*."[42] When arranging with the Foreign Office to appoint a Petrograd-based coordinator for the diverse propaganda activities, British Ambassador to Russia, Sir George Buchanan, had suggested both Cudbert Thornhill (1883-1952) and Hugh Walpole, which may explain Cournos's designation of Thornhill as his chief. At the beginning of the war, Thornhill had been recruited by Mansfield Cumming into MI6. At the MI6 (SIS) station in Petrograd, Thornhill served as "military attaché in charge of the intelligence mission in Russia."[43] Thornhill's position in Petrograd enhances the supposition that Cournos was not altogether disengaged from intelligence activities.

Cournos continues:

> For he was neither an artist nor a poet; he was primarily a man of action, a man who, I felt, could face danger calmly, whose presence could make me face danger with equal calm, who had character in the best English sense. [. . .] He was attached, I believe, to the British Embassy, and he

40. See also, Beasley, *Russomania,* 379-81.

41. Dukes had returned to London in June 1917 to work at the Foreign Office, as had Walpole. He made a secret trip to Petrograd in December 1917. See entry for Dukes in Jonathan D. Smele, *Historical Dictionary of the Russian Civil Wars, 1916-1926*, viewed online. See also Sir Paul Dukes, K. B. E. *Red Dusk and the Morrow. Adventures and Investigations in Red Russia* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1922) and *The Story of "ST 25." Adventure and Romance in the Secret Intelligence Service in Red Russia* (London: Cassell and Company LTD, 1938). John Buchan, Compton Mackensie, and W. Somerset Maugham were also employed by SIS.

See also Service 224-5 and David Ayers, *Modernism*, *Internationalism and the Russian Revolution* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2018), 97, 173,175, 188

42. Cournos, *Autobiography,* 303. Sir Robert Hamilton Bruce Lockhart, KCMG (1887-1970) had been British Vice Consul in Moscow, 1912-1915, Consul General, 1915-1917, and Unofficial Ambassador to the Bolsheviks, 1917-1918. The book Cournos refers to is *Memoirs of a British Agent* (London: Putnam, 1932). An introduction by Walpole appeared in the 1933 edition.

43. Beasley, *Russomania*, 379-80.

> only rarely appeared at the offices of the Commission on the Fontanka, where a large staff worked, often it seemed to me to no purpose. [. . .] It was different if you broached an idea to Colonel Thornhill. If he liked it he simply said, 'Go ahead and do it!' It was then wholly up to you. Red tape was foreign to his nature; therefore it was a pleasure to work with him. And he told me to go ahead quite often.[44]

Only now does Cournos write:

> "Quite apart from ideas I used to suggest [to Thornhill], I wrote articles which appeared in the Petrograd newspapers and periodicals. Sometimes they were purely journalistic, as for example, when German air raids were expected over Petrograd I wrote a *feuilleton* for the Novya Vremya [*sic* - Novoe Vremya, a popular, if conservative daily] to show how panicky the Londoners were during the Zeppelin visits."[45]

Cournos's experience of war-time London had prepared him in numerous ways for social conditions in Petrograd. Aside from food shortages (though considerably less severe) and Zeppelin raids, Cournos was familiar with the ongoing social lives of artists outside their regular, now closed, venues.

Cournos writes further, "And I wrote quite a number of critical articles: among others one on Whistler and Sargent for the popular weekly, *Niva*, and another on current tendencies in English art for the leading art monthly, *Apollon*. The clever Russian literary critic, Korney Chukovsky, was associated with me in this work."[46] Given Chukovsky's association with the Anglo-Russian Commission, Cournos's move to Chukovsky's building at 27 Zagorodnyi Prospekt settled him under Chukovsky's mentorship. Chukovsky was an ideal mentor for Cournos and played a significant role in Cournos's life in Petrograd. Born Nikolay Vasilyevich Korneychukov (1882-1969), Chukovsky contributed to several periodical publications, was a major literary critic and, later, children's author. Well known for his translations of Walt Whitman, Chukovsky also translated Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Oscar Wilde, Rudyard Kipling, O. Henry into Russian.

Chukovsky had spent time in London as correspondent for an Odessan newspaper in 1903-04 and again in 1916 as a member of an official Russian delegation. During both visits to England, Chukovsky met with Zinaida Vengerova. Zinaida Afanas'evna Vengerova (1867-1941) was a professional literary figure, who traveled widely throughout western Europe, returning frequently to Russia.[47]

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44. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 303-4.

45. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 304. Cournos describes the 8 September 1915 Zeppelin raid over London that he witnessed: *Autobiography*, 279-80. He gives a fictionalized account of the raid in chapter II, "'The Devil Speaks German'," of his *roman à clef*, *Miranda Masters* (New York: Knopf, 1926), 15-25.

46. Ibid.

47. On Vengerova, see also: Rachel Polonsky, *English Literature and the Russian Aesthetic Renaissance* (Cambridge, Eng.; New York: Cambridge UP, 1998), 26-7, 29; "Zinaida Vengerova and Her Unpublished Correspondence," edited by Rosina Neginsky.

Often in London, Vengerova lived at 54 Bloomsbury Street in September 1914, across from the British Museum. Cournos may well have met her around this time in the museum's Reading Room, which he frequented. Or at one of the Russian émigré salons, such as that of Vengerova's friend Fanny Stepniak. Vengerova established the connection between Cournos and Fedor Sologub, initiating their correspondence, praising Cournos's translations and conveying texts between London and Petrograd.[48] Vengerova probably had supplied Cournos with a copy of Chukovsky's *From Chekhov's Days to Ours*, on which Cournos based much of his understanding of Sologub for his 1915 article in the *Fortnightly Review*.[49] It is not inconceivable that Cournos met Chukovsky through Vengerova during the 1916 visit.

The men's numerous life experiences in common would have undergirded a strong personal sympathy beyond their professional association. Born almost precisely a year apart, both men had been separated from their biological fathers at an early age; had been separated from formal education after primary school, though Chukovsky finished his education through correspondence courses; both were subject to social marginalization due to class, a marginalization from which they sought escape through journalism, to employ Anna Vaninskaya's formulation.[50]

Vaninskaya's summary accounts of Chukovsky's articles written from and about London for the *Odessa News*, taken together with Cournos's *Autobiography*, provide ample documentation for the men's shared sentiments.[51] Both men socialized with Russian émigrés based in London; in at least Cournos's case, often political émigrés. Both men were familiar with Whitechapel in London's East End, known for its poverty and overcrowding, and home to the majority

Revue des Etudes Slaves v. 62, nos. 1-4 (1995); Rosina Neginsky, "Zinaida Vengerova." *Russian Women* Writers v. 2, ed. Christine D. Tomei (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1999); Charlotte Rosenthal, "Zinaida Vengerova: Modernism and Women's Liberation," *Irish Slavonic Studies* v. 8 (1987): 97-105.

48. See Marilyn Schwinn Smith and Elena Yushkova, "Dzhon Kurnos – perevodchik Fedora Sologuba na angliiskii iazyk: rol' Zinaidy Vengerovoi vo vzaimootnosheniiakh dvukh literaturorov." Forthcoming, RUDN Journal of Studies in Literature and Journalism.

49. Chukovsky's *Ot Chekhova do nashikh dnei* was first published in 1908 (Sankt Peterburg: T-vo "Izdatel'skoe biuro"). A third corrected and expanded edition appeared in 1909 (Sankt Peterburg: M. O. Vol'f). John Cournos, "Feodor Sologub", *Fortnightly Review* v. 104 (Sept. 1, 1915): 480-90.

S. V. Fedotova describes *Ot Chekhova do nashikh dnei* as the young critic's debut book in "'Liubopytnyi malyi': pis'ma Z.N. Gippius i D.S. Merezhkovskogo k K.I. Chukovskomu (1907-1920)" *Literaturnyi fakt* 2021. № 2:31–81. https://doi.org/10.22455/2541-8297-2021-20-31-81

50. See Anna Vaninskaya, "Korney Chukovsky in Britain" *Translation and Literature* v. 20, no. 3:373-392. http://www.jstor.com/stable/41306124.

For discussion of Chukovsky's early reputation as journalist and critic, see Fedotova, "Liubopytnyi malyi," 32-50

51. Vaninskaya, "Korney Chukovsky," 377-380.

of Russian-Jewish immigrants.[52] Cournos and Chukovsky had experienced poverty in childhood and endured extreme financial stress during their time in London. Aspiring to a literary life, both men deplored the state of British cultural life among the bourgeoisie -- its focus on business and a general enthusiasm for mechanization.

In his article "Not Vodka," Cournos expressed outrage at C. E. Bechhofer's characterization of Russia when implying that Chekhov was not Russian because he was "not vodka," and made clear his own love for Chekhov precisely as Russian.[53] There is, in his article, a striking similarity to Chukovsky's reaction to Russia's representation in the British Museum. Vaninskaya writes:

> A silver shot glass, Chukovsky was outraged to discover, was all that 'represented [his] homeland' in the British Museum. If a visitor wished to find out 'what went on in that big country which gave him Tolstoy and Dostoevsky', what were its cultural achievements, its 'manners and customs', there was nothing to point to but Russian 'drunkenness' ([Chukovsky,] S[obranie] S[ochinenii], XI, 455).

Vaninskaya continues:

> Chekhov was a particularly sore point [. . .] Chekhov, Chukovsky concluded, was utterly inaccessible to the 'primitive' Englishman (447), who would 'demand his money back' if he were made to sit through *The Cherry Orchard* (509). [. . .] An English translation of *The Black Monk* did exist, but was apparently too dreadful for words; while a translation of *Ward No. 6* by a friend of Chukovsky's was turned down by Fisher Unwin because the author was unknown to the public.[54]

Vaninskaya summarizes Chukovsky's 1903-1904 response to British appreciation for Russian literature as follows: "The only place in London where Russian literature was properly appreciated was the Russian reading room in Whitechapel, frequented exclusively by Russian Jews."[55]

Publishing in Petrograd - American Propaganda and *Niva*

On 11 November 1917 (O. S.), the most widely circulating magazine in Russia, *Niva*, published a special issue (no. 45) reflecting American efforts to influence Russian attitudes towards both the war and the United States. Aside from

52. Whitechapel figures in numerous accounts of London by Russian journalists. See Anna Vaninskaya, "Under Russian Eyes: Foreign Correspondents in Edwardian Britain," *Times Literary Supplement* (28 November 2014): 17-19. See also Robert Henderson, "'For the Cause of Education.' A history of the Free Russian Library in Whitechapel, 1898-1917," *Russia in Britain, 1880-1940: From Melodrama to Modernism*, ed. Rebecca Beasley and Philip Ross Bullock (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013), 71-86.

53. John Cournos, "Not Vodka," *Egoist* v. 3, no. 9 (Sept. 1916): 134.

54. Vaninskaya, "Korney Chukovsky," 379.

55. Vaninskaya "Korney Chukovsky," 380.

numerous political and commercial differences, England and the U. S. concurred on a number of significant matters during the Great War: keeping Russia in the war to divert German forces from the Western Front; a belief that Germany exercised outsize political and commercial influence within Russia, a belief fostered by the influence of the German-born Empress over her husband, the Russian Tsar; a belief that Germany was fomenting revolt within Russia to the end of driving Russia out of the war, reflected in the effectiveness of German propaganda; the belief that the Germans were assisting the return of revolutionaries to Russia.[56] Like the British, the Americans were much concerned that a positive image of the U. S. be widely propagated in Russia. The Anglo-Russian Commission had been the British response.

After the United States declared war on Germany, the appointment of a special mission to Russia was recommended to President Wilson. On April 24, Elihu Root (1845-1937), former Secretary of War, Secretary of State and United States Senator from New York, accepted a position as Special Ambassador to Russia, heading what was known as the Root Mission.[57] Unlike the literary staffing of the Anglo-Russian Commission, the Root Mission was staffed with representatives from numerous fields and was intended both to establish good relations with the Provisional Government and to investigate Russia's need for aid. Traveling west via Vladivostok, the Root Mission arrived in Petrograd on 13 June 1917. Despite Root's repeated cables urging a major publicity campaign, he left the city on 12 July before any action was taken.

Separately, on 13 April 1917, seven days after Congress declared war on Germany, a Committee on Public Information (CPI) was established by executive order, chaired by George Creel (1876-1953), a journalist who had recommended it to the President. The Committee was primarily charged with engaging the American public in support of the war, but soon expanded to include foreign offices. The President sent Edgar Grant Sisson (1875-1948) to Petrograd on 27 October with instructions to begin a publicity campaign. Only with Sisson's arrival in Petrograd on 25/12 November, weeks after the Bolshevik coup, did publicity become active. Creel writes:

56. On these issues, see: David R. Francis, *Russia from the American Embassy. April 1916 – November, 1918* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1921) *passim*, esp. pp. 37-39, 97, 113. (Reprints: New York: Arno Press, 1970; Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2019, edited and annotated by Vladimir N. Voskov); George Creel, *How We Advertised America* (New York: Harper, 1920) on the "Committee on Public Information"; David H. Mould, "Images of Revolution: An American Photographer in Petrograd, 1917," *Journal of Russian American Studies* v. 1, no. 1 (May 2017): 46-61; Conger, "The Root mission."

For accounts of German assistance in returning revolutionaries to Russia, see also *Germany and Revolution in Russia 1915-1918: Documents from the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry*, ed Z. A. B. Zeman (London; New York: Oxford UP, 1958).

57. See Conger, "The Root Mission." For a Soviet assessment of the Mission, see A. E.Ioffe, "Missiia Ruta v Rossii v 1917 godu"// Kiev: Library of Ukraine (ELIBRARY.COM. UA). Updated: 18.03.2016. URL: https://elibrary.com.ua/m/articles/view/МИССИЯ-РУТА-В-РОССИИ-В-1917-ГОДУ (date of access: 09.03.2021).

> The temporary nature of the Root mission, and the erratic activities of various "volunteer groups," brought home to us the imperative need of a continuous educational campaign under a central control, and Mr. Sisson, detached from his duties as associate chairman, was sent to Russia with full authority to work out a complete Committee organization.[58]

With the assistance of publicist Arthur Bullard, who had extensive background in Russian affairs, having been active during the 1905 revolution and participating in the Root Mission,[59] Sisson undertook a vigorous campaign to persuade both Russians and German troops on Russian territory of America's support for the success of Provisional Government and of the war effort. Among his efforts was the translation of President Wilson's speeches into German and Hungarian to be dropped among invading troops.[60] The special issue of *Niva*, though published prior to Sisson's arrival, reflected American publicity efforts and bears the hallmarks of work produced by Creel's CPI. The most striking example of CPI's influence on the *Niva* special issue is a piece cataloguing Germany's sins, titled "Vrag vsego mira. Pochemu Amerika voiuet s Germaniei?" ("Enemy of the Entire World. Why is America at War with Germany?") (p. 686), described as a speech by Minister Lane.[61] Lane frequently gave speeches for the CPI. One of his more popular and widely distributed speeches was titled "Why We Are Fighting Germany" and was produced as a pamphlet by the CPI. The *Niva* piece may have been a precis of the speech.[62] The title of Creel's book on the CPI, *How We Advertised America*, suggests a particularly American take on the matter of propaganda.

The *Niva* issue is illustrated with 10 posters, 7 of them U. S. enlistment posters. One poster, captioned "Bratanie soiuznikov: Amerika privetstvuet Rossiiu" ("Brotherhood of allies: America hails Russia"), is entirely in Russian. The poster reads: "Tovarishi-Demokraty. Ivan I Diadia Sem" ("Comrades – Democrats. Ivan and Uncle Sam") and depicts the two shaking hands aboard a ship with the Statue of Liberty and the NYC skyline in the background, with the word Svoboda (Liberty) arcing over the statue. Freedom and liberty are key words in all propaganda pieces produced by the Americans for the Russian audience. In addition to the posters are three portraits: a full-page portrait of President Wilson (p. 678); a portrait of Ambassador to Russia, David R. Francis, centered in his remarks (p. 679); a quarter-page portrait of General Pershing, seated in his field tent (p. 682).

The *Niva* issue was apparently initiated by Ambassador Francis, whose full-

58. Creel, *How We Advertised,* 374.

59. Conger, "The Root mission," 39.

60. See Creel, *How We Advertised,* 288.

61. Franklin K. Lane (1864-1921) was U. S. Minister of the Interior from 1913 into 1920. A strong supporter for America's entrance into the war, Lane was appointed to the Council of National Defense in 1916. His support for formation of the Railroads War Board likely dovetailed with The Root Mission's intense focus on aid to Russia's rail transportation.

62. See *The United States in the First World War: An Encyclopedia,* ed. Anne Cipriano Venzon (New York: Garland, 1995), 327.

page message addressed to the Editor of *Niva* surrounds his portrait. The date of Francis's message, "Petrograd, 4-go Oktiabria 1917" documents the pre-coup genesis of the issue. In addition to assurances of America's fellow-feeling and desire to work "side-by-side" with the newly emancipated peoples of Russia, Francis introduces messages from Elihu Root and Samuel Gompers, founder and president of the American Federation of Labor and member of the Root Mission, which follow on page 680.

The articles are written by either Russians or Americans; the English-language pieces possibly translated into Russian by Kornei Chukovsky. The issue opens with an essay by the novelist A. I. Kuprin, "Zveznyi flag" ("The Starry Flag") and a poem titled "Amerika" by Aleksandr Roslavlev (pp. 675-77). Aleksandr Ivanovich Kuprin (1870-1938) moved to St. Petersburg in 1901 after army service. Response to his 1905 novel, *The Duel*, dealing with the conditions of army life, was predictably polarized – embraced by those critical of the autocracy and reviled by traditionalists. Grouped among the realist authors – Gorky, Andreev, Tolstoi – Kuprin's unstable political inclinations led to his briefly assuming editorship of the SR newspaper, Free Russia (Svobodnaia Rossiia) in May 1917. In an interesting component of "The Starry Flag," Kuprin draws on Chekhov's prediction that Siberia will separate from Russia and become a United States analogous to North America's United States and cites Dostoevsky's belief that Siberia represents the true essence of Russia. Siberia features in other articles as well. A story by "Tan," "Rossiia i Amerika" (pp. 680-84), cites the novelty of the U. S. as a melting pot, when comparing the expansive geographies of the two countries (and implicitly, their diverse populations) based on his travel the previous winter from Vladivostok to Petrograd. The following article by Mrs. M. Farwell, titled "Amerika i Rossiia" (p. 685), reprises the history of the American revolution, while remarking on the similarities of the countries' diverse populations.[63]

The article titled "O. Genri" ("O. Henry") (pp. 686-87), subtitled "A study of contemporary American literature," is notable for its introductory remarks on Chukovsky, who may well have facilitated the contribution. The author is listed as Professor Emeri, presumably Rufus Emory Holloway (1885-1977) of Adelphi College in Brooklyn, a prominent Whitman scholar. The article begins:

> When I first became acquainted with the writer K. I. Chukovsky, our conversation immediately turned to Walt Whitman, and in confirmation of one of my own thoughts, I ventured an opinion of O. Henry. To my great pleasure and, I confess, to not inconsiderable surprise, I learned that Chukovsky turned out to be a passionate fan of O. Henry and was preparing to translate his short stories into Russian, much as he had already translated the poems of another American, Whitman. (p. 686)

63. For an interesting variant of the "The United States of Siberia" trope, see Il'ia Vinitskii, "Pesn' 'Soedinennie Shtaty Rossii' v politicheskom voobrazhenii russko-amerikanskogo avantiurista," *Journal of Russian American Studies* v. 4, no. 2 (October 2020): 92-135.

Cournos's article is titled "Amerikanskie Khudozhniki. Uistler' i Sardzhent'" ("American artists. Whistler and Sargent"). That the painters are American is much to the point, as the special issue of *Niva* was devoted to the United States as an ally of Russia in the war. Chukovsky was doubtless responsible for the inclusion of Cournos's article on James McNeil Whistler and John Sargent. He was closely associated with *Niva*, whose editorial offices were located at 22 Malaya Morskaya Street adjacent to the *Hôtel Angleterre*, and a regular contributor since 1906.[64] Unlike any of the other articles, Cournos's is tagged as written expressly for *Niva* and his name appears in Roman script, again, unlike the names of the other non-Russian authors. Further, Cournos is identified as a British critic, thus appearing to be a non-American contributor, when, in fact, he was an American. This may have been in deference to Cournos's belonging to a British delegation. Cournos's citizenship had been problematic when applying for a visa to travel to Russia with Britain's Anglo-Russian Commission.[65]

Cournos's article reprises moments from his writing on the two expat American painters, drawing on his experience as an art critic in Philadelphia and London. Referring back to his early exposure to young art students at the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts, he mentions Whistler twice in his *Autobiography*: "I had been for some time developing two correlated passions: the love of the English language and the desire to go to London. The latter desire was further encouraged by [Baruch M.] Feldman, who had made a journey to England on a cattleship in order to see the Whistler Memorial Exhibition [22 February-15 April 1905] and had remained there over a year . . ." From the perspective of 1935, he comments: "Today painters speak in hushed tones of El Greco and Cézanne; in those days the 'moderns' swore allegiance to Velasquez and Whistler."[66] The choice of Whistler as subject for a Russian audience may have been influenced by Whistler's own love for St. Petersburg, where as a child he had been enrolled in the Imperial Academy of Arts.

Once in London, Cournos had continued to rely on art criticism for income. At the suggestion of Ernest Rhys, he began a book on American painting that was accepted for publication by J. M. Dent & Sons. The war intervened and the book was never published. Ezra Pound, who had known several of Cournos's artist friends in Philadelphia, went through the manuscript, commenting favorably. "And Ezra thought well enough of my chapter on Sargent to show it to Mr. Yeats, who liked it a great deal."[67] This chapter was the basis of his article published in the art journal, *Forum,* which opens by starkly contrasting Whistler and Sargent, giving preference to the former.[68]

Cournos's treatment of Sargent in the *Niva* essay reflects an evolution in his judgement. The passage quoted above, devoted to "those days," concludes that it

64. Fedotova, "Liubopytnyi malyi," 36.
65. See Cournos, *Autobiography,* 301-02.
66. Cournos, *Autobiography,* 183, 157.
67. Cournos, *Autobiography,* 247.
68. John Cournos, "John S. Sargent," *Forum* v. 54 (1915): 232-6.

was then "rank heresy to praise Sargent."[69] Now, Cournos appreciates several of Sargent's portraits, notably those of Joseph Pulitzer and Asher Wertheimer; the latter he judges to excel for its modernity. The eventual positive evaluation of Sargent devolves on the painter's contemporary work, his murals for the Boston Public Library and the large collection of water-colors in the Brooklyn Museum. Cournos valorizes Sargent for what he might produce in the future, having left behind what Cournos labels his "promiscuous portraiture," or what the young students of 1905 found objectionable. The article in *Niva* again contrasts the two painters, but even-handedly praises them both. Such even-handed praise for sharply contrasted figures echoes in Chukovsky's 1920 essay, "Akhmatova and Mayakovsky."[70]

Publishing in Petrograd - H. D., Anna Akhmatova, and *Apollon*

The December 1917 and final issue of *Apollon* contained a translation of Cournos's "The Death of Futurism" ("Smert' Futurizma"). First published in the January 1917 issue of the *Egoist*,[71] "The Death of Futurism" can be related to Cournos's close relationship during the war years with the poet, H. D. (1886-1961). H. D.'s influence on Cournos's verse during these years is demonstrated in the poem he was to compose and address to Akhmatova during his time in Petrograd.[72] H. D.'s husband, Richard Aldington (1892-1962), had edited the *Egoist*'s literary section since 1913, which published a number of Cournos's articles and translations. H. D. took over his editorial responsibilities in 1916-1917 when he was on active war duty, positioning her to place "The Death of Futurism" in the *Egoist*.

Akhmatova's relationship with *Apollon* was not altogether dissimilar to H. D.'s with the *Egoist*. *Apollon* (1909-1917) had been co-founded by Akhmatova's husband, Nikolai Gumilev, and its editor, Sergei Makovsky. Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev (1886-1921), poet, critic and military officer, was executed by the Cheka in August 1921; Sergei Leonidovich Makovsky (1877-1962), poet, art critic and historian, left Russia after the Bolshevik coup. Makovsky's living quarters were both gathering place for the Acmeists and office for *Apollon*. Originally focused on the arts and Russian Symbolism, *Apollon* published "Manifestos of Acmeism" in January 1913.

As the Imagists published in the *Egoist*, the Acmeists published in *Apollon*.

69. Cournos, *Autobiography,* 157.

70. Kornei Chukovsky, "Akhmatova i Mayakovsky," *Dom iskusstv*, v. 1 (1920): 23-42. Reprinted in *Voprosy literatury* v. 51 (1988): 177-205. Translated by John Pearson in *Major Soviet Writers: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Edward J. Brown (London: Oxford UP, 1973).

71. John Cournos, "The Death of Futurism," *Egoist* v. 4, no. 1 (Jan. 1917): 6-7. "Smert' Futurizma," *Apollon* nos. 8-10 (Oct-Dec. 1917): 30-3. For the actual printing date of this issue of *Apollon* – the middle of 1918, see Evgenii Evgenievich Stepanov, *Letopis' zhizni Nikolaia Gumileva na fone ego polnogo epistoliarnogo naslediia (1886-1921): v trekh tomakh* (Moscow: Azbukovnik, 2019-2021), Tom 2, 390n123. I thank Sergei Zenkevich for directing me to Stepanov's work.

72. See Smith, "John Cournos Among the Imagists," 24-27.

Akhmatova was naturally on friendly terms with the poets of this group and maintained especially close relations with the journal through Mikhail Lozinsky. Mikhail Leonidovich Lozinsky (1886-1955), translator and poet, was Makovsky's secretary and a long-standing friend of Gumilev. He edited the journal of the Poets' Guild (Tsekh Poetov), *Hyperborean* (1912-1914), which had been founded by Gumilev and Sergei Mitrofanovich Gorodetsky (1884-1967) in 1912. Six original members of the Poets' Guild, including Akhmatova, coalesced as the Acmeists. Akhmatova's first book of verse, *Vecher* (*Evening*), was published under the imprint of the Poets' Guild in 1912. Lozinsky published Akhmatova's second and third books of verse, *Chetki* (*Rosary*) and *Belaia Staia* (*White Flock*) under the imprint of Giperborei in 1913 and 1917 respectively. Akhmatova's relationship with Lozinsky supports the supposition that she was in a position to facilitate the publication of Cournos's "Death" ("Smert'") in *Apollon*.[73]

Cournos's and H. D.'s thoughts about the war and about art coincide in "The Death of Futurism," thoughts which may have appealed to Akhmatova's own sentiments regarding contemporary art and its relationship to the war. While the article addresses an art movement, Futurism, it is discussed specifically in reference to the war. H. D. and Cournos shared comparable sensibilities regarding the connection between the Great War and contemporary art. The sympathy between H. D. and Cournos is discernible along the fault line between modern classicism (exemplified by T. E. Hulme, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot) and H. D.'s romantic Hellenism as analyzed by Eileen Gregory. Gregory's formulation of Eliot's "*via negativa*"—"a denial of all untoward imaginative, emotional, spiritual stimulation"--and H. D.'s embrace of romantic qualities—"the territory of dream (erotic, fragmentary, associational), of the child, of mystery, illusion, beauty" --contains all the terms of Cournos and H. D.'s affinity and their mutual antipathy to Eliot.[74]

"The Death of Futurism" and a roughly contemporaneous essay by H. D. link modernist movements with the Great War, as both H. D. and Cournos rail against the machine and against a mechanistic aesthetic.[75] In her posthumously published,

73. In a letter to Gumilev in Paris dated 28/15 August 1917, Akhmatova writes that she has sent his poems to Lozinsky, who would place them in *Apollon*. Jacob J. Bikerman Collection on Nikolai Gumilev. Series 1. Sub-Series 2. Amherst Center for Russian Culture. Amherst College. The two poems that Gumilev had included in a letter to his mother, which Akhmatova forwarded to Lozinsky, "Stokgol'm" and "Priroda," did not appear in *Apollon*, but were first published in Gumilev's collection, *Koster*, June 1918. See Stepanov, *Letopis' zhizni Nikolaia Gumileva*, Tom 2, 390n123. Lozinsky left a substantial archive, which serves as a major source for information on *Apollon* and its contributors. A sample appears in "Iz pisem k Mikhailu Lozinskomu," *Anna Akhmatova: Desiatye gody*, ed. Roman Davidovich Timenchik and K. M. Polianov (Moscow: MPI, 1989).

74. Eileen Gregory, *H. D. and Hellenism* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1997), 18, 22.

75. In light of Cournos's antipathy to both Futurism and Vorticism (Cournos was later to publish "Death of Vorticism." *The Little Review* (June 1919) v. 6, no. 2:46-8), together with his dismay at the sinking on the ship of émigrés, there is a certain irony to the possibility that the ship on which Cournos and Walpole sailed may have been protected by a "Dazzle ship." The British employed Edward Alexander Wadsworth, Vorticist artist and

review article of W. B. Yeats's 1914 *Responsibilities and other poems*, H. D. condemns her generation, whose "cubes and angles seem a sort of incantation, a symbol for the forces that brought on this world calamity."[76] Cournos framed the issue somewhat differently: "The fact is, the artists, like the rest of the world, had hardly realized that the true exponents of modern art were the men on the German General Staff, holding periodical meetings at Potsdam, or some other 'dam'."[77] Gregory uses H. D.'s "Responsibilities" article to introduce the gendered modernist assault against romanticism (romantics denigrated as "effeminate") that effectively marginalized H. D.[78] Cournos calls out such gender coding, referring to "all those 'brother' arts, whose masculomaniac spokesmen spoke glibly in their green-red-and-yellow-becushioned boudoirs of 'the glory of war' and 'contempt for women,' of the necessity of 'draughts,' 'blasts,' and 'blizzards,' of 'maximum energy' and 'dispersed energy,' etc. etc." More explicitly, he continues: "Some day a book may be written to show how closely war is allied with sex. For the Futuristic juxtaposition of the glorification of war and 'contempt for women' is no mere accident. This contempt does not imply indifference, but the worst form men's obsession with sex can take, that is rape!"[79]

Another aspect of that fault line on which H. D. and Cournos found themselves on the same side was their mutual understanding of the relation of art to life. The occasion of Cournos's essay was an exhibition of C. R. W. Nevinson's war paintings at the Leicester galleries, of which he says: "it is generally agreed, the best pictorial protest against war that has yet been shown." Lauding Nevinson's painting, Cournos nevertheless writes:

> And this protest is effective precisely because the artist has expressed it in unfuturistic terms. [. . .] After all, whether these paintings are a protest against war or not matters little, they are by their method a protest against Futurism. By his return to representation the artist proclaims in them a confession of Futurism's failure, and incidentally his own success as an artist. And as no art is distinct from its method—indeed the method is always the art—so the Futuristic theory falls with the structure. Peace to its ashes.

He takes exception to Nevinson's remarks in the exhibit catalogue, interpreting them as follows: "It is that this is a scientific age, and that art must therefore adopt a scientific formula. To say this is to imply that art is always the result of environment, whereas the opposite is nearer the truth: great art is nearly always

friend of Wyndham Lewis, to supervise the camouflaging of over 2,000 ships during the war. Employing ideas derived from Vorticist and Cubist design, battle ships were painted with black and white stripes of various widths at varying angles to disrupt the U-boats' ability to pinpoint the direction and speed of travel. For images of the ships, see https://publicdomainreview.org/collection/dazzle-ships

76. H. D., "Responsibilities," *Agenda* v. 25 (1988): 51-53: H. D. Special Issue. 53.
77. Cournos, "Death," 6.
78. Gregory, *H. D. and Hellenism*, 12.
79. Cournos, "*Death*," 6, 7.

a reaction from environment. Only little artists are content to wallow in the mud of reality." Cournos's position: "The plausible theory set forth in this essay is that art is not life, that art is greater than life, that art—the world of the imagination created by the artist's will—projects itself into life, the world of reality, to which it gives colour and in which it inspires a spirit of emulation."[80]

Coincidentally, in June 1917, five months after the publication of "Death" critiquing Nevinson and three months before Cournos traveled to Petrograd, Akhmatova's husband, Gumilev, visited London. Gumilev and Cournos met. Cournos had already been in communication with Akhmatova regarding his desire to become her authorized translator. Gumilev did not so advise his wife.[81] Gumilev also met with numerous British writers and artists. Through Boris Anrep (1883-1969), a Russian-born mosaicist active in Britain and intimate of Akhmatova, Gumilev met with Nevinson on more congenial terms than he did with Cournos.[82]

To confirm his own assessment that a prime mover of modernist complicity in the war was the *mésalliance* of life and art, Cournos concludes "The Death of Futurism" with recently published remarks by the pre-eminent Russian Futurist, Vladimir Mayakovsky. He quotes Mayakovsky to the effect that, as a result of futurism having fulfilled its "idea" in the war, it had "died as a particular group, but it has poured itself out in every one in a flood. To-day all are Futurists. The people is Futurist."[83] In her review article on Yeats's book, H. D. points to the same question: who wags the dog's tail, art or life? She continues her assessment of her own generation, sounding much like Mayakovksy, that what WAS, no longer IS the enemy, because "it has merged into the struggle with its own lauded guns and aeroplanes, it has become a part of the struggle and is no longer a self-

80. Cournos, "*Death*," 6. While Cournos revised several of his aesthetic judgments over time, his understanding of the relationship among life, art, and science persisted. See, for example, his essay "Introduction. What is a Short Story?" *A World of Great Stories*, ed. Hiram Haydn and John Cournos (New York: Avenel Books, 1947), 3-17.

81. See Smith, "John Cournos Among the Imagists," 42-43.

82. Quoting from Gumilev's notebook, Evgenii Stepanov writes:

"Evidently, he met with C.R.W. Nevinson, English futurist painter, subsequently an official war artist: "C.R.W. Nevinson/4 Downside Crescent/Belsize Park Tube Station/Tel. Hamp. 2258." Another note in his notebook indicates that Nevinson recommended that he meet in Paris with his friend, the Italian artist Gino Severini: "Mons Gino Severini/6 Rue Sophie Germain/xiv part./C.R.W. Nevinson/atelier: 51 Boulevard Saint Jacques/(atelier 17)." "Очевидно, что он встречался с К.Р.В. Невинсоном, английским художником-футуистом, впоследствии -- официальным военным художником: <<C.R.W. Nevinson/4 Downside Crescent/Belsize Park Tube Station/Tel. Hamp. 2258>> Другая пометка в записной книжке указывает, что Невинсон рекомендовал ему встретиться в Париже с его другом, итальянским художником Джино Северини: <<Mons Gino Severini/6 Rue Sophie Germain/xiv part./C.R.W. Nevinson/atelier: 51 Boulevard Saint Jacques/(atelier 17)>>. Stepanov, *Letopis'*, 335. Pages 320-488 in Stepanov cover Gumilev's time in London, even citing Cournos's "Death" in reference to Nevinson, 336n55.

83. Cournos, "*Death*," 7. Cournos quotes from Vladimir Mayakovsky's short "manifesto" – "Kaplia degtia," published in 1915 by Osip Brik in a short, 15-page miscellany, *Vzial: Baraban Futuristov* (*Seized: The Drum of the Futurists*) (Petrograd: Tip. Z. Sokolinskago, 1915).

willed agent." H. D.'s "self-willed agent" resonates with Cournos's "imagination created by the artist's will." H. D. continued: "The guns they praised, the beauty of machines they loved, are no more as a god set apart for worship by a devil over whom neither they nor we have any more control." H. D.'s "no more a god set apart" resonates with Mayakovsky's "The people is Futurist."

Original member of the Moscow Hylea group, Vladimir Vladimirovch Mayakovsky (July 1893 – April 1930) (poet, artist, playwright, and actor), was well known among Petrograd's poets, having first read on 17 November 1912 at the city's Stray Dog cabaret (Brodiachaia Sobaka), a prominent venue for both the Acmeists and Futurists. His presence in Cournos's *Apollon* article may have added a touch of local appeal, much as mention of Whistler's birth in St. Petersburg at the opening of the *Niva* article. Mayakovsky moved to Petrograd in 1915, the year his manifesto quoted by Cournos was published. Cournos may well have taken the title of his own article from Mayakovsky's manifesto, in which "death" was the principal topos. Cournos occasioned his article on Nevinson's exhibition; Mayakovsky occasioned his manifesto on the current day focus in the press on death.

> This year is a year of deaths: almost every day the newspapers sob loudly in grief about somebody who has passed away before his time. Every day, with syrupy weeping the brevier wails over the huge number of names slaughtered by Mars. How noble and monastically severe today' s newspapers look. They are dressed in the black mourning garb of the obituaries, with the crystal-like tear of a necrology in their glittering eyes.

Mayakovsky's intent in his manifesto was not merely to satirize bourgeois hypocrisy over the war dead, but to respond to their delight over the purported death of Futurism.

> That's why it has been particularly upsetting to see these same newspapers, usually ennobled by grief, note with indecent merriment one death that involved me very closely. When the critics, harnessed in tandem, carried along the dirty road-the road of the printed word-the coffin of Futurism, the newspapers trumpeted for weeks: "ho, ho, ho! serves it right! take it away! finally!"[84]

Thence to the statements quoted by Cournos: Futurism has "died as a particular group, but it has poured itself out in every one in a flood. To-day all are Futurists. The people is Futurist." While there is a certain irony to the use Cournos put Mayakovsky's words, two things are clear--Cournos had remarkably fast access to a relatively obscure document and respected Mayakovsky as a poet,

84. Vladimir Mayakovsky, "A Drop of Tar" ("Kaplia degtia"), *Russian Futurism Through Its Manifestoes, 1912-1928*, translated and edited by Anna Lawton and Henry Eagle (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988), 100-102, 100.

as did Akhmatova.[85]

Cournos and H. D.'s disavowal of Futurism, when it was "art," when it conjured the as-yet-unrealized, lay in Futurism's grounding in materialism, its love for the machine, which they viewed as contributing to the war. Such was never Akhmatova's focus. She would align with Cournos and H. D., however, in respect to rejection, rather than glorification, of war. Akhmatova biographer, Roberta Reeder writes:

> Many of the poems [in the 1917 collection, *White Flock*] are about the war. They reveal a new consciousness of Akhmatova's place in the world. No longer is she voice of women crying out in pain at personal suffering, or asking God why the world is often so cruel. She is speaking now for her country and her people [. . .] Akhmatova did not glorify war. Her patriotism took the form of compassion for those facing death fighting for their land, rather than a rhetorical celebration of heroism.[86]

Akhmatova would align with Cournos and H. D. as well in terms of a near religious insistence on art reaching toward spirituality, rather than subjugation to mere materiality. She did not employ their strident antagonism toward geometry. Yet her grounding in the natural world implied a sympathy for their anti-technology sensibility.

Petrograd acquaintances

Aside from his official journalism work or pursuits approved by Colonel Thornhill, Cournos was expanding his circle of acquaintances in the art world. The cabaret life of Petrograd continued during the war, though diminished after the March/February revolution. Artists continued to frequent their favored, pre-war cafés, much as in London. The preeminent, pre-war cabaret, the Stray Dog, had been closed by the censors in March 1915; a new venue opened in April 1916, The Comedian's Halt (Prival komediantov), which remained open after the Bolshevik coup until 1919.[87] Cournos surely attended whatever gatherings

85. Akhmatova had first met Mayakovsky at the Stray Dog, subsequently encountering him on a number of occasions. While unenthusiastic of his post-revolution work, Akhmatova genuinely liked his early poetry. In 1940, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of Mayakovsky's death, Akhmatova read a specially composed poem, "Mayakovsky in 1913," acknowledging the impact of his early verse: "What you destroyed—was destroyed,/A verdict beat in every word." See Roberta Reeder, *Anna Akhmatova: Poet and Prophet*. Revised edition. (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 2006), 97-98, 317. The text of the poem appears on pp. 316-17.

86. Reeder, *Anna Akhmatova*, 136. See also M. M. Kralin, "'Khorovoe nachalo' v knige Akhmatovoi 'Belaia staia'," *Russkaia literature* v. 3 (1989): 97-108.

87. On the Stray Dog, see Reeder, *Anna Akhmatova*, 94-100 and *passim*, and Lisa Appignanesi's section titled "Russia: Revolutionary Art" in *The Cabaret*. Revised and expanded edition (New Haven: Yale UP, 2004), 95-104. Appignanesi highlights Akhmatova's presence at the cabaret, quoting from several of her poems in relation to the Stray Dog. On the Comedian's Halt, see https://www.krugosvet.ru/enc/kultura_i_

of artists and writers as were still functioning during his stay. An aside in his *Autobiography* suggests time spent among artists:

> And how is it to be explained, this curious natural attraction that sex has for the imagination? Is it necessarily an attribute of a so-called filthy mind? I scarcely think so. Rembrandt, we now know, made numerous etchings of men and women in the act of copulation; and when I was in Petrograd in 1917 I happened to hear a great deal about the collection of his own drawings made by that exquisite artist Somoff and shown only to unsqueamish friends.[88]

"[T]hat exquisite artist Somoff" was none other than Walpole's lover and Eugene Somoff's cousin, Konstantin Somov.

Describing preparations to leave Petrograd, Cournos offers further evidence of encounters with Petrograd's literati:

> I was told that I could take along with me only hand luggage. So I packed a large trunk with things I could not take with me; a dress suit and a great many books, including many autographed copies: it was too bad to have to leave these behind. I gave the trunk in charge of Korney Chukovsky and asked him to deliver it for safekeeping to the British Embassy. I fear I shall never see that trunk again.[89]

Chukovsky was instrumental in personally introducing Cournos to Petrograd's literary figures: "He was a very amusing fellow who knew all of literary Petrograd, and I met a number of celebrities through him." Chukovsky was, indeed, an amusing fellow, well connected within Petrograd's literary world. He was certainly a major, if not adequately acknowledged, force in arranging Cournos's literary and journalistic undertakings. In his *Autobiography* Cournos names only Feodor Sologub in respect to Chukovsky.[90] Chukovsky was acquainted with Sologub's close friend, literary critic Vengerova, who had facilitated Cournos's correspondence with Sologub beginning in 1915. Chukovsky was also acquainted with the another "celebrity" named by Cournos, Aleksei Remizov, whom Cournos had met in Petrograd by 26 November (O. S.). On that date Remizov wrote a letter of introduction for Cournos to his friend, ethnographer and bibliophile, Ivan Aleksandrovich Riazanovskii of Kostroma, drawing a map directing him to Riazanovskii's home.[91] Though there is no evidence that Chukovsky introduced

obrazovanie/teatr_i_kino/PRIVAL_KOMEDIANTOV.html

88. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 25.

89. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 316.

90. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 304-05.

91. Remizov, Aleksei Mikhailovich. Houghton Library, Harvard University. MS 65 (4). See also Edward Manouelian, "From Pis'ma to Pis'mena: Ideological and Journalistic Contexts of Remizov's Documentary Project," *The Russian Review* v. 55, no. 1 (Jan. 1996): 1-20

Cournos to Mayakovsky, the two were well acquainted. Mayakovsky had spent May 1914 in the fabled village of Kuokkala, summer home to Chukovsky from 1906 to 1916. Known today as Repino in honor of the painter, Ilia Repin, the village is located 19 miles north of St. Petersburg on the Karelian Isthmus and the Gulf of Finland. Mayakovsky often visited Chukovsky during his stay in Kuokkala. Chukovsky had known Akhmatova since 1912. It is not known where or how Cournos met Akhmatova, whether through Chukovsky or at a cabaret. Or on his own initiative, since he had her address when he arrived in the city.

Cournos and Akhmatova

During the war years, Akhmatova was peripatetic. She traveled to the Black Sea region for health reasons and visited her mother in Kiev. Her primary residences were: her in-laws house in the Tsar's Village (Tsarskoe Selo), where she had spent much of her adolescence and had first met her future husband Nikolai Gumilev in 1903; at the Gumilev country home in Slepnevo (south of Petrograd and west of Moscow); and in Petrograd, where she often stayed with her childhood friend, Valeriia Sreznevskaia at Botkinskaia ulitsa No. 9 in the Vyborg district across the Neva via the Liteiny bridge just beyond Finland Station. Botkinskaia ulitsa No. 9 appears in Cournos's address book. Akhmatova was living with the Sreznevskys at the time of the March/February revolution and returned to them in September 1917 after a stay at Slepnevo, remaining with them until autumn 1918. The November 1917 dating of Cournos's poem addressed to Akhmatova suggests that he had met the poet not long after his mid-October arrival in Petrograd.[92]

During Cournos's time in Petrograd, Akhmatova's public presence included the publication of her 1915 poem, "Prayer," on November 26 (O. S.) in the newspaper *Pravo Naroda* (*The Right of the People*) and two public readings. It was read on November 28 at an event organized by the Union of Russian writers and again in January 1918. Roberta Reeder contextualizes the publication and readings of this 1915 poem with contemporaneous events surrounding elections for the Constituent Assembly. Reeder writes:

> Soon after the disbanding of the Constituent Assembly, on January 22, 1918, at a fundraiser for the Red Cross, Akhmatova read her poems, Arthur Lourie played the piano, and Sudeikina danced. The meeting, which was entitled "Oh, Russia," became like a protest against the disbanding of the Constituent Assembly in the wake of the punishment of leading political figures. [. . .] The meeting ended with Akhmatova reading "Your spirit is clouded with arrogance" (dated January 1, 1917).[93]

Zinaida Gippius (1869-1945), who together with her husband Dmitry Merezhkovsky (1889-1941) was a major figure among the Russian Symbolists, also read at the January event. Her "black notebook" entry for January 22, providing a different date and name for the event, reads:

92. See Smith, "John Cournos Among the Imagists," 25n2.
93. Reeder, *Anna Akhmatova*, 151.

> Yesterday I saw Akhmatova at the "Morning of Russia" benefitting the political Red Cross. I am not in the least "afraid" and am not ashamed to read from the stage, no matter what, poetry or prose; before 800 feeling the same as before two (maybe it comes from myopia) - however, I hate these readings and have long since been declining them. Here, we had to, after all, it's our Red Cross. And I read to them - all the most "obscene"! We also read Merezhkovsky, Sologub ... There were so many people that they could not all be accommodated. A respectable collection.[94]

Notes to the publication of Gippius's notebook indicate that the event took place at the Tenishev Academy, located just beyond Nevskii Prospect at 33-35 Mokhovaia Ulitsa -- in the heart of the city. Among the readings are listed: "Gippius ("Now"), A. A. Akhmatova ("Prayer", "Your spirit is darkened by arrogance ...", "You are an apostate: for the green island ..."), F. Sologub ("Hymns to the Motherland"), as well as performances by D. S. Merezhkovsky and D. V. Filosofov."

> On the evening of 'Morning of Russia', - Akhmatova recalled, - I was invited and the three of them (Merezhkovskys and Filosofov. - TP). I was disgraced there: I read the first stanza of "Apostate," and forgot the second. In the artistic studio, of course, I remembered everything. I left and did not read … In those days I had troubles, I felt bad ... Zinaida Nikolaevna in a red wig, her face as if enameled, in a Parisian dress ... They insistently invited me to join them, but I demurred, because they were evil …[95]

Cournos may well have attended the first reading and surely the second. In 2012, two framed Russian Red Cross postcards hung in Cournos's granddaughter's dining area. The postcards were likely purchased at the "Oh, Russia" (or "Morning of Russia") fund raiser. Cournos may also have attended a third reading.

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94. *22 января, понедельник*

Вчера я видела Ахматову на «Утре России» в пользу политического Красного Креста. Я нисколько не «боюсь» и не стесняюсь читать с эстрады, все равно что, стихи или прозу; перед 800 чувствуя себя так же, как перед двумя (м. б., это происходит от близорукости) — однако терпеть не могу этих чтений и давно от них отказываюсь. Тут, однако, пришлось, ведь это наш же Красный Крест. Уж и почитала же я им — все самое «нецензурное»!

Читали еще Мережковский, Сологуб... Народу столько, что не вмещалось. Собрали довольно. https://gippius.com/doc/memory/chjornye-tetradi.html (p. 382)

95. «На вечер "Утра России", — вспоминала Ахматова, — была приглашена я и они трое (Мережковские и Философов. — *Т. П.*). Я там оскандалилась: прочитала первую строфу «Отступника», а вторую забыла. В артистической, конечно, все вспомнила. Ушла и не стала читать. У меня в те дни были неприятности, мне было плохо... Зинаида Николаевна в рыжем парике, лицо будто эмалированное, в парижском платье... Они меня очень зазывали к себе, но я уклонилась, потому что они были злые...» (цит. по: *Ахматова А. А.* Собр. соч. Т. 1. М., 1998. С. 561). Ibid.

Akhmatova read at the Comedians' Halt in January 1918. Stepanov writes:

> On 26 January/8 February, for the first time after a long break, took place in Petrograd at the literary-artistic café, "The Comedians' Halt." A. Akhmatova, G. Adamovich, M. Zenkevich, R. Ivnev, G. Ivanov, M. Kuzmin, O. Mandel'shtam, V. Piast and others appeared. Announced in the program, "T. P. Karsavina, O. A. Glebova-Sudeikina [. . .] will read verse by N. Gumilev, M. Tsvetaeva. . ."[96]

Departure from Petrograd

Conditions had continued to deteriorate after the Bolshevik coup and Cournos "had discovered [he was] a bourgeois'."[97] On the morning of 5 January (O. S.), from his office newly moved to the Furshtadskaya, Cournos had witnessed "Red machine-gunners fire into the peaceful demonstrators marching to the hall of the Constituent Assembly." He took to spending his days wandering from café to café in search of both food and companionship. In these venues, he witnessed both the deprivations and dangers daily faced by the city's inhabitants.

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96. А 26 января/8 февраля в Петрограде, впервые после длительного перерыва, состоялся <<Вечер петербургских поэтов>> в литературно-артистическом кафе <<Привал комедиантов>>. На вечере выступали А. Ахматова, Г. Адамович, М. Зенкевич, Р. Ивнев, Г. Иванов, М. Кузмин, О. Мандельштам, В. Пяст, и др. Как сказано в программе, <<Т.П. Карсавина, О.А. Глебова-Судейкина <...> прочтут стихи Н. Гумилева, М. Цветаевой...>>. Stepanov, *Letopis'*, Tom 2, 504. Stepanov cites: Привал комедиантов-1988. С. 143. Новые ведомости. Вечерняя газета. 1918. No.7. 25 января.

Though Mikhail Zenkevich had returned to Saratov from Petrograd in December 1917, the inclusion of his name among the advertised participants tempts one to speculate on the possibility that Cournos met Zenkevich, perhaps at another reading, or possibly through Zenkevich's friend and fellow Acmeist, Akhmatova. In early 1915, Cournos's friend Zinaida Vengerova had published an article based on her interview with Ezra Pound (an interview facilitated by Cournos), in the first issue of the almanach, *Strelets*. (See Julia Trubikhina, "Imagists Rejected: 'Vengerova, Pound and A Few Do's and Don'ts of Russian Imagism." "Appendix: Zinaida Vengerova 'English Futurists' (1915): Translation." *Paideuma. A Journal Devoted to Ezra Pound Scholarship* v. 27, nos. 2&3: 129-51.

A consequence of the article was the introduction of Richard Aldington, H. D.'s husband and Cournos's close friend, into Russian literary consciousness. Mikhail Urnov opens his essay on Aldington's popularity in Russia as follows:

Richard Aldington's yesterday in my country embraces a long historical period: from 1915 to 1985. [. . .] It was in 1932 that the first Russian edition of Aldington's novel *Death of a Hero* appeared from the State Fiction Publishing House [. . .] As for me, I discovered Aldington for myself a year before that date. [. . .] The person who drew my attention to Richard Aldington was Mikhail Zenkevich, poet and translator, a friend of Nikolaj Gumilev and Anna Akhmatova, the famous leaders of the Acmeist literary movement, and their brother in poetry. (Mikhail Urnov, "A Note on Richard Aldington. Yesterday and Today in Russia," *Richard Aldington: Reappraisals*. Ed. by Charles Doyle (Victoria, B.C., CA: Uof Victoria, 1990), 81-85, 81.) [English Literary Studies Monograph Series n. 49]

Had Cournos met Zenkevich in 1917, he may have spoken about his close friend, inspiring Zenkevich's interest in Aldington.

97. Beasley, *Russomania*, 386. Beasley cites a letter to Fletcher dated 1 January 1918.

> It was a city of nightmare, of foreboding, of sinister phantoms. [. . . F]or the damp mists used to enter your room and choke you, and you had nightmares, and you had begun to understand that the demons who sit on people's chests at night and try to throttle them—those you have read about in Russian fiction—are no figures of speech, but an accursed reality.[98]

Not long after "An Evening of Petersburg Poets," Cournos began to consider a return to England. Bolshevik censorship and closures of newspapers rendered untenable his official work as a journalist. In retrospect, Cournos creates a humorous story, citing the travails of a "Menshevik" paper to characterize conditions under which journalists were operating. Bearing the same name as the Red Cross Fundraiser recalled by Akhmatova and Gippius – *Morning of Russia* (*Utro Rossii*), the paper's name altered each time it was closed: from *Morning of Russia* to *Noon of Russia* to *Afternoon of Russia* to *Evening of Russia* to *Midnight of Russia* to *Dead of Night of Russia*, after which the paper "gave up the ghost."[99] Such a paper actually existed. Based in Moscow, *Utro Rossii* (1907-1918) was a daily paper associated with the liberal wing of Moscow industrialists. When shut down in April 1918 (after Cournos had left the country), its name was changed to *Dawn of Russia* (*Zaria Rossii*); the paper was shut down finally at the end of July 1918.[100]

By early 1918, virtually all Allied diplomatic services were contemplating removal. For health reasons, British Ambassador to Russia, Sir George Buchanan, had already left the city 26 December 1917. On the morning of 27 February, a train carrying the Americans departed for Vologda, where they remained onboard for a week before securing accommodations. American Ambassador David Francis wrote that few other national embassies accepted his suggestion to transfer to Vologda, choosing rather to depart the country entirely via Finland and the Scandinavian route by which many had arrived. Together with six other governments, the British negotiated with the Bolsheviks in Helsingsfor for passage through civil-war Finland.[101] Early March 1918 the trains encountered the front line at Vilppula, just north of the Finnish city of Tampere. The British train was mistaken and met with fire. After negotiation, the train carrying British embassy personnel got through. The others were forced to return to Russia.[102]

98. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 311-15. See Chapter XLV, "Volcano of Human Wrath" (309-15) for Cournos's account of Petrograd during his stay.

99. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 313.

100. James D. White, "Moscow, Petersburg and the Russian Industrialists. In reply to Ruth Amende Roosa," *Soviet Studies* v. 24, no. 3 (January 1973):414-20, 417. See also the ru.wikipedia entry for Утро_России_(газета), which lists the paper's political orientation as "konstitutsionnaia demokratiia."

101. David Rowland Francis, *Russia from the American Embassy*, chapter XVII "Vologda – The Diplomatic Capital" (New York: Arno Press, 1970 [c1921]), 234-260, 235-6.

102. Tuomas Tepora and Aapo Roselius chose to open their edited book, *Finnish*

Cournos had decided to depart Petrograd on his own, rather than wait for the British Embassy special train. He boarded a train to Murmansk (Murman) from the Nikolayevsky station on the opposite side of town from the Finland station, expecting to board a ship already in harbor. The journey to Murmansk was slowed by weather and fight. Once the train arrived, the battleship Glory was indeed in harbor, but not serviceable. The passengers remained on board the train for approximately four weeks awaiting the arrival of another ship, the British naval ship Huntsend, to carry them to England. Rather than the land route through Scandinavia then across the North Sea, the route from Murmansk was entirely at sea. From the Kola Peninsula, the Huntsend sailed the Barents Sea above Scandinavia, then down the Norwegian Sea to the North Sea – a route vulnerable to U-boats. Cournos's note, that the ship was "properly camouflaged," evokes the Vorticist designs he might otherwise have disparaged. After 8 days at sea, the Huntsend arrived at Newcastle on 29 March. (Had Cournos waited to take the embassy train, he would have arrived in England a week earlier.) The Huntsend's passengers were immediately entrained, arriving in London that evening.[103]

Once Cournos settled on the train to Murmansk, he had mere hours to finalize his affairs. From Murmansk he wrote to his Petrograd acquaintances to explain his sudden disappearance. Evidence of two such communications exist. In a letter to Akhmatova dated 7 March, Cournos wrote to apologize for not visiting her as promised before his departure, explaining the circumstances and mentioning his regret at what he had been forced to leave behind. He regrets, as well, that he was not able to collect from her the letter to Gumilev that she had intended to give to him, but promises to contact Gumilev once he arrives in London.[104] In a post

Civil War 1918: History, Memory, Legacy with the British encounter with Finnish troops. "Introduction" (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2014), 1. They cite as their source Juho Kotakallio, "Brittilähetystön rintamalinjojen ylitys vuonna 1918" Tammerkoski. No. 4 (2008): 10-12.

103. Cournos, *Autobiography*, Chapters XLVI and XLVII "North of the Arctic Circle," 316-324, "Homeward Bound," 325-31.

104. Мурман, март 7, 1918

Милая Анна Андреевна —

Простите мне, что не мог притги к вам, как я вам обещал. Но я не виноват в этом, так как мне дали всего девять часов уехать от Петрограда. Я даже оставил многих вещей, которых я хотел взять с собой. Во всяком случае я жалею самого себя в том, что я вас не мог видеть перед моим отъездом. Я тоже очень сожалею, что при таких обстоятельствах не мог взять с собою письмо, которое вы хотели дать мне. Я напишу вашему мужу, когда я приеду в Лондон, и надеюсь написать вам, если это будет возможно. Желаю вам, что вы сами желаете себе. Надеюсь, что опять увижу вас, и при более благополучных обстоятельствах. Пожалуйста, не забудьте меня.

John Cournos

Мой адрес в Лондоне:

c/o Forcing [sic] Office, Whitehall, S.W., London или: 44 Mecklenburg Square, London, W.S.I.

This letter appears in Roman Timenchik's discussion of Akhmatova's poem "Ostav' svoi krai glukhi I greshnyi" ("Оставь свой край глухой и грешный"), published 18 April 1918. R. D. Timenchik, "Anna Akhmatova. Trinadtsat' strochek iz kommentariev" (63-71), de visu. istoriko-literaturnyi i bibliograficheskii zhurnal 5/6'94, 65-66. https://imwerden.

card to Cournos dated 11 April, Sologub acknowledges receipt of Cournos's letter sent from Murmansk. In his note, Sologub comments on the difficult conditions in Petrograd and expresses his desire to go at least for a while to England or America.[105]

Return to England

The experience of Petrograd fundamentally altered Cournos's relationship with Russian literature and culture. Before leaving for Petrograd, he was warned not to share his revolutionary opinions. Not long after the coup, he discovered himself to be a bourgeois. To parse the term "bourgeois" as used by Cournos, he discovered in himself not an anti-revolutionary sentiment, but a reinforcement of his anti-machine sentiment. His experience of the Bolshevik coup triggered his most humane sentiments, sentiments aligned with the idealism of the revolutionaries he had encountered in London, and strengthened his antipathy to materialist dogmas and practices.

Upon returning to London, Cournos set about reconstituting the life he had left behind when leaving for Petrograd, a life of translation, journalism, art criticism and literature, now informed by the experience of Petrograd. He retained his connection with Walpole, who had Cournos installed in the Ministry of Information, where it was his "task to keep informed of the Russian situation as it developed by reading the Russian papers and such documents as came [his] way."[106] He also contributed to periodicals based on knowledge he had acquired in Petrograd and through connections he had made there.[107] One notable instance is his "dream fantasy" – "A Londoner's Dream on Returning from Petrograd" – published first by *Nineteenth Century and After* 85: 383-94 (February 1919), then reprinted, also in 1919, as "London Under the Bolsheviks: A Londoner's Dream on Returning from Petrograd" by the Russian Liberation Committee as number four of its pamphlet series. On the Committee's executive board were Harold Whitmore Williams (1876-1928), whose brother had accompanied Walpole and Cournos on the journey out to Petrograd, and Williams's wife Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams (1869-1962).[108] Cournos would have known them

de/pdf/de_visu_1994_5-6_text.pdf

105. ". . . уехать хоть бы на время в Англию или Америку. . ." Harvard University, Houghton, Russian MS 61 (4).

106. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 328.

107. John Cournos, 'Cultural Propaganda in Its Russian Aspect', *The New Europe* v. 7, no. 89 (27 June 1918), 251–5; "Proletarian Culture: (I) The Theory," *The New Europe* v. 13, no. 159 (30 Oct. 1919): 61-4, in which Cournos translates directly from an article by Poliansky from a November 1918 issue of *Proletarskaya Kultura* 5 (see Ayers, *Modernism*, 188n56); "Proletarian Culture: (II) Bolševik Poetry," *The New Europe* v. 13, no. 160 (6 Nov. 1919): 110-16; "Proletarian Culture: (III) The Bolševik Theatre," *The New Europe* v. 13, no. 161 (13 Nov. 1919): 151-4; "Proletarian Culture: (IV) 'A Factory of Literature'," *The New Europe* v. 13, no. 162 (20 Nov. 1919): 183-7. On *The New Europe* and Cournos's contributions, see Ayers, *Modernism*, 55-64, 172-5

108. Journalist and linguist, Williams first worked in Russia for the *Manchester Guardian* in 1905. By 1914 he wrote for the *Daily Chronicle*, meeting Walpole when the

from his time in Petrograd.

Witnessing the human misery of Petrograd may have influenced Cournos's decision to work for the newly established Save the Children Fund (SCF). During 1920, Cournos was engaged as field investigator in Central Europe for the SCF. From Vienna, Budapest, and Czecho-Slovakia, he sent reports quoted liberally in the organization's publication, "The Record."[109] Under the aegis of the SCF, an exhibit of children's art appeared 18 November 1920 through 2 December 1921 in the Exhibition Gallery of the British Institute of Industrial Art in Knightsbridge, London. A review of the exhibition in *International Studio* designated the designs and drawings contributed by children aged 10 to 14 from classes at the Vienna Municipal School of Arts and Crafts run by Franz Cižek as the best part of the exhibition. The review quotes at length Cournos, who was well acquainted with Cižek from his time spent in Vienna working for the SCF.[110] All the while, Cournos was writing his three volume, autobiographical *roman à clef*: *The Mask* (1919), *The Wall* (1921), and *Babel* (1922). In the 1920s and 1930s, he contributed articles on Russia to *The Criterion* under the editorship of T. S. Eliot.[111]

The span of Cournos's career as a translator, from his 1908 translation of Leonid Andreev's *Silence* to the publication in 1959 of Andrei Bely's *St. Petersburg*,[112] ran the gamut of individual short stories, volumes of collected

latter arrived in Russia in September. Widely considered an expert on Russia, Williams was a confidant of British Ambassador to Russia, Sir George Buchanan, and in 1916 assisted Walpole in setting up the Russian Propaganda Bureau in Petrograd, precursor to the Anglo-Russian Commission. Tyrkova-Williams, member of the Constitutional Democrat party (the Cadets), was active in Russian politics. On the Williamses and on the Russian Liberation Committee, see also Charlotte Alston: *Russia's Greatest Enemy?: Harold Williams and the Russian Revolutions* (London; New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007); "The Work of the Russian Liberation Committee in London, 1919-1924" *Slavonica* v. 14, no.1: 6-17; "News of the Struggle: The Russian Political Press in London, 1853-1921," *The Foreign Political Press in Nineteenth-Century London: Politics from a Distance*, ed. Constance Bantman and Ana Cláudia Suriani da Silva (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 155-74.

109. "The Record of the SAVE THE CHILDREN FUND," ed. by Edward Fuller, October 1, 1920-September 1, 1921.

110. *International Studio* v. 72 (November 1920 – February 1921): 191-194. *International Studio* (New York/London: John Lane) was a joint production with the British journal, *The Studio*. Cournos had previously published an article on Robert Henri, George B. Luks and George W. Bellows, "The Painters of the New York School." *The International Studio* v. 56, no. 224 (Oct. 1915): 239-46. He also published "Jacob Epstein: Artist-Philosopher," *International Studio* v. 70, no. 282 (Aug. 1920): 173-8.

111. See Olga Ushakova, "Russia and Russian Culture in *The Criterion*," *A People Passing Rude: British Responses to Russian Culture*, ed. Anthony Cross, (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2012): 231-240; Olga Ushakova, "Zhurnal 'Criterion' o Russkoi Revoliutsii I Kommunizme," *Literatura dvukh Amerik* (2017), no. 3: 335-362; David Ayers, "John Cournos and the Politics of Russian Literature in The Criterion," *Modernism/modernity* v. 18, no. 2, (April 2011): 355-369.

112. *Silence* by Andreev. Phila.: Brown Bros., 1908; *St. Petersburg*. By Andrei Belyi. New York: Grove Press, 1959.

short stories and at least 13 books. From the perspective of beginning and end points, Cournos remained devoted to Silver Age modernists. the lasting legacy of his experience of revolutionary Petrograd--the vehemence and longevity of Cournos's recognition of his "bourgeois" sentiment—is signaled in passages from his 1935 *Autobiography* and his 1963 final book of poetry.

> Particularly do I remember a news vendor on a Nevsky corner. He was tall, lean, middle-aged. He wore a black morning coat and striped trousers; it was quite clear he had seen better days; he was probably a husband and a father; perhaps a businessman or a lawyer; he looked so helpless, so forlorn, above all, so incongruous: pathos personified, a symbol of a vanishing world. . . .He seemed to shiver, to shrink. And your glance measured him from the apathy in his eyes to the spats on his feet. Those spats! They were the final touch. And, glimpsing them, you smiled, couldn't help but smile; for you realized that, in a sense, they were the stamp of the old, the vanishing world, and that whatever else of this world might be retained, spats would be no more! To this day I can vividly recall the wretched figure in the morning coat and striped trousers and, as in a photo out of focus, these spats project rather large and prominent enough to have a comical aspect. . . .Yet no laughing matter is this, but in its own fashion a full-fledged tragedy.[113]

Cournos recalls this scene in a poem, "The Man With the Spats," published in 1963.[114] This late poem harks back to Cournos's writings upon his return to London: "London Under the Bolsheviks: A Londoner's Dream on Returning from Petrograd," his articles on Russia in *The Criterion*,[115] and his series of articles in *The New Europe*.

There is also an interesting congruence among the *Autobiography*, "The Man With the Spats," and Cournos's translation of Bely's *St. Petersburg*. Chapter XLV, "Volcano of Human Wrath," of the *Autobiography* is imbued with Bely's novel. Cournos had long been a champion of the novel, praising *St. Petersburg* and its author in the 20s and 30s.[116] He first read the novel during WWI and completed its

113. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 306.

114 John Cournos, "The Man With The Spats (*Petrograd, November, 1917*) A Memory," *With Hey, Ho . . . and the Man With The Spats* (New York: Astra Books, 1963), 72-122, 75. In this late iteration of the scene, Cournos repeats the story about the name changes in the newspaper, *Utro Rossii*, insisting that it is not a fantasy and that he had donated copies of the paper to the archives of Yale University Library. a comprehensive search for the newspaper in both Yale's and other depositories' collections was conducted and no copies were located.

115. See especially Ushakova, "Zhurnal 'Criterion' o Russkoi Revoliutsii i Kommunizme."

116. "And, of course, there is Andrey Bely, whose recent three-volume novel was a considerable event, though Bely has never surpassed or even equaled that prodigious earlier work of his called 'Petersburg,' which is one of the great books of our epoch." "Foreword" (x-xi) *Short Stories Out of Soviet Russia* (New York: Dutton, 1929; London: Dent, 1929,

translation by 1932. The manuscripts were twice lost by the publisher.[117] "Volcano of Human Wrath" opens and closes under the influence of *St. Petersburg*.

> Peter, though he did not know it, had opened a window to let Bolshevism in. There occurred in the depths of the Russian soul a fierce impact of the half-Mongol and the European, which was ultimately to resolve itself into an historic impact between Ghenghis Khan and Karl Marx, once remote from each other and divisible, and now, after various mysterious character-transmuting processes of history, in the final impact and explosion become one. Karl Marx had thus taken possession of the conquering soul of Ghenghis Khan, and now together, as one, they had formed themselves into a new conqueror, leading new hordes intense with new effort to conquer the world for social revolution.[118]

Thus, Cournos analyzes the appropriateness of the revolution taking place in Russia, especially in Petrograd. The conjunction of Ghenghis Khan and Karl Marx recalls Bely's anxiety over the "yellow peril." The chapter closes with the eerie vision quoted above of the demons "you read about in Russian fiction." The

1932). In 1935, Cournos concluded his "Russian Chronicle" with a paeon to Bely, writing: "If he had written nothing but *Petersburg* his fame would be assured. There is something in the comparison which has been made between this work and Joyce's *Ulysses*, though Biely owes nothing to Joyce; actually, *Petersburg* made its appearance before *Ulysses*." He begins a brief comparison of the novels' commonalities before summarizing the plot and strengths of Bely's novel. *The Criterion* v. 14, no. 55 (January 1935): 290–91.

An account of discussions among editors at Grove Press and the 1960 British publisher of *St. Petersburg*, Weidenfield and Nicolson, includes letters from Cournos further expressing his admiration and understanding of the novel. See Roger Keys, "'An Extremist in All Things' – George Adamovich on Andrei Biely: A Late Unpublished Article," *Paraboly: Studies in Russian Modernist Literature and Culture. In Honor of John E. Malmstad*, ed. Nikolay Bogomolov and others (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), 269-85.

117. The first part of his *roman á clef*, *The Mask* (London: Methuen, 1919; New York: Doran, 1919) was dedicated to Elena Konstantinovna Somoff, whom he credits with giving him a copy of the novel. Introducing his translation of *St. Petersburg*, Cournos writes: "The translator owes a great debt to Eugene Somoff and his wife Elena Konstantinovna for first introducing him to Biely, and in particular for presenting him early during the First World War with a copy of the first Russian edition." (New York: Grove Press, 1959), xviii.

The bibliography accompanying publication of one of his own short story concludes: "There are half a score of translations from the Russian by J. Cournos, among them "Petersburg", by Anrey (*sic*) Biely, Coward-McCann, N. Y. 1932." "Bibliography" (90) in *Americans Abroad: An Anthology*; Cournos again cites the forthcoming publication, this time for 1933: "Bibliography" (171) in *Authors: Today and Yesterday*.

For Cournos's 1960 recollection of the lost manuscripts, see Keys, "'An Extremist in All Things'," 269.

118. Cournos, *Autobiography*, 309.

atmosphere is entirely consonant with the surreal occurrences in *St. Petersburg*. Ghenghis Khan and Karl Marx reappear in "The Man With the Spats," here in a part verse, part prose dream sequence reminiscent of "A Londoner's Dream on Returning from Petrograd." This late dream sequence finds the Khan and Marx conversing at the base of the Bronze Horseman, the famous statue dedicated to Peter the Great. Together, the Mongol horseman and the German theorist confabulate how their individual talents, when working jointly, can achieve their respective objectives. Especially resonant with Bely is Marx's line: "I dipped my pen/Into the same ink-bottle [as did Shakespeare]/And pulled out a time bomb/ Whose moment to explode/Is nigh . . ."[119]

Coda

A significant intention governing Cournos's decision to go to Petrograd was his desire to meet Akhmatova and become her authorized translator. He had been translating her poetry since approximately 1914. In Petrograd, he did befriend the Russian poet and composed a beautiful verse to her, which appears in her visitor's album. Cournos's sole published translation of Akhmatova, "The Call," was taken from her 1917 collection, *White Flock (Belaia Staia)* and appeared at the end of Cournos's first book of verse, *In Exile*, in 1923.[120]

The translation takes notable linguistic liberties with the original poem. Compare the Russian with Cournos's translation.

Зачем притворяешься ты
То ветром, то камнем, то птицей?
Зачем улыбаешься ты
Мне с неба внезапной зарницей?

Не мучь меня больше, не тронь!
Пусти меня к вещим заботам. . .
Шатается пьяный огонь
По высохшим серым болотам.

И Муза в дырявом платке

119. Cournos, "The Man With the Spats," 110-121, 119.

120. John Cournos, "The Call (*After Akhmatova*.)," *In Exile* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923), 64.

Writing to Gumilev from Slepnevo, Akhmatova announces that her own book of poems would come out the next week. (Jacob J. Bikerman Collection on Nikolai Gumilev. op cit). E. E. Stepanov approximates the date of this letter to around 2 (O. S.)/15 (N. S.) 1917, concluding that *White Flock* was printed late July or early August 1917. Stepanov quotes an 11 August letter from Akhmatova to Lozinsky, congratulating and thanking him for bringing *White Flock* into existence. Stepanov, *Letopis'*, Tom 2, 386nn107&108. However, annotating Gumilev's letter to Lozinsky from London on 25-26 1917 in which Gumilev requests that the "korrektura" of White Flock be sent to Bechhofer, Stepanov writes: "Kniga Akhmatovoi "Belaia staia" vyshla v svet pod nabliudeniiem Lozinskogo v oktiabre 1917 goda (Pg.: Giperborei)." Stepanov, *Letopis'*, Tom 2, 324n6.

Протяжно поет и уныло.
В жестокой и юной тоске
Ее чудотворная сила.[121]
(Слепнево 1915)

THE CALL
(*After Akhmatova*.)
WHY do you come masked
As the wind, as a stone, as a bird?
Why do you smile at me from the sky
In the dawn's flashing light?

Torture me no more,
Do not touch me;
Leave me to eloquent cares . . .
A drunken flame reels
On the dry grey bogs;
The Muse in torn shawl
Croons a sorrowful tune;
Her young, cruel grief
Leads down tortuous ways,
Toward lyric valleys,
Where enchantment dwells.[122]

More interesting than the linguistic liberties taken by Cournos is the change in structure and format. Three stanzas are reduced to two. This second stanza is then indented. Three other verse translations from the Russian appear in Cournos's collection. Only this poem takes such liberties, rendering both prosodically and visually the shift in tone of the original. It may be that Cournos wished to evoke his own poem addressed to Akhmatova, when translating one of hers.

O lily,
Frail white flower,
A joy to behold!

The hurricane blows,
Felling huge trees,
The beech and the oak,
And the tall sycamore.

O lily sweet,
Dear and frail,

121. Anna Akhmatova, *Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh.* Tom 1 (Moscow: Ellis Lak, 1998), 241.
122. Cournos, "The Call." *In Exile* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923), 64.

Will you still stand
When the winds cease to blow?
Will you still hold high
Your fair proud head?
Will you look with pity
On the beech and the oak
And the tall sycamore
That lie stretched on the ground
When the winds cease to blow?
(*To A.A.* – November 1917)[123]

About the author

Marilyn Schwinn Smith, an independent researcher affiliated with Amherst College, has presented and published internationally across a varied range of subjects. She has written on the city of Holyoke's community farm, Nuestras Raices and on the Northampton Silk Project. Among English-language writers, she has dealt with memoirist Anne Morrow Lindbergh, photo-journalist Ruth Gruber, novelist Virginia Woolf, classical scholar and Russophile Jane Ellen Harrison, and poet H. D. The Russian-language authors about whom she has published include Aleksei Remizov and Marina Tsvetaeva. The career of John Cournos is the current focus of her work.

123. First published: M. B. Meilakh, "Al'bom Anny Akhmatovy. 1910—nachala 1930-kh godov," *Pamiatniki kul'tury. Novye otkrytiia. Ezhegodnik 1991*. (Moscow: Nauka, 1997), 46. I gratefully acknowledge Boris Dralyuk for locating this publication on my behalf. Roman Timenchik dates the poem to November 1917. "'Zapisnye knizhki' Anny Akhmatovoi," *Etkindovskie chteniia: sbornik statei*, v 2-3. (St. Petersburg: Evropeiskii universitet v Sankt-Peterburge, 2006), 238. Timenchik's entry for Cournos includes several little noted documents (238-42).

An American in Magnitogorsk, 1930: Clare F. Saltz's Letter and a Half to His Aunt Hazel in La Crosse, WI

Alison Rowley

Roughly fifteen years ago, I bought these two letters on eBay. Once I had a chance to read them, I immediately contacted the seller to ask how he acquired them and, if I am honest, to see if he had any others. He let me know that the letters were in a box of papers that he bought at a garage sale, that he knew nothing about the person who wrote them, and that he did not have any more. At that point in my career – when I was a newly hired Assistant Professor – I did not have time to spend on a research project that might not go anywhere, so I too filed the letters away in a box. But I did not forget Clare Saltz and the heartfelt words he wrote to his aunt in the United States in 1930. Now, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, his longing for family, friends and the familiar confines of North American life resonated with me, and I decided this brief research note is the ideal way to ensure that his letters reach a wider audience.

Clare F. Saltz was born to John and Cora (nee Hern) Saltz on 18 August 1899 (or 1890) in La Crosse, WI.[1] The 1890 census puts La Crosse's population at 25,000 and the city – one of the largest in the state – was a center for the lumber and brewing industries. Its economy benefited from being part of the rail link between Milwaukee and St. Paul, MN as well as from having access to the Mississippi River. A decade later, census data shows the family had moved a hundred miles away to the much smaller town of Rock in Wood County. That move meant Clare likely did not benefit from the growing educational opportunities available in La Crosse, where three colleges and universities were established between 1890 and 1912. Instead, this young man, who told census officials in 1930 that he was literate but did not attend school, must have gone to work and his lack of formal or advanced education is perhaps borne out by the frequent spelling errors that pepper his letters as well as his irregular use of punctuation. On April 3, 1911, Clare married Irma Glen (sometimes written Glenn in documents) in Walker County, Georgia. The couple was soon on the move; small want ads in

1. Information about Clare Saltz's life has been drawn from documents found through *Ancestry.com* and *Newspapers.com*. A FOIA request turned up no information about him at all.

the *La Crosse Tribune* for April 26 & 27 show Clare was looking for work in familiar territory. "SITUATION WANTED – Young man of 21 wants work of any kind. Must have work. Address Clare Saltz, 1702 Loomis Street, city", the earnest sounding text read. Given that a similar ad – this time saying "SITUATION WANTED – MILK DRIVER; 3 YRS experience. CLARE SALTZ. 1630 Devon Av" – ran in *The Chicago Tribune* less than a year later, it is clear that Clare's hopes for a long-term position in Wisconsin had not panned out.

A five-year gap in the documentary record means we have no sight of Clare Saltz until he registered for the draft in 1917. His registration card provides us with our only physical description of him; it notes that he was of medium build and medium height, with brown hair and blue eyes. By this point, Clare was apparently working as a building superintendent for the Concrete Steel Bridge Co. in Clarksburg, WV. The expansion of his family is evident because Clare asks for an exemption on account of it – noting that he had a wife and two children. These were his daughters Anna (sometimes Annie in census records) and Margaret; son Clare Saltz Jr. was not born until a few years later). By 1920, the family had moved from West Virginia, settling into a rented house in Cuyahoga, OH. That year, the census taker recorded Clare's occupation as "carpenter," but given that his wife's name is erroneously listed as "Mary," one must take that information with a grain of salt.

At this point, there is another large gap in the documentary record, meaning we have no information about Clare Saltz and his family until 1930. The census that year asked more questions than the one a decade earlier, so we get a few more snippets about their lives. The family lived in a rented house on Jefferson Avenue in Macomb, MI. Macomb is a civil township within Metro Detroit, suggesting that Clare might have been commuting for work in the larger city as he did when they later lived in Ypsilanti, MI. In 1930, Clare gave his occupation as "construction engineer in general building." We have no way of knowing with any certainty how the Great Depression affected the family's fortunes but, by the end of that year, Clare Saltz had signed a three-year contract and found himself in Magnitogorsk no later than September. Unlike more well-known engineers and scions of industry who sometimes had the chance to bring their families with them, Clare left his behind. But perhaps he had no choice for, as he implies in one of the letters below, Clare went to the Soviet Union for the money. As he put it: "I intend to fight it out to stay out the time so I will have some means to fall back on."

And he did stick it out, despite the homesickness he evinces in the letters to his aunt. Passenger lists for the *SS. President Roosevelt* show Clare sailed home from Hamburg Germany on April 13, 1932, which means he left Magnitogorsk at the same time as most of the foreign specialists. Clare's ship docked in Southampton the next day and then arrived in New York on April 22nd. He traveled second class – so maybe he did manage to save some of his earnings from his time in the USSR – and he told immigration officials that his home address was 1122 Pearl Street, Ypsilanti, MI. The Ypsilanti city directories for 1933 & 1934 describe him as a construction engineer and show that the family had moved to 14 Ford Street.

Clare F. Saltz died in a work-related accident on Saturday January 5, 1935. His death certificate says that he had been working as a "steel worker" for the past two years. An autopsy showed that he died from "shock and intercranial hemorrhage following crushing fractures of [the] skull." His injuries were the result of a 21-foot fall while trying to make a pipe connection and his death was deemed accidental. Clare Saltz is buried in Highland Cemetery in Ypsilanti, MI.[2]

The letters that are reproduced here – unedited and in their entirety – are a valuable source concerning the earliest days of Magnitogorsk and the roles that Americans played in its development. Since Clare Saltz arrived almost two full years before John Scott, he describes a very different, and less privileged, world than the one we see in the latter's widely read account, *Behind the Urals*.[3] The food rationing system had yet to be introduced and the waves of kulak deportees sent to work on the site had yet to arrive. Construction of the special enclave which offered better accommodation and a more comfortable way of life to foreign specialists was only just being completed. Since, at this point, the authorities were scrambling to provide even basic housing and services, there was little time or money to devote to cultural activities and propaganda work, which left the population free to determine how they spent their time away from work – a subject which Clare addresses at some length for his relatives. But all was not fun and games, for references to some of more ominous aspects of Soviet life – notably to censorship and the removal of Soviet personnel from their jobs – do creep into the letters and foreshadow the purges and arrests that Scott describes in detail.

LETTER ONE –

[**Start page 2**] This country seems to grow a kind of black wheat because the bread is almost black. Large loaves about 18" long by 10" the other way. Most all the labor works sub contract each laborer digs his particular hole and is paid by the meter. There is no unemployment in fact we need at least a thousand laborers on the several jobs. Lumber is plentiful logs are used for all timbering round. I have seen several people making lumber by sawing logs lengthwise with a crescent saw. One man gets up on top of some high horses the log is also on the horses the saw is raised by the man on top but cuts only on the downward stroke pulled by the man below. The wheelbarrows are all so wide at the handle you can hardly reach between them. This makes them very awkward, imagine trying to push a wheelbarrow with both hands straight out. Work clothes seem to be made of a kind of gumy sack material boots of leather are on the better clad people. The peasants wear some shoes made of woven wood strips. In summer nearly everyone is barefooted men and women. I was in the former czars house was in

2. Saltz's headstone (which he shares with his wife), as well as his death certificate, can be seen here: https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/150896615/clare-f.-saltz [Accessed 15 May 2021]

3. John Scott, *Behind the Urals: An American Worker in Russia's City of Steel* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989).

the room he died in. Ill [sic] tell you about that make sometime after I am back. I went through all the museums in Moscow and 2 other cities art galeries I guess thats misspelled but I havent any dictionary now. Berlin is in the town to see relics in. The language is very hard to learn. I don't know if I will ever get it. So many words are so near alike. Ne ponie meya means I don't understand but ya ponie meya means exactly opposite. Say Ivebeen [sic] away a whole day did you miss me? I just had a seamstress call and sew some of my coat linings and I couldn't get her to take a cent of pay how do such people get along is more than I can say. I live in a new Hotel that is not quite done yet.[4] It has been pretty dirty around here the sewers dont run yet and we have water once in a while in the pipes. It seems strange to me to do everything by hand. All the lumber is planed by hand all the trim lumber is choped out with an ax and then about half planed [illegible word] and then nailed up. We will have steam heat someday. They are building our power house for central heat. If I get cold Ill run down to the central heat plant. I would guess this town to be about 30 or 40 thousand people and they say there were only a few hundred a year ago. A huge camp you can imagine. [**Start page 3**] They tell me there are some good hunting grounds in the Ural mountains about 40 miles west of here. It is noised around there is fishing near here also on the way here at several of our stops we could buy eggs, cucumbers milk (boiled) and a few tomatoes at some places they had pears and peaches but dont think about the cost and every thing will be lovely unless you happen to buy rotten eggs and 12 ½ cents each for eggs and ½ of them rotten adds to the zest. You will be thinking Im blue but 50 cents for a pear will make any one homesick did I tell you about getting homesick I played a piece on the phonograph called the "Spring time in the Rockies".[5] It says among other things "when its spring time in the Rockies Ill be coming home to you" and those words together with a very sweet melody moved me to tears. I dont like leaving all of you people for so long. I have such a good time when I got to Sparta Id just love to live near you and Aunt Belle.[6] If I can stay out the three years mabe I can visit you people more. I would write direct to Aunt Belle but I am very busy now and this letter can do for both of you if you will be so kind to show it to her. I remember my Aunt Belle in my childhood days and spent many hours of pleasure with her I only wish I could see her after and have many real visits. How well I remember when she was a young school teacher and that little John Davis was coming around. I used to get jealous because she liked to talk to him out in the hammock under the big oak trees of the Cole place. I couldnt understand why I was in the way. haha. I was probably all of five years old at the time. The hours spent at the old farm are with me yet. I remember I used to bawl a week every time I had to go back to La Crosse to live. Well Im writing about Wisconsin instead of Russia. I cant write much as the most

4. This was the Magnitogorsk Central Hotel.

5. "When It's Springtime in the Rockies" was written by Mary Hale Woolsey and Robert Sauer. The single Saltz is referring to was recorded by Bud and Joe Billings and released in July 1929. Gene Autry's 1937 version is better known. See https://secondhandsongs.com/work/138137/all [Accessed May 15, 2021]

6. Sparta, WI is just under 30 miles from La Crosse, where Saltz was born.

interesting things are not [**Start page 4**] written about and you may never get this letter. I have tried not tell anything objectionable but I dont know this kind censor but let me thank him in advance to pass this letter. You don't know how much letters mean way out here and it seems so long between word from the States. I have heard from Irma twice since I came in [illegible] weeks so I think some at least of the letters never get through. I was certainly glad to get your letter and I hope the little information I have given will help some when I get back. I think Ill take the platform haha. Like some of the people who make those trips to the South pole etc. I may think its the North pole before I get out of here. They say it gets 40 below here. Its my day off tomorrow if I can get water enough together Ill take a bath and get my laundry together write to Irma and my mother. I heard from both of them about a week ago working every day you lose track of what day it is. I think this is Saturday. You see we are supposed to work 5 days and off the 6th day this throws the week days off. I hope someone keeps track of the day of the month for I wont know when my three years is up. My how I envied you going to a show in La Crosse. Id give all my rubles to see a good talkie. We are allowed to receive bundles by mail but the duty is very high and some things you cant afford to send. I know of a case where a party bought 3 pairs of silk hose (Ladies) and the duty was 90 rubles about 45 dollars or $15 per pair. Socks are the same. Foodstuffs will come through but duty is very high. Ill be glad to pay the duty because by xmas Ill have so many rubles I wont know what to do with them. Ill try and send some xmas cards from Russia if I can only buy some. Perhaps by standing in line my off day I can get permission to buy some picture cards to show you what a drosky looks like and some of their [**Start page 5**] buildings. It takes 14 days for a letter to get to Moscow and about 2 weeks for them to send it on to me. Just about a month each way will hit it about right. I have no assurance yet that my letters are going out. I havent received any answer from a letter written here. This a very large operation as large as the Panama Canal and nearly as much cost. Digging till you cant rest. I am designing form work for all the jobs. I go in and get the jobs all laid out and made up and move on to another place. I like my job very much and if only I can stay it out I can do something when I get back to the States. Mabe I can get some of you for business partners when I get back. Ill organize a stock company and sell shares haha. In Moscow the buildings bear the marks of struggle most of the sidewalks are torn up. The streets are paved with cobble stones a few automobiles run through the streets and pay no attention to the people who jump and run to get out of the way. Street cars that look like the Chicago ave line in Chicago run in trains of about 3 cars each. Never any seats and no place to stand. They seem to all want to go home at once. A few vendors of fruit are still selling pears at 50 cents each and peaches at 2 for 50 cents. There are about 1/10 enough places to eat in. No real restaurants mostly those café type sort of cellar café. A meal costs at least 2 dollars. Beer 50 cents a bottle and no soft drinks like you get at any stand in the U.S. to be had. Im homesick for a hot dog stand or a gas station. There is no such a thing here. You see small stations about 12 feet square at some street corners

you see a long line of people lined up to get something and when you find out what they probably have some cabbage a few apples some potatoes, black bread and cigarettes and you find after you get through the line that money wont buy anything you have to have a card to buy. I gave up after the first experience. Yesterday two of our party left for the States. They [**Start page 6**] were good and homesick. I know they will cry when they see that good statue of liberty at New York Harbor as I did when it was dimming to my view. I know what it means now to live in the best country on the globe. One has to leave U.S. to know what a heaven it is. I intend to fight it out to stay out the time so I will have some means to fall back on. There will be a job here 5 years hence I guess. Some of the men make more than I do I know one man making $150 more than I. I may get a raise if I put it over. Ill have to stop or Ill have to charter a ship to carry this letter. I want to hear from you as often as you can spare the time and Ill drop bits of pictures from time to time so you can construct how it looks. I have pictured a skeleton and any thing you may tell your club wont be far wrong if you picture Montana and its barren ness. There is no effort to make any thing beautiful in fact beauty doesnt enter into any consideration anywhere. The [illegible] isn't there. A Raw open new country yet to be developed. A few American tools and when they learn to run the tools the thing can go. A lot of children playing with toys and liking to take time to play too. An argument must enter into every operation and if talk and jabber would build the job we would be already on our way back. Every one is a student and wants to know why and how before they will believe you. Every word name and picture I say and draw is written down as though it was gold, ha ha. To draw form work as I have here is new to all. Will both of you write me from time to time and Ill always be more than pleased. Give my regards to Uncle Mait Uncle John, Grover and for yourselves I send a regard I cant express and may you be kept in health and may God grant I may be spared to again spend some happy hours in dear old Sparta. Until next time good bye Clare.

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Nov. 12. 1930 Magnitogorsk

Uralsky – Oblast.

Clara Saltz
Mother's nephew

Magnitostroy.

Dear Hazel:- your answer to my letter of Sept 25 attempting to describe some of this country at hand I was delighted to find out that they would pass such a letter. I had my doubts about you ever receiving it. The picture this morning is one of winter snow as far as you can see and while very bright its pretty cold. I have been sick for three days myself and I feel pretty good again but I am awful weak. My hand went write very well either but I trust somehow you can read it. I sure put in a miserable three days. We had a dance at the american Dining Room and I tried to dance the Russian Waltzes and got over heated and over strained too and now glands are hung up. They played some of our waltzes like "Over the Waves" they played it so fast it was about triple time and I tried my best to keep up but had to fall out before the dance was through. Later in the evening we were playing a game similar to "postoffice." They put a man and a woman in the center of a circle of people the people composing the ring were to let the woman out, but not the man he was to try and catch her and land a kiss while she was in the center. I looked on for a while and finally they pushed me into the center and a big girl who works on the table here who is so large we call her "Jenny" I wasn't going to be out done in an attempt anyhow. I had some struggle but I finally made her give up by using the half nelson hold. I smacked her hard amid the applause of a couple of hundred people. I must have wrenched my back in the scuffle because in the ~~nothing~~ morning I was so lame and stiff I could hardly move alone my wrist. I worked that day at the board but I didn't get much done and kept getting worse. I came home and ~~took~~ took a hot bath and soaked for 2 hrs in the hottest water I could stand this relieved me some but I was sure miserable in the morning. I tried to get a Chiropractor and there is no such thing around here. I tried to have one of our boys treat me and

LETTER TWO

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Magnitogorsk
Uralsky – oblast
Magnitostroy

Nov. 12 1930

Dear Hazel: - your answer to my letter of Sept 25 attempting to describe some of this country at hand. I was delighted to find out that they would pass such a letter. I had my doubts bout you ever receiving it. The picture this morning is one of winter snow as far as you can see and while very bright its pretty cold. I have been sick for three days myself and I feel pretty good again but I am awful weak. My hand wont write very well either but I trust somehow you can read it. I sure put in a miserable three days. We had a dance at the american Dining Room and I tried to dance the Russian waltzes and got over heated and over strained too and ever since Ive been bunged up. They played some of our waltzs like "Over the Waves."[7] They played it so fast it was about tripple time and I tried my best to keep up but had to fall out before the dance was through. Later in the evening they were playing a game similar to "post office".[8] They put a man and a woman in the center of a circle of people the people composing the ring were to let the woman out, but not the man he was to try and catch her and land a kiss while she was in the center. I looked on for a while and finally they pushed me into the center and a big girl who waits on the table here who is so large we call her 'Tiny'. I wasn't going to be out done in an attempt anyhow. I had some struggle but I finally made her give up by using the half nelson hold. I smacked her hard amid the applause of a couple of hundred people. I must have wrenched my back in the scuffle because in the morning I was so lame and stiff I could hardly move above my waist. I worked that day at the board but I didn't get much done and kept getting worse. I came home and took a hot bath and soaked for 2 hrs in the hotest water I could stand this releaved me some but I was sure miserable in the morning. I tried to get a chiropractor and there is no such thing around here. I tried to have one of our boys treat me and [**Start page 2**] he made a good stab at it and in a couple of hours I could feel I was getting stronger. My pulse got so feeble I thought they would stop altogether, but after this heating and twisting I made him give me it improved. I feel pretty well today except very weak and

7. "Sobre las olas," ("Over the Waves" in English; "Ueber den Wellen" in Gerrman) was written by Mexican composer Juventino Rosas (1868-1894). The waltz was published in 1888. See Guadalupe P. Quintana P., "'Over the Waves': The Mexican Waltz that Conquered the World," *www.puertovallerta.net*, https://www.puertovallarta.net/fast_facts/over-the-waves-juventino-rosas. [Accessed 15 May 2015]

8. References to a kissing came called "Post Office" can be found in American popular culture as far back as the 1880s. See "Post office (game)," *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post_office_(game). [Accessed 15 May 2021]

shaky. I cover with perspiration very easily and I dont want to take any more cold now. Ill stay off from work one more day at least. One thing about this job you dont lose time due. Cant tell though there is apt to be a blow up and mabe we wont have a job long. It isnt likely but you never can tell over here. They pull their own bosses out and fire them so much it makes me leary. Not long ago they made away with 48 of their head men in Moscow. One is up against conditions we cant imagine over there. I never realized that countries could be so different. They want to do everything by hand all the time. The shovels they use are so poor it is long handled like our long handled shovel but has no crook at the shovel in the handle and no dish in the shovel its self. The wheel barrows are all wood wheel and all except for the axle they make the handles too far apart so your hands are straight out nearly where they lift them up to go. Your description of Drosky is about right all the horses have a yoke over their collar fastened to the shafts. The body of a Drosky is any shape from our old –[illegible word] type to a one horse wagon. Most of them are weaved baskets with a seat crosswise. There are millions of them. Cars are very scarce we have 3 for our use. The place about we are was a field a year ago and now they have about 25000 town here no theatres, no stores, no churches, only barracks and camps. Our village is about 4 miles from the job and quite decent compared to some of the places. All the houses here have double windows one in the outside and one on the inside. Last night I was sleeping away and one of my inside windows blew out and smashed all over the floor thats a real tragedy for I dont know where I can get some more glass. I was so sorry to hear of your fathers illness. I trust ere this he is well again. Winter is a dangerous time and we must be very careful not to get caught. Ill go to no more dances [**Start page 3**] believe me.

I have been for about a month drawing designs of different kinds of concrete control mixing plants. All sorts of combinations I'm trying to design a steel derrick now to use in the plants. I never had any actual experience trying to build with steel and its up bull work. I think as far as due gone its safe enough. I sure have to look up a lot of dope. I cant remember all the formulas etc. When I come back from here if I say out the time I should be able to do anything. Im getting a varied experience. We fill in the evenings pretty well several nights ago they had comunity singing. Irma sent me 3 song books and we practice singing once or twice a week. There is one piano here and a woman who plays some. We play poker about 2 nights a week and write letters read etc other nights. It isnt safe to run out of the village at night so everyone stays in at night. We have military passes but I dont care to run around nights anyhow. You couldnt go anywhere nor do anything without some agent goes along so there is no fun in going all the car drivers interpreters etc are lined up if you get what I mean. This eternal feeling of being watched gets your goat. I have quite a good house now steam heated and while not furnished as it should be does pretty well better than that cold Hotel. Theyve turned on the heat there now though. Our water problem remains. All drinking water must be boiled and we must be saving on that. I had letters from Irma the other day saying she was sending the 'Post' and she said she had sent a

pair of working gloves song books etc the song books came through but nothing of the other packages heard of. I do not hold much faith of any merchandise coming through. There is so much want most everything is stolen I guess. Its a long way to america and a lot of hands handle a package we can never tell where it stops going. Razor blades are my most urgent need but Irma says she has sent them. I can get barber work done though so that dont hurt so much. Will manage to stand it I guess now that the hardest part is over that first few weeks were so long and dreary. Not being able to talk the language makes it pretty hard. [**Start page 4**] The upper class you speak of are no more. You can guess what happened to them. There is a lot that will never be told I guess. Im not getting along very fast with my Russian. I know a few words you would change your mind about learning it when you get into it. German is much easier I think. I think the stories you speak of were true because they wouldn't dare print it if it wasn't. Yes they always serve tea in glasses and most places coffee too. The mail is a irregular problem and you would wonder how any of it got over here when you look at the disorder in the stations and post offices. Unless you buy stamps early (about 4 am) you simply cant get them there is a line a block long trying to buy stamps get permission stand in line for it and then stand in line to get the goods. Thats the shopping tours over here. After you go through the 2nd line you find they havent got what you want. ha.ha. I dont try because theirs no use. I should think those blocks would bring up old scenes. That was the time when I knew Hazel also and went fishing etc. Those were happy moments indeed and I will always remember that spring at your place accross the street from the Wisconsin Hotel as well as Sparta people and the whole Lacrosse destries [?] are very dear to me and I long for the time when I can again see all of you. Three years is a long time to take out of ones life at this time of my life and it took a big fight with myself to agree to do it. I miss so much everything that makes america so worthwhile. It is indeed the best country on earth (except of course Russia) haha. You can actually figure when you can take a train over there here you may go today and you may not go for a month depending on conditions and someones agreeableness. Some of the boys are able to go hunting about once a week and we get some game to eat that way. There are prairie chickens some ducks and geese large rabbits. We have about twice a week the best wall eyed pike fish I ever ate. I should judge they weigh about 10 lbs. I think they come from a sea about 300 miles from here. They are certainly good. The dishes they want to give you in the morning are fried pie and a kind of waffle with hard boiled eggs in them. I dont like either another distasteful dish is fried rice fried like potatoes. [**Start page 5**] They put rice and roast beef together also. There are 4 kinds of drinks available to americans a "vodka" which is (in appearance) like our white corn whiskey champhansky genuine champaign and 2 or 3 kinds of other wines and "conyack".[9] I dont drink

9. This reference to alcoholic beverages in interesting since the sale of vodka and beer was apparently prohibited during the first two years of Magnitogorsk's construction – a prohibition that some got around by visiting nearby settlements to purchase vodka. The ban ended in the mid-1930s. See Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 189.

any of them so Im out on that score. Candies available are country chocolate 4 kinds of bar chocolate beginning at 1.40 to 4 Rubles a bar. Until recently there were Russian cigaretts available but I am told they are going to be out before long. On 3 days a week Friday Saturday & Sunday there is a peasants market about 6 miles from here. The prices will knock you cold but the articles were pretty good. I saw potatoes as good as you could want 2 Rubles a peck. There is all kinds of fresh killed meat there. A peasant kills an animal & does his best to sell out some come in and camp the whole 3 days. There is onions, beans, eggs, and earlier melons. An abundance of hay straw etc. Much the same as any farmer would bring. The butter is not salted here. It isnt salted in Berlin either. I guess we invented that once there. There isnt any chance of going hungry over here this year as long as we get Rubles enough. I understand there are over 300 cars of potatoes here now. That seems like a lot of potatoes. The crops were sure good over here all over Europe. When we sighted England I was struck with how green everything looked France and Germany the same way. One does not realize how much territory this country covers. It is vast indeed. There are vast deposits of all kinds of ores in fact I think they have wonderful natural resourses. They are like Mexicans a lot though tomorrow is the day never today and they are long on promises and very short on performance. I sure would like to see more dirt dug will never get done if they dont get the dirt out of the way. It certainly is a big project much too big for anyone to handle in that short time. We can stop the Ural river any time we want to now.[10] Just now it's a creek about ½ as big as Lacrosse River. There is a perfect site for a dam though and they have it nearly built. We just heard there was four feet of snow in Buffalo New York and we only have about 3" here. Its cool but not cold. [Start **page 6**] I think the real way to get over this country is by plane. The Railroads will always be congested and the plane isn't so much more only about twice fare. On my vacation I think Ill fly to Berlin. I can fly there in 3 days or parts of days. It takes about 3 hours to fly what the train takes 2 days to go and in about 7 hrs more to cover what the main line trains make in 48 hours.[11] The biggest delay getting out of here is getting permission to leave Moscow it usually takes 5 days. The trains are so sold out too you can hardly get passage. One thing on the main line of the Trans-Siberian they sure do run and the sleepers are as good as ours. On branch lines the Pullmans are what they call "traveling soft" small compartments with 4 beds croswise the train 2 on each side of the compartment one above the other. There are no blankets or pillows furnished in a "travel soft" car. The next class is the same scheme only wooden seats are the beds one above the other. The third class can be anything from a old car with wooden benches on it to an ordinary box car and no seats. Our train in here had

10. In 1930 a dam was built on the Ural River in order to supply the steel factory with water. Supply problems persisted however since the dam was not sufficiently deep. Work on a second, much larger, dam began immediately but it was not finished until 1938. See Kotkin, 92.

11. In these early years, there was no direct train route from Moscow to Magnitogorsk. Travellers had to change trains five times and the trip regularly took at least a week. See Kotkin, 106.

about 8 box cars filled with peasants. They were packed in so thick they had to stand. I wonder how they stood it for 48 hours. I told you before how they stopped for about an hour at each station. Ive found out since they had to stop for steam to get up. Well Ive about written the limit again and Im so sorry the writing is so poor but my hand is pretty unsteady yet due to weakness. How Id like to drop in at your club and give you a talk cant be told but I trust some of the available information will be useful. I think by the time I am out of here I could tell some real experiences at building under such difficulties. There are many problems yet unsolved one is the almost universal distrust and suspicion. You never will be able to override it completely I feel it myself ha ha. Well Hazel your letters are one bright shot in the winter and darkness let me hear often as you can conveniently find to write. Clare. love to all of you

About the author

Dr. Alison Rowley is a Professor in the Department of History at Concordia University (Montreal) and Past-President of the *Canadian Association of Slavists*. She is the author of a number of articles and the following books: *Putin Kitsch in America* (McGill-Queen's, 2019) and *Open Letters: Russian Popular Culture and the Picture Postcard, 1880-1922* (University of Toronto Press, 2013).

Soul to Soul: Americans' Discovery of Yelena Khanga and the Promise of Russian-American Relations

Meredith Roman

In November 1987, Yelena Khanga, a Black Russian descendant of the interwar African American migration to the Soviet Union, first arrived in the United States as part of a three-month journalist exchange program between the *Moscow News* and the *Christian Science Monitor*. Khanga's American ancestry and English-language skills had previously inhibited her from traveling outside the U.S.S.R. However, under the democratizing reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev her family background no longer posed an impediment to foreign travel. On this and subsequent visits to the United States, Khanga garnered significant attention among American audiences who were excited to discover her existence as a Black Russian with U.S. ancestry.[1] After receiving a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship in 1990 to research her family's history, Khanga wrote *Soul to Soul* with U.S. journalist Susan Jacoby about her family, life growing up in the Soviet Union, and her experiences navigating U.S. society as a Black Russian woman.[2] This essay marks the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of Khanga's 1992 memoir by exploring how her life story challenged Americans to complicate their perceptions of life in the U.S.S.R. and confront an important history of African Americans' engagement with the Soviet experiment. Analysis of U.S. press coverage of Khanga in conjunction with *Soul to Soul* reveals that discussions of racism remained central to the late Cold War competition for moral superiority and the nascent Russian-U.S. rivalry that replaced it.[3]

1. Khanga is the granddaughter of Bertha Bialek, a Polish-born, Jewish-American labor activist and Oliver Golden, an African American communist who led a team of Black agricultural specialists to the U.S.S.R. in 1931 to help develop the cotton industry in Uzbekistan. Khanga's mother, Lily Golden (b. 1934) married Abdullah Hanga, a revolutionary leader from Zanzibar who was studying in Moscow in the early 1960s.

2. Yelena Khanga with Susan Jacoby, *Soul to Soul: A Black Russian American Family 1865-1992* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992). Jacoby worked as a freelance writer in the Soviet Union between 1969 and 1971. She authored two books *Moscow Conversations* (Coward, McCann, & Geoghegan, 1972) and *Inside Soviet Schools* (Farrar, Strauss, & Giroux, 1974) based on her experiences there.

3. On the framework of a rivalry, see Andrei Tsygankov, *The Dark Double: US Media, Russia and the Politics of Values* (New York: Oxford University Press), esp. 2-7.

A year before Khanga's first sojourn in the United States, historian Allison Blakely published his groundbreaking study *Russia and the Negro*.[4] Blakely's seminal 1986 monograph signaled the birth of a scholarly discourse on the Black diaspora in Russia. Facilitated by the collapse of the U.S.S.R. in 1991, literary scholars, linguists, anthropologists, and historians have answered Blakely's call to take seriously African-descended people's connections with the Soviet Union and its tsarist Russian predecessor.[5] This essay builds on and contributes to this innovative scholarship by turning our attention to Khanga herself. Khanga's interactions with American audiences and her ideas about Russian-U.S. relations at the end of the Cold War have received little scholarly attention.[6] Khanga carried on, in reverse, the legacy of interwar Black migrants to the U.S.S.R. who wrote about their experiences with Soviet anti-racism to envision the America to which they dreamed of returning.[7] Khanga used *Soul to Soul* to reclaim ownership of the representations of her life from the U.S. press and challenge hegemonic U.S. (mis)understandings of the Soviet Union that inhibited closer relations between the two countries that her own existence proved possible.[8] The world that Khanga envisioned through her writing recognized the "connected differences" between

4. Allison Blakely, *Russia and the Negro: Blacks in Russian History and Thought* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1986).

5. See, for example, Vladimir E. Alexandrov, *The Black Russian* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2013); Hugh Barnes, *The Stolen Prince: Gannibal Adopted Son of Peter the Great, Great-Grandfather of Alexander Pushkin, and Europe's First Black Intellectual* (New York: ECCO, 2006); Joy Gleason Carew, *Blacks, Reds, and Russians: Sojourners in Search of the Soviet Promise* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008); Maxim Matusevich, ed. *Africa in Russia, Russia in Africa: Three Centuries of Encounters* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2007); Catharine Theimer Nepomnyashchy, et. al, eds. *Under the Sky of My Africa: Alexander Pushkin and Blackness* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2005); Dale E. Peterson, *Up from Bondage: The Literatures of Russian and African American Soul* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000); and Meredith L. Roman, *Opposing Jim Crow: African Americans and the Soviet Indictment of U.S. Racism, 1928-1937* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012).

6. In the epilogue to her 2002 monograph, Kate Baldwin discusses Khanga's agency as the popular host of the 1990s talk show *Pro Eto* (About It) that broke societal taboos surrounding discussions of sex. See *Beyond the Color Line Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters between Black and Red, 1922-1963* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 253-4, 259-62.

7. See, for example, James W. Ford, "In the Soviet Union, There is No Compromise with Race Hatred!," *Liberator*, October 20, 1932, 8; Chatwood Hall, "A Column from Moscow," *Chicago Defender*, December 15, 1934, 10; Chatwood Hall, AFRO Editor is Dinner Guest of Red Minister," *Afro-American*, September 21, 1935, 1-2; Langston Hughes, "Going South in Russia," *The Crisis* (1934): 162-163; and Homer Smith, *Black Man in Red Russia* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing, 1964).

8. Khanga represents a long tradition of Black women using writing to counter their "disfiguring" in the U.S. press. On this tradition, see, for example, Darlene Clark Hine, *Hine Sight: Black Women and the Re-Construction of History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); Patricia Morton, *Disfigured Images: The Historical Assault on Afro-American Women* (New York: Praeger, 1991); and Margo V. Perkins, *Autobiography as Activism: Three Black Women of the Sixties* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000).

Russia and the United States as the basis for greater cooperation, solidarity, and respect.[9]

Narratives of friendly cooperation between Russia and the United States have been overshadowed by equally long histories of Cold War conflict and American efforts to "save" Russia.[10] Journalists on both sides of the Atlantic have played critical roles in explaining the "other side" to their readers. Many U.S. journalists have contributed to the dominant representation of Russia as America's "dark double."[11] In the case of Khanga, American reporters often emphasized how she exchanged her Soviet propagandistic view of U.S. racism for a more nuanced, "truthful" reality that Soviet anti-racist propaganda obscured. Conversely, some journalists and readers were less willing to relinquish the "dark double" representation of the Soviet Union in favor of the more complex portrait that Khanga articulated. They expressed skepticism about Khanga's testimony regarding her life as a Black Russian in the U.S.S.R. (especially her insistence that she was made more aware of her race in the United States and was never threatened with racial violence in the U.S.S.R.) and insinuated that she was hiding the truth. Khanga attributed such skepticism to the reflexive American Cold War assumption that everything about the Soviet Union was inferior to the United States. Such conceit, Khanga observed, deluded some Americans into thinking that only Russians needed to learn from America without acknowledging that Americans could learn anything from Russia. She moreover expressed frustration – much like the many male Soviet foreign correspondents who preceded her – with pervasive U.S. perceptions of warlike forces coming from Moscow alone.[12]

Apart from challenging American readers to interrogate their assumptions about the Soviet Union, Khanga used *Soul to Soul* to claim an unequivocal

9. For the phraseology of "connected differences" see Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007). Scholars have researched some of these "connected differences" in modern Russian-U.S. history. See, for example, Amanda Brickell Bellows, *American Slavery and Russian Serfdom in the Post-Emancipation Imagination* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020); Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); and Margaret Peacock, *Innocent Weapons: The Soviet and American Politics of Childhood in the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

10. See, for example, David S. Foglesong, *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire"*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Victoria I. Zhuravleva, *Ponimanie Rossii v SShA: Obrazy i Mify, 1881-1914* (Moscow: Russian State Humanitarian University, 2012); Andrew Jenks, "Androgynous Coupling and the Engineering of Peace: A Cold-War Romance in Space," *Journal of Russian American Studies* 5, no. 2 (Nov 2021): 78-111; and Norman E. Saul, *Distant Friends: The United States and Russia, 1763-1867* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), *War and Revolution: The United States and Russia, 1914-1921* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), *Friend or Foe? The United States and Soviet Russia, 1921-1941* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006).

11. Dina Fainberg, *Cold War Correspondents: Soviet and American Reporters on the Ideological Frontlines* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021); Foglesong, *The American Mission*, 6, 11; Tsygankov, *The Dark Double*, 2-12, 97-104.

12. Fainberg, *Cold War Correspondents*, esp. 9, 178-80, 239-241, 244-245.

connection to the African American ancestry of her grandfather, Oliver Golden, that was not matched by a similar level of attachment to either her grandmother's Jewish ancestry or her African father's roots. Khanga's inclination to privilege her roots in Black America was fueled first and foremost by her family's experiences, but it was reinforced by defining elements of late Soviet society.[13] While anti-Semitism had coexisted with official anti-racism for decades, fascination with American culture grew exponentially under Perestroika as did resentment with Africans as a source of Soviet economic woes – a development that Khanga herself captured in a *Moscow News* article.[14] In the United States, Khanga felt an immediate affective connection with African Americans and candidly admitted to feeling "that I am somebody" upon seeing her great grandfather's former land in Mississippi.[15] This newfound sense of "somebodyness" and rootedness that Khanga shares in *Soul to Soul* counterbalanced the feelings of displacement and alienation that she experienced in her Soviet Russian homeland – feelings common to women writers throughout the Black diaspora.[16] Alienation with their U.S. homeland had, of course, inspired her grandfather and other Black Americans to seek affirmation of their humanity in the U.S.S.R. Since most African American migrants to the Soviet Union who wrote about their experiences were men, Khanga's account provides a valuable Black woman's perspective on the complicated, lived experience of Soviet anti-racism under late socialism.[17]

13. Khanga's relationship to her Jewish ancestry is no doubt informed by her grandmother's ambivalence towards her own family for rejecting her marriage to Oliver Golden. She acknowledges that Bertha's communist politics that opposed bourgeois nationalism and Stalin's anti-cosmopolitan campaign further contributed to her grandmother's "reticence about her Jewishness"; Khanga, *Soul to Soul*, 144.

14. Yelena Khanga, "On the Way to a Soviet Diploma: How Do Foreign Students Live?," *Moscow News*, September 17, 1989, 7. On the increasingly negative depictions of Africa as an impediment to Soviet Russia's placement atop a civilization hierarchy with the West, see, for example, Rossen Djagalov, "Racism, the Highest Stage of Anti-Communism," *Slavic Review* 80, no. 2 (Summer 2021): 290-98; and Charles Quist-Adade, "From Paternalism to Ethnocentrism: Images of Africa in Gorbachev's Russia," *Race & Class* 46, no. 5 (Apr-June 2005): 79-89.

15. Karima A. Haynes, "Soul to Soul How a Black/Jewish/Polish/Russian/African Woman Found Her Roots," *Ebony* (December 1992): 44-46, 48, 50, 135; Khanga, *Soul to Soul*, 34-35. Khanga's insistence that she felt like she was "somebody" echoes the line of a famous poem that civil rights activist Jesse Jackson recited in his speeches. Interestingly, Khanga interviewed Jackson when he visited the Soviet Union. Yelena Khanga, "According to the Rev. Jackson," *Moscow News*, February 12, 1989, 1.

16. As scholar Carole Boyce Davies observes, many Black women writers from throughout the Diaspora do not romanticize home and family but speak of alienation, "pain, movement, difficulty, learning and love in complex ways." *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 15.

17. A notable exception for the late Soviet era is Andrea Lee's travelogue *Russian Journal* (New York: Random House, 1981). As a young, Harvard-educated Black woman who accompanied her husband to the Soviet Union for his dissertation research, Lee offers brief commentary on the limits of Soviet anti-racism. See Kimberly St. Julian-Varnon, "Andrea Lee's 'Russian Journal': A Tapestry of the Late Soviet Era," *Kennan Institute – Wilson Center*, February 19, 2021 https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/andrea-lees-russian-journal-tapestry-late-soviet-era. None of the Black female sojourners from the

By articulating a deep emotional-historical connection to her African American ancestry without disavowing her Russian homeland, Khanga found true belonging in the intersection of the two worlds of the United States and Russia rather than their separation.[18]

Discovery and Disbelief

Most U.S. journalists discovered Yelena Khanga when she was one of the only Black reporters who covered the historic Reagan-Gorbachev Summit in Washington, DC (December 8-10, 1987) as a member of the Soviet press corps. Prior to the historic Summit, the *Boston Globe* had reported Khanga's arrival in that city together with Nikolai Garkusha of the Novosti Press Agency. Foreshadowing a major point that Khanga makes in *Soul to Soul*, she and Garkusha acknowledged that they have much to learn from U.S. journalism but rejected the position – rooted in the assumption that the Soviet press was simply a disseminator of communist propaganda – that American journalists have nothing to learn from Soviet journalists like themselves.[19] The *New York Times* emphasized Khanga's discomfort with her instant celebrity status at the Summit and exasperation that her American counterparts, who followed her around, made a fuss that she was a Black reporter who was a Soviet citizen.[20] In a lead article on the Summit, *Jet* magazine reporter Simeon Booker highlighted the exclusion of African Americans from the Capitol Hill delegation that met with Gorbachev despite their prominence in past decades as advocates of global peace. A photograph appeared at the end of the article of William Davis, the Russian-speaking, Black American diplomat

interwar period published book-length accounts of their Soviet experiences. Some of their testimonies can be found in archival collections as in the case of Louise Thompson Patterson, or in short, published articles. See, for example, Margaret Glascow, "I am Among My own People in My Own Country," *Negro Worker* 5 (July-August 1935): 32-34 reprinted as "Negro Mother, Now a Shock Worker," in *60 Letters: Foreign Workers Write of Their Life and Work in the USSR*, eds. N. S Rosenblit and R Schüller (Moscow: Co-operative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the U.S.S.R., 1936), 10-14, and Louise Thompson, "The Soviet Film," *The Crisis* (February 1933): 37, 46. Erik McDuffie's study remains the best at accessing Black women's experiences with the Soviet experiment; *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011). Khanga's mother did not publish her memoir until a decade after Khanga. See Lily Golden, *My Long Journey Home* (Chicago: Third World Press, 2002).

18. Khanga upholds the tradition of Afro-Europeans who used diasporic connections to forge a sense of belonging unavailable in their white majority homelands. See, for example, Tiffany Florvil, *Mobilizing Black Germany: Afro-German Women and the Making of a Transnational Movement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020).

19. Khanga also refused to attribute the popularity of the *Moscow News* to its adoption of so-called Western modes of reporting. See Carey Goldberg, "East meets West – press division," *The Boston Globe*, November 24, 1987, 2.

20. Andrew Rosenthal, "Western Scramble, Meet Eastern Scramble," *New York Times*, December 9, 1987, B6. Rosenthal noted that Khanga's grandfather was "a Communist from Mississippi" who "led 14 other American blacks to settle in Uzbekistan in the 1920's." The errors in the details of Khanga's grandfather's history are emblematic of early reporting on Khanga and indicates how unknown was this history of Soviet-African American relations among mainstream audiences.

conversing with Khanga, who is identified as "the granddaughter of the first Black to migrate to the Soviet Union in the thirties." While Khanga's grandfather was certainly not the first African American to migrate to the U.S.S.R., the political and economic context that informed U.S. Blacks' interest in the Soviet experiment is not the focus. Instead, Booker places emphasis on Khanga's isolation from other Black people growing up in Soviet Russia. He quotes Khanga as saying "'I have never seen so many Blacks in my life as in Washington. I want to learn more about American Blacks than the concept in my country that they are the homeless forgotten people on the streets.'"[21]

The association of African Americans with impoverished victimhood reflects the dominant, undynamic representation of U.S. racism in Soviet propaganda that did not allow for a sophisticated analysis of how racial capitalism produced a Black middle class who enjoyed living standards that exceeded those of most Soviet citizens. Khanga's education in the "truth" of U.S. race relations was facilitated by Lee Young, a Black businessman, who invited Khanga to Los Angeles to meet other Black professionals after he read about her in *Jet*. Khanga would come to affectionately call Young her American father. Itabari Njeri of the *Los Angeles Times* catalogued the firsthand experiences that Khanga claimed gave her a more nuanced understanding of U.S. racism. In addition to the absence of Black reporters covering the Reagan-Gorbachev summit, Khanga was disturbed to discover that the white residents of Plymouth, Massachusetts considered it a great place to live precisely because Blacks did not reside there. Moreover, her visits to the homes of white and Black families, she noted, were pleasant but eerily segregated affairs with the hosts denying that they harbored any racial prejudices. Khanga expressed dismay that some Americans (like Jimmy "the Greek") foolishly correlated athletic ability with race, and frustration that a television program misquoted her as saying that Alexander Pushkin was Black. Instead, she had stated that Pushkin's African ancestry did not exclude him from being embraced as Russian. While Khanga was realizing that "U.S. Race Relations Aren't Just Black and White," Njeri reported that attendees of the reception which Young co-organized with the Black Journalists' Association had difficulty reconciling their preconceived notions of the Soviet Union with Khanga's testimony. Khanga quite strategically refrained from claiming that Blacks experienced no racism in the U.S.S.R. but did state that they were neither poor (since unemployment was absent) nor part of the Soviet Olympic team because most whom she knew were studying at the conservatory or in university science programs.[22]

21. Simeon Booker, "126 VIPs Chosen for Historic White House Dinner during Summit," *Jet Magazine* (December 28, 1987-January 4, 1988): 4-6, 8. Khanga expressed a similar desire to dispel this undynamic depiction of Black Americans in Linda Feldmann, "Soviet Reporters Try American Journalism," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 27, 1987. The U.S. government selected William Davis to work as a guide and spokesman for the progress made in U.S. race relations at the 1959 American National Exhibit in Moscow; Carew, *Blacks, Reds, and Russians*, 189-94.

22. Itabari Njeri, "Black Russian: Moscow Reporter Discover that U.S. Race Relations Aren't Just Black and White," *Los Angeles Times*, February 8, 1988, 49-50. Despite the racism that African students confronted in the U.S.S.R., they did not live in

Njeri's documentation of the audience's skepticism regarding Khanga's testimony about the Soviet Union was a common theme in U.S. press coverage. Some articles explicitly affirmed that this disbelief was the correct or natural "American" response. Since Khanga's life story could potentially inspire American audiences to think that they could learn something valuable from her experiences, an article appeared in U.S. newspapers under different titles such as "Soviet system isn't devoid of racism" and "No Soviet racism?" which disabused readers of any such notion. The piece, which has no author, admonishes readers against believing what Black Russians like Khanga say about racism in the Soviet Union since they are not speaking authentically. As the article warns, Soviet leaders send Black Russians like Khanga to the United States with the objective of "spreading a little disinformation to hoodwink the gullible." The article calls "laughable" and a "whopper" Khanga's statement that she is made more aware of her skin color and was more of a curiosity in the United States than in the Soviet Union. The author singles out one quotation from Khanga to then speak the "truth" to American readers about the experiences of non-Slavic Soviet nationalities and African and Asian students in the U.S.S.R.[23] The article concedes that the United States has "similarly blatant problems with racism" but relativizes such problems by remarking that "there are few countries anywhere without some racial or ethnic problems." It concludes by self-righteously declaring that "the lie that the Soviet system has somehow expunged this curse (racism) from Russian life must not go unchallenged."[24]

By stressing its widespread nature, the unsigned article depicts racism as a "curse" that is impossible to "expunge" rather than a calculated human invention that systemic anti-racist policies could begin to dismantle. It also employs a common anticommunist device of dismissing Soviet individuals' testimony as inauthentic propaganda unless it affirms dominant U.S. images of life in the

impoverished conditions vis a vis Soviet citizens. While earning degrees in a variety of academic fields they often received higher stipends and had greater freedom to travel than their Soviet counterparts. On the experiences of Africans in the Soviet Union, see, for example, Julie Hessler, "Death of an African Student in Moscow: Race, Politics, and the Cold War," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 47, nos. 1-2 (January-June 2006): 33-64; Constantin Katsakioris, "Burden or Allies? Third World Students and Internationalist Duty through Soviet Eyes," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 18, no. 3 (Summer 2017): 539-67; Maxim Matusevich, "Expanding the Boundaries of the Black Atlantic: African Students as Soviet Moderns," *Ab Imperio* 2 (2012): 325-350; and Anika Walke, "Was Soviet Internationalism Anti-Racist? Towards a History of Foreign Others in the USSR," in *Ideologies of Race: Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union in Global Context*, ed. David Rainbow (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 284-311.

23. On the diverse experiences of non-Slavic nationalities in the Soviet Union, see, for example, Adrienne L. Edgar, "What to Name the Children?: Oral Histories of Ethnically Mixed Families in Soviet Kazakhstan and Tajikistan," *Kritika* 20, no. 2 (Spring 2019): 269-90, and Jeff Sahadeo, *Voices from the Soviet Edge: Southern Migrants in Leningrad and Moscow* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019). On African and Asian students, see f22 above.

24. "Soviet system isn't devoid of racism," *South Idaho Press*, November 27, 1989, 5; "No Soviet racism?" *Hawaii Tribune-Herald*, November 22, 1989, 10 ("Reprinted from the San Diego Union").

U.S.S.R. (as in the case of the hallowed Soviet dissidents).[25] Soviet citizens like Khanga are thus rendered incapable of testifying authentically to their experiences as *individuals*.[26] While her family's privileged status among Moscow's cultural elite and the uncertainty of Perestroika made it necessary for Khanga to exercise caution in what she said publicly, this caution did not automatically render her testimony disingenuous and deceitful as the unnamed author claimed. Instead of expressing an openness to exploring the complexities of Khanga's experiences, newspaper articles like this one reassert America's superior position in the nascent post-Cold War competition. Any individual who asks what the United States could learn from the successes and failures of state socialist approaches to racism is thus "gullible" and "hoodwinked" by those deceptive "Soviets" to whom the truth is inimical.

Even after Khanga published *Soul to Soul*, some journalists simply ignored her commentary and moralized in simplistic fashion that racism in the United States was no worse than the Soviet Union. For example, journalist Sonya Bernard of the *Battle Creek Enquirer* erroneously reported that all the other African Americans who traveled to the U.S.S.R with Golden immediately returned to the United States after their first work contracts expired – unlike Khanga's grandparents – because they "found Russia just as racist as America."[27] Bernard bolsters her contention that the U.S.S.R. was "just as racist as America" by mentioning Khanga's encounters with racially prejudiced attitudes in the United States, but then adding that her experiences in the Soviet Union were not any better. In the U.S.S.R., Khanga was frequently viewed "with suspicion" and faced "conflicts as the result of racism." Bernard fails to explain, however, that Khanga – who became a national tennis champion and graduated from Moscow State University – identifies ideological xenophobia not anti-Black racism as the source of these conflicts and suspicion which she would have elicited even if she was white.[28] By disregarding Khanga's nuanced discussion, readers are misinformed that life in the Soviet Union can be viewed through the binary lens of U.S. race relations. Russian society, by Bernard's account, also remained static with no measurable

25. See especially Benjamin Nathans, "Talking Fish: On Soviet Dissident Memoirs," *The Journal of Modern History* 87 (September 2015): 579-614; and Fainberg, *Cold War Correspondents*, 219-220. See also Clint Buhler, "The Artist-Nomad," *Journal of Russian American Studies* 3, no. 1 (May 2019): 5-21.

26. Khanga insists in *Soul to Soul* on the authenticity of her feelings: "One thing was certain: As a black Russian in America, I felt like more of curiosity than I ever did as a black Russian in Russia"; *Soul to Soul*, 214.

27. A few men returned but this was because of the harsh living conditions and concerns over malaria. Most of the men did not leave until 1937 when given the ultimatum to assume Soviet citizenship. George Tynes, like Golden, decided to assume Soviet citizenship and remain in the U.S.S.R. See Carew, *Blacks, Reds, and Russians*, 107-112.

28. Sonya Bernard, "Black Russian Journalist to Speak Here," *Battle Creek Enquirer*, August 17, 1996, 11. Such articles are especially egregious since other articles captured this complexity by highlighting the institutionalized nature of anti-Semitism and xenophobia over the systemic anti-black racism of the United States. See, for example, Janette Rodrigues, "Russian Journalist's Black, White Story Enthralls," *Dayton Daily News*, March 15, 1994, 9.

change in the experiences of racial and ethnic minorities between the Soviet and post-Soviet period, or even within the Soviet era.

Articles that did not contest as duplicitous Khanga's testimony regarding her experiences with racism in the Soviet Union could draw criticism from readers. This is exemplified in a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* in response to the renowned U.S. historian Eric Foner's review of *Soul to Soul*.[29] The reader, identified as Bernard Bellush of Great Neck, Long Island, accused Foner of writing an ideologically charged review that "seeks to praise, and thus spotlight, the author's observation that as a child she rarely encountered racism, but that it 'is now growing in Russia not only because of conflicts among the former Soviet Union's many nationalities, but also as a byproduct of increased contacts with the United States.'" Bellush proceeds to recount how in 1966, when Khanga was only four years old, he visited the Soviet Union and encountered a graduate student-tour guide who ranted about the threat that the Chinese "'yellow peril'" posed to Slavs. Bellush concedes that this graduate student may have not been representative of all Soviet graduate students. However, he expressed absolute certainty "that Soviet racism, which took many shapes and forms (of which he provides no additional examples), was clearly evident throughout my journey. And this was some time before Yelena Khanga became aware of the sociological and political worlds about her."[30] Bellush's white American patriarchal condescension which denied Khanga the ability to be a reliable witness to her own experiences as a Black Russian woman elicited a concise but pointed response from Foner. Foner questioned how Bellush's brief experience as a tourist could discount "Ms. Khanga's actual experience of growing up as a black Russian." Foner also rejected as unwarranted the charge of ideological bias which he argued revealed Bellush's disappointment that neither he nor Khanga were sufficiently "anti-Communist." Foner hoped that the end of the Cold War could lead to balanced analysis of the Soviet Union's history without efforts to score "political points," and praised Khanga's memoir as a "step in this direction."[31]

The anticommunism that fueled skepticism of Khanga's commentary about the Soviet Union also shaped the dominant representations of her grandparents. U.S. journalists deradicalized the Goldens by giving little to no attention to the anticapitalist politics and dreams of economic and racial justice that motivated their 1931 migration to the U.S.S.R. For instance, Diane Lewis of the *Boston Globe* identified U.S. employment discrimination and Vladimir Lenin's letter inviting U.S. workers to contribute to the socialist project as the impetus behind Oliver Golden's decision to form a delegation of African American agricultural specialists. Notwithstanding the fact that Lenin had been dead for seven years when Golden supposedly answered the Bolshevik leader's call, Lewis invokes a common trope in U.S. political culture that attributes any Black radical

29. Eric Foner, "Three Very Rare Generations," *New York Times*, December 13, 1992, BR14.

30. Bernard Bellush, "Letters: 'Soul to Soul,'" *New York Times*, January 10, 1993, BR30.

31. "Eric Foner replies," *New York Times*, January 10, 1993, BR30.

initiative to outside white manipulation.[32] In this way, Golden lacked the agency to dream of lending his technical expertise to creating a more just, antiracist world.[33] Similarly, journalist Robert Maynard identifies the story of Khanga's grandparents as a riveting one worthy of an Academy Award winning film. The "great Russian revolution" in which they had placed their hopes, however, "in many ways has been a disaster." The implication is that the Goldens' story is a riveting one because the discrimination against interracial marriage that they fled is triumphantly in America's past while the revolutionary movement in which they had misguidedly placed their hopes was a "disaster."[34]

Chicago Tribune reporter Andrew Fegelman likewise eschewed discussion of the Goldens' communist politics. The desire to engage in their work as scientists while being paid well (especially by Depression-era U.S. standards) coupled with the threat of lynching and legal lynching (as exemplified in the 1931 Scottsboro case) encouraged Golden and his colleagues to migrate to the Soviet Union.[35] Fegelman provides a refreshingly more honest overview than many of his U.S. contemporaries of the racial injustices that constituted U.S. push factors – minimized as "American phobias" in at least one newspaper article. He even quotes historian Allison Blakely as one of his sources.[36] However by concluding that "pragmatism, not politics, led many to emigrate," Fegelman glosses over the communist activism of Oliver Golden, as the group's leader, to frame the story in a "common sense" manner that naturalizes the primacy of individual self-

32. Scholars have debunked this stereotype of African Americans and Third World liberation activists as weak-minded "dupes" of Moscow. See, for example, Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); David Engerman, "The Second World's Third World," *Kritika* 12, no. 1 (2011): 183-211; Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*: *Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); and Mark Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917-1936* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998).

33. Diane E. Lewis, "A Black Journalist from Russia Dreams of a Cooperative Effort," *The Boston Globe*, November 30, 1992, 52. See also Itabari Njeri, "Black Russian: Moscow Reporter Discover that U.S. Race Relations Aren't Just Black and White," *Los Angeles Times*, February 8, 1988, 49-50, and "Black Soviet Journalist Looks at American Society," *The Modesto Bee*, February 11, 1988, 33 for a similar argument.

34. Robert C. Maynard, "Yelena's story: A search for U.S. roots," *Detroit Free Press*, March 31, 1991, p. 53, Robert Maynard (The Oakland Tribune), "Black Russian Seeks Mississippi Roots," *Clarion-Ledger* (Jackson, Mississippi), March 31, 1991, 71. On Cold War triumphalism in U.S. politics, see, for example, Beth Fischer, *The Myth of Triumphalism: Rethinking President Reagan's Cold War Legacy* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2020).

35. Nine African Americans teenagers were sentenced to death on trumped up rape charges. On the Scottsboro protest in the U.S.S.R., see Roman, *Opposing Jim Crow,* 91-123.

36. For "American phobias" from which the Goldens wanted to protect their daughter, see Elizabeth Kendall, "From Mississippi to Moscow," *Newsday*, October 11, 1992, 151. Despite the minimization of U.S. racial violence, Kendall provides a more incisive overview of Khanga's memoir than most, emphasizing the need to confront the truth of our histories, her grandmother's "refusal to condemn Communism and her resistance to its propaganda" and Khanga's willingness to admit and adjust her preconceptions.

interest.[37] The *collective* dream for humanity that Golden and more well-known Black freedom fighters like W.E.B. DuBois, Paul Robeson, Langston Hughes, and Louise Thompson Patterson associated with the Soviet experiment is elided.[38] Such reporting furthermore obscures the feelings of internationalist solidarity that informed Golden and other African Americans' interest in witnessing if not helping fellow persons of color in Soviet Central Asia liberate themselves from the legacies of tsarist oppression.[39]

Although some U.S. journalists acknowledged that racial violence motivated Black Americans' migration to the U.S.S.R., they assured readers that the U.S. racism which Oliver Golden and others fled in the 1930s paled in comparison to the violent oppression of the Soviet Union. To illustrate, a review of *Soul to Soul* in *The Nation* criticized Khanga for failing to contemplate the legacy of her grandparents' decision to unknowingly exchange one form of oppression in the United States for a more "terrifying one" in the U.S.S.R. Such a blanket assertion trivializes U.S. racial terrorism as an insignificant, more humane alternative to Soviet political terror even as the reviewer acknowledges that Khanga herself lived a relatively privileged existence in the Soviet Union. Decades after the interracial Goldens would have returned to the United States, civil rights activist James Meredith staged the March Against Fear in 1966 – during which he was shot – to expose the culture of fear that still violently circumscribed Black citizens' mobility, and functioned "as a paralyzing weight, 'the excess baggage of the American Negro's mind,' whether a resident of New York or the Deep South."[40] Ignoring the everyday reality of anti-Black violence in the United States to reinforce the dominant image of the Soviet Union as *the* ultimate space of unfreedom, fear, and state-sanctioned violence is an unfortunate and enduring Cold War legacy that reifies white supremacist understandings of rights and freedoms.[41] More recently, scholars have established a framework that acknowledges the mass violence and immense suffering of the Soviet Union especially under Stalin's leadership without minimizing or obfuscating the real terror and violence of anti-Black racism.[42]

37. Andrew Fegelman (Chicago Tribune), "The Unknown Exodus: U.S. Blacks Who Went to the Soviet Union," *Tallahassee Democrat*, July 8, 1990, 9, 14.

38. See, for example, Charisse Burden-Stelly, "W.E.B. DuBois in the Tradition of Radical Blackness: Radicalism, Repression, and Mutual Comradeship, 1930-1960," *Socialism and Democracy* 32, no. 3 (2018): 181-206.

39. Khanga, *Soul to Soul*, 77. This interest in Soviet Central Asia persisted in the 1950s in connections forged between leaders and intellectuals from this region with activists and intellectuals from throughout the Global South. See, for example, Rossen Djagalov, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism: Literature and Cinema between the Second and Third Worlds* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020).

40. Quoted in David Johnson Thornton, "The Rhetoric of Civil Rights Photographs: James Meredith's March Against Fear," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 16, no. 3 (Fall 2013): 457-488, 462.

41. Joshua Rubenstein, "Black in the U.S.S.R.," *The Nation*, December 14, 1992, 750-752 (quotation p. 752).

42. See, for example, Thom Lloyd, "Congo on the Dnipro: Third Worldism and the Nationalization of Soviet Internationalism in Ukraine," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian* 22, no. 4 (Fall 2021): 781-811, 795.

The Quest for Understanding & Belonging

Khanga used *Soul to Soul*, much like the few articles she published in the *Christian Science Monitor*, to respond to and correct the pervasive misperceptions that she discovered many Americans had of the Soviet Union which U.S. press coverage largely reinforced.[43] Khanga was often asked how an intelligent man like her grandfather could have been "'duped'" by communism. Fatigued by this frequent inquiry, Khanga emphasizes that during the interwar decades the "Communist Party was the only institution in white America that recognized Oliver Golden's unusual capabilities and saw him as something more than a potential cook or waiter."[44] Moreover, the only social spaces where her grandparents, as an interracial couple, felt physically safe and had their dignity affirmed, she explains, were among fellow members of the Communist Party. In discussing her grandparents, Khanga writes with a deep empathy and warmth that the U.S. press could not convey. She foregrounds how the feelings of pain and humiliation that they experienced in the United States inspired their political commitment to changing the world through their communist politics and transatlantic migration to the Soviet Union.[45] While Khanga wants American readers to understand the dehumanizing violence of U.S. racism from which her grandparents sought refuge, she does not necessarily romanticize their experiences in the U.S.S.R. Khanga claims that her grandfather who fled the violence of Jim Crow could have easily been murdered in the Stalinist terror had he been at home when the NKVD came looking for him in 1937. In this way, Khanga alludes to the tragedy that the same country that allowed some African Americans like her grandfather to feel fully human for the first time in their lives was also responsible for mass murder and political terror that did not necessarily exclude them.[46]

In addition to contesting the "duped" African American stereotype by

43. Khanga established this pattern of admitting to the shortcomings of her own preconceived notions of Americans while responding to the problematic assumptions that she encountered among Americans in two articles in the *Christian Science Monitor*. These articles curiously omitted mention of race. See, Yelena Hanga, "Moscow on the Charles?: A Soviet Views Boston," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 24, 1987 and "Soviet Visitor Tries to Reconcile Conflicting Images of America," *Christian Science Monitor*, February 4, 1988.

44. Khanga, *Soul to Soul*, 63-64.

45. On the significance of feelings and emotions to Black women's first-person narratives, see, for example, Mary Phillips, "The Power of the First-Person Narrative: Ericka Huggins and the Black Panther Party," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 43, nos. 3 & 4 (Fall/Winter 2015): 33-51.

46. Khanga, *Soul to Soul*, 90-91. Khanga does not discuss the racism for which many white American communists in the interwar era were notorious despite the Party's official commitment to Black equality. See, for example, Roman, *Opposing Jim Crow*, 54, 155-176. Lovett Fort-Whiteman who fell out of favor with Soviet authorities and some African Americans in Moscow is the only known African American victim of the Great Terror. His tragic fate continues to inspire investigation. See Joshua Yaffa, "A Black Communist's Disappearance in Stalin's Russia," *New Yorker*, October 18, 2021 https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/10/25/a-black-communists-disappearance-in-stalins-russia-lovett-fort-whiteman-gulag.

foregrounding the racism that imperiled Blacks' lives in the interwar era, Khanga problematizes many Americans' tendency to reduce all Soviet authorities' actions to propaganda. Individuals who patronizingly dismiss Soviet recruitment of her grandfather and his colleagues as a propaganda stunt, she explains, reveal their ignorance of the conditions in the U.S.S.R. in the early 1930s. Soviet leaders recognized that they needed foreign expertise to modernize the country and paid these men salaries unavailable to them in the United States. The propaganda factor, Khanga posits, was a bonus. Since many sent money to family in the United States (receiving permission from Soviet officials to do so), many of the men, contrary to the erroneous reports of newspapers like the *Battle Creek Enquirer*, renewed their contracts.[47] While prejudices existed between and among ethnic Russians and Soviet national minorities, Golden and his colleagues, she stresses, were not its targets. They faced neither the real threat of physical violence nor the indignites of segregation in the United States. Khanga emphasizes how much it meant to her grandfather and Joseph Roane, then the group's only survivor whom she interviewed, that Soviet citizens came to their defense when white Americans demanded their expulsion from public places and hurled racial slurs at them. Khanga laments that the measurable increase in anti-Black sentiment in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s makes it unlikely that most present-day Russians would act similarly to their interwar ancestors by actively defending Black Americans from racial insults and violence.[48]

To further disrupt the truth-lie binary that shaped some Americans' understanding of the United States (purveyors of the "truth") in relation to the Soviet Union (purveyors of "lies"), Khanga comments on how insincere U.S. political rhetoric sounded to an outsider.[49] She provides the example of one U.S. politician who delivered a belligerent Cold War speech warning that Gorbachev could not be trusted until he realized that Khanga was a Soviet journalist. Then, as Khanga puts it, this politician completely changed his rhetoric to advocate friendship and cooperation between the two countries. Not dissimilarly, at the Reagan-Gorbachev summit, Khanga objected to the suggestions of a U.S. journalist that it was Gorbachev who was stalling over an arms control agreement. She asked him why many Americans insist that Soviet authorities alone act with ulterior motives and should always be the first to concede during negotiations.[50] By relaying these experiences with individual Americans, Khanga hopes to inspire readers to reflect on their own assumptions about the supposed inherent

47. Khanga, *Soul to Soul*, 77-79, 85.

48. Khanga, *Soul to Soul*, 238-239. On the increased violence directed against persons of color in the late 1980s and into the twenty-first century, see, for example, Joy Gleason Carew, "Black in the USSR: African Diasporan Pilgrims, Expatriates and Students in Russia, from the 1920s to the First Decade of the Twenty-First Century," *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 8, no. 2 (2015): 202-215, 211-214; Sahadeo, *Voices from the Soviet Edge,* 169-203; and Nikolai Zakharov, *Race and Racism in Russia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

49. On this binary in Cold War political culture, see especially, Fainberg, *Cold War Correspondents*, esp. 267-269.

50. Khanga, *Soul to Soul*, 212, 214.

"otherness" of Soviet Russians and recognize the default position of innocence that U.S. leaders frequently adopt.

The assumption that Soviet officials were incapable of speaking and acting without duplicity also affected Khanga who disputes the allegations that her public talks were disingenuous exercises in Soviet propaganda. She focused mostly on the positive aspects of living as a Black Russian in the U.S.S.R. (with the exception of her hair problems) not because she was adroitly mouthing a Soviet anti-racist script, but because most of her negative experiences were deeply personal.[51] She often felt uncomfortable discussing such painful matters with her mother let alone sharing them with audiences of American strangers. Moreover, Khanga like countless others, was uncertain of the longevity of Perestroika. As someone whose family enjoyed considerable prominence among Moscow's cultural elite, she had no desire to bash her country before crowds of Americans some of whom harbored preconceived notions of Russians as oppressed victims who desperately wanted to defect to America's freedom.[52] Khanga points out that her complex feelings about her homeland were not unusual but comparable to those which many African Americans possessed towards the United States.[53]

The deeply personal feelings of belonging and disbelonging as a Black Russian that Khanga refrained from disclosing during her public lectures she revealed in the pages of *Soul to Soul*. Unlike most other Black Russians who had white mothers, Khanga benefitted from having a strong Black mother who raised her to take pride in her African and African American roots while still being solidly rooted in Russian culture. However, while Khanga saw her mother having healthy, romantic relationships with Russian men, she feared that no Russian man would be interested in her romantically because she lacked her mother's height, lighter skin, and more stereotypical white features.[54] She was reticent about sharing these feelings of "sadness and confusion" because of the "'no excuses'" standard that governed their household, but also because she wanted to shield her mother (and grandmother) from her own pain. As Khanga elucidates "to suggest that I was wounded in any way by the color of my skin would wound them even

51. Khanga published an article about a new beauty salon in Moscow that catered to persons of African descent who had no place to have their hair done. She closes the article by insisting "We want to help people of African origins live up to the motto: Black is beautiful"; "For the First Time: Black is Beautiful," *Moscow News*, July 30, 1989, 14.

52. When Khanga asked a refusenik why he planned to leave the U.S.S.R. since he was advancing the cause of human rights, he remarked on the prevailing fear that all the progress and changes could easily be reversed; Yelena Khanga, "Their Desk at the Visa Office," *Moscow News*, July 22, 1990, 11. On the contested meanings of glasnost and the necessity of a non-teleogical approach to Perestroika, see especially Courtney Doucette, "Glasnost in the Mailroom: The Soviet Subject in Gorbachev's Perestroika, 1985-1988," *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 48 (2021): 171-188.

53. As she writes, "I loved Russia in spite of her shortcomings, in the same way, I was beginning to understand, that most blacks love America in spite of its failings"; *Soul to Soul*, 220.

54. Khanga, *Soul to Soul*, 124, 158-9. Only after her third Russian boyfriend helped pin her hair did Khanga put aside fears that no Russian man would have any interest in touching her hair (194).

more deeply; leaving the sore spots alone was easier on all of us."[55] Khanga further reveals that although she was exposed from a young age to the glossy photographs of *Essence* magazine for Black women she only began "to believe that there might be more than one kind of beauty, that blonder and whiter weren't necessarily better" after she viewed VHS recordings of Diana Ross and Donna Summer as a college student.[56]

Khanga added to these personal *Soul to Soul* revelations by signaling out the relationship with her second Russian boyfriend Volodya as playing the most important role in permanently disrupting her feelings of belonging as a Russian. Volodya abruptly ended their relationship when he realized that marriage to a woman with U.S. ancestry was unfeasible if he wanted to advance his career as a Party member and military officer. Khanga emphatically rejects many Americans' claims that Volodya's actions were the result of anti-Black racism.[57] Even if she was the descendant of a white American, she stresses, then Volodya would have ended the relationship since any high-ranking position that required political reliability and international travel was closed to anyone with foreign roots. Khanga's insistence that xenophobic repressive Soviet politics were to blame for Volodya's actions rather than racism did not of course lessen the pain of losing her first true love and conviction that she belonged in her Russian homeland. At the same time, Khanga acknowledges that her Black American ancestry which rendered her an outsider or "odd duckling" in the Soviet Union also afforded her insider access to educational and social opportunities of the Russian intelligentsia that most children of Russian-African relationships did not enjoy.[58]

Among African Americans in the United States Khanga found the sense of emotional belonging that was missing in her Soviet Russian homeland. She identifies music especially blues and jazz music as the diasporic resource that first allowed her to bridge her African American heritage and Russian culture. This diasporic connection was deepened by her direct interactions with African Americans during visits to her maternal grandfather's homeland. A random encounter that she had in Boston exemplified the affective community that she found in Black America. An elderly Black man who asked Khanga about the bus to Fenway Park prefaced his question by referring to her as "sister." When she responded that it was the correct bus but that he was mistaken because they were not related, he remarked that regardless of where Khanga was from in the world, her Black ancestry made her his "soul sister."[59] Although she felt a strong sense of rootedness among Black Americans, Khanga does not romanticize this connection by portraying her relationships as free of tension and misunderstanding. For instance, Khanga recounts how she inadvertently offended an African American female friend because she did not ask for permission to bring a white acquaintance

55. Khanga, *Soul to Soul*, 148-9, 158.

56. Khanga, *Soul to Soul*, 188.

57. See, for example, Gary Lee, "A Child of Many Cultures," *Washington Post*, December 20, 1992.

58. Khanga, *Soul to Soul*, 158, 186, 227.

59. Khanga, *Soul to Soul*, 147-9, 210.

to an all-Black social gathering. Khanga felt badly for wounding her friend but comments that she too was wounded by the realization that she could not bring her own white grandmother to her Black friend's house without asking permission. Khanga thus mourns the fact that her grandparents' relationship would still have rendered them as not quite belonging in the post-Cold War United States of the early 1990s.[60]

Indeed, the disapproval of interracial relationships that many Americans expressed made Khanga increasingly reticent to discuss her grandparents. On those occasions when she did, Khanga found herself insisting that her grandfather was not one of *those* Black men who was obsessed with white women. She offered as "proof" Golden's previous marriage to a Black woman who tragically died while studying in Moscow in the 1920s.[61] Khanga relays her shock at the hostility that she personally experienced from some white and Black Americans because she dated a white male colleague. She acknowledges that dating a Black man was socially more acceptable in the United States but adds that it still came with some complications. An African American man whom she met in Boston categorically declared that she was "too dark" for him to date. The complexity of American race relations, Khanga confesses, made her feel most at home with interracial families like that of Lee and Maureen Young.[62]

As her reflections on interracial relationships demonstrate, Khanga is heartfelt in observing how racism distorted human interactions in the United States. Especially poignant is her discussion of how she discovered firsthand that many white Americans had been taught to fear or view Black people as a threat to their safety – an experience that was foreign to her as a Black Russian woman. When she randomly stopped a white female stranger in a New England town to ask her for directions, Khanga recounts how the woman shrunk back with a look of fear. Khanga henceforth tried to avoid this experience by asking only Black people for directions. As she laments "Something terrible happens to the human soul when you constantly feel you have to prove you're not a threat to others." On those occasions when she did have to ask a white person, then she made sure to approach with deference. Khanga contemplates with empathy how much more intense and frequent that soul destroying look of fear must be for Black men in America.[63]

By recounting this experience, Khanga illuminates how the long history of criminalizing Black people in the United States manifested in everyday interactions that caused her to alter her own thinking and behavior. She stops short, however, of addressing how this criminalization justified the structural racism that left Black communities disproportionately incarcerated, unemployed, and without access to equitable housing, health care, education, and equality before

60. Khanga, *Soul to Soul*, 173-4, 258.

61. On Jane Golden's death and Moscow funeral, see Harry Haywood, *A Black Communist in the Freedom Struggle: The Life of Harry Haywood*, ed. Gwendolyn Midlo Hall (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 25-27.

62. Khanga, *Soul to Soul*, 218, 276-7.

63. Khanga, *Soul to Soul*, 246-7.

the law in their dealings with police officers across the country.[64] By focusing on individual acts of U.S. racial prejudice not on the widening racial inequities of the 1980 and 1990s that thwarted the struggle for Black equality, Khanga perhaps sought to counter Soviet propaganda's undynamic depiction of African Americans as universally impoverished victims.[65] Yet this equation of U.S. racism with the acts of individuals mirrors her discussion of racism in the Soviet Union. In both instances, Khanga, who never claims to be a scholar of the history or lived experience of racism in either country, concentrates on the things that she and her family experienced (or witnessed).

Since most U.S. commentators focused on Khanga's observations regarding race, the admiration she expressed in *Soul to Soul* for American feminism was largely overlooked. Such an omission reveals that the fight for gender equality did not carry the same significance in the late Cold War competition for moral superiority as did the still contentious terrain of race relations. The fact that Khanga was raised in an all-female household by her "two mothers," as she calls them, no doubt informed her critical appraisal of the Soviet Union's lack of progress on gender relations when compared to the United States.[66] Khanga derived inspiration from seeing strong women like Kay Fanning, the editor of the *Christian Science Monitor*, occupying positions of power without sacrificing their feminine appearance. Khanga credits her American experiences with helping her understand the intersection of the personal and political, and for giving her the theoretical framework to criticize the sexualization of Black women in the U.S.S.R. about which her mother had warned her as a young woman. Although she

64. Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019); Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016).

65. See, for example, Justin Gomer, *White Balance: How Hollywood Shaped Colorblind Ideology and Undermined Civil Rights* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020), and Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #Black Lives Matter to Black Liberation* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), esp. 72-73, 94-96. The Reagan administration also launched a domestic war on drugs (when rates of drug abuse had declined) that overwhelmingly criminalized and targeted African American communities. See Carol Anderson, *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Nation's Divide* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), esp. 98-137.

66. Feminists in the West had previously used Soviet progress on gender equality to advance their struggle for women's liberation. See, for example, Sue Bridger, "The Cold War and the Cosmos: Valentina Tereshkova and the First Women's Space Flight," *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, ed. Melanie Ilic, Susan Reid, and Lynne Attwood (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 222-237. Khanga's praise of Russian women's strength may have partly been in response to a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* from Anya Yermolenko (identified as a Soviet journalist working in Denver). Yermolenka criticized Khanga for depicting Soviet women (Yelena Khanga, "No Matryoshkas Need Apply," *New York Times*, November 25, 1991, A19) as either young, beautiful, and seeking work as high-end prostitutes or old, shriveled, and reduced to doing dirty jobs. Yermolenko argued that most women exist in between these two extremes and unlike men women were the ones doing all they could to keep the country from the brink of disaster. Anna Yermolenko, "Women Keep It Going," *New York Times*, December 11, 1991, A26.

laments that Russian women lagged behind the feminist gains of their American counterparts, Khanga praises their strength, fortitude, and perseverance which she insists resembles that of African American women.[67]

Khanga's emphasis on women's equality likely contributed to her affective distance from her East African roots. When she visited her father's homeland in 1991, Khanga expressed dismay that Islamic influences muted the voices of Zanzibari women like her paternal grandmother and reduced them to subordinate positions. Although she was afforded honorary male status as a "European woman" that allowed her to speak freely with then President Amour, she immediately "understood the humiliation my mother felt, so many years ago, when my father allowed her to serve at dinner but not to speak."[68] Abdullah had even refused to take Lily and Yelena home from the hospital because he was angry that she had not given birth to a son. Khanga credits her mother for instilling in her an appreciation for the context in which her father was raised as the reason she holds no animosity to his memory. Khanga also gained respect for her father's passionate commitment to educating the men and women of his country after she met some of his former students who expressed gratitude for his efforts.[69] Nonetheless, the gender politics of her father's homeland, reinforced by the increasingly negative depictions of Africa under Perestroika and the heightened fascination with U.S. culture, encouraged Khanga to find diasporic belonging not on the African continent despite her direct paternal lineage (and mother's professional expertise in the history of African music) but in the United States among Black Americans.

Dream Deferred

Soviet leaders' interest in condemning U.S. racial violence and forging connections with African Americans like Oliver Golden made a remarkable family history like Khanga's possible. Americans' discovery of and fascination with that history in the late 1980s, early 90s did not however serve the productive purposes that Khanga envisioned it would for Russian-U.S. relations. Khanga models in *Soul to Soul* a personal openness to adjusting her preconceptions of Americans and learning about herself and her Soviet Russian homeland from her American experiences that she hoped U.S. readers would emulate. In addition to the commentary on Soviet Russia's lack of progress on women's rights discussed above, these lessons included the painful realization that her experiences as a Black Russian woman were quite privileged and her advocacy that Soviet television emulate its U.S. counterpart (which she first voiced in a *Moscow News* article) by having non-Slavic nationalities represented in national programs.[70]

67. Khanga, *Soul to Soul*, 156, 161, 172-3, 181, 210-212, 231, 278-9.

68. Khanga, *Soul to Soul*, 270-1.

69. Golden, *My Long Journey Home*, 104; Khanga, *Soul to Soul*, 268-272. Hanga, a political leader in the briefly independent state of Zanzibar, was assassinated shortly after Zanibar unified with Tanganyika to become Tanzania in 1964 under the leadership of Julius Nyere. On Tanzanian efforts to build socialism and its ujamaa villagization program, see Priya Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania: Between the Village and the World* (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

70. Khanga, *Soul to Soul*, 222-223; Yelena Khanga, "Our Man on TV," *Moscow News*, May 13, 1990, 3. She adds that for too long all the "ethnic wealth" of the country has been

It would be all too easy in 2022 to dismiss as naïve Khanga's hope that Americans' engagement with her family's story would inspire respect for the differences between Russians and Americans, and recognition of their shared humanity. Yet Khanga emphasized that her dream of Russian-U.S. solidarity, which she shared with her grandparents, could only be realized if it was founded on mutual respect rather than inequality. She identified as a major impediment many Americans' unwillingness to recognize that they could learn something from Russia. Khanga also rejected as smug some American politicians' inclination to lecture Russians about their fledgling democracy without acknowledging that their more than two-hundred-year democracy still faced problems. She highlighted as evidence the then recent acquittal of the police officers who brutalized Rodney King (which she connected to the police violence against her grandfather decades earlier) and the hopeless desperation that fueled the subsequent unrest in Los Angeles.[71] Khanga's 1992 commentary resonates in the arguments of present-day political scientists like Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes who contend that the dominant discourse of the late 1980s, early 90s which celebrated the triumph of liberal capitalist democracy as the end of history helped silence critics in the West who sought to improve the liberal democratic model and fueled a sense of moral superiority over the populations of Russia and East Central Europe that bred feelings of resentment rather than solidarity.[72] To be sure, two years after *Soul to Soul*'s publication, Khanga warned readers of the *New York Times* that some Americans' greed and arrogant disregard for Russians' perspectives and interests (that included not inviting Soviet veterans to the 50th anniversary D-Day celebration) was fueling anti-American sentiment not among the perennial American haters like leaders of the Communist Party, but among everyday Russians who "not long ago were warm toward the United States." During the Cold War the Kremlin was the driving force behind negative attitudes towards the United States but now with the United States identified as a "friend," Khanga cautions, those attitudes were emerging organically from below.[73]

Khanga's family history serves as a sobering reminder that the present-day Russian Federation is far removed from what the preeminent African American intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois had celebrated as "Soviet Russia's 'Refusal to be

concentrated in the urban centers of central Russia and that Russians cannot adequately understand non-Russians based on their interactions with the merchant-traders.

71. The acquittal of the four Los Angeles police officers occurred on April 29, 1992 and yet Khanga's last chapter is dated "New York, 1991." *Soul to Soul* was released in October 1992 so Khanga likely worked on this final chapter beyond 1991.

72. Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes, *The Light that Failed: Why the West is Losing the Fight for Democracy* (Pegasus Books, 2019). Scholar Ronald Suny argues that the major lesson of the Soviet experiment is that there can be no socialism without democracy while the main lesson from the present-day political landscape in Russia and the United States is that genuine democracy requires socialism; *Red Flag Wounded: Stalinism and the Fate of the Soviet Experiment* (London: Verso, 2020), esp. 15-16.

73. Yelena Khanga, "Overrun by Ugly Americans," *The New York Times*, August 20, 1994, 23. On the growth of anti-Americanism, see, for example, Boris Sokolov, et al. "Disillusionment and Anti-Americanism in Russia: From Pro-American to Anti-American Attitudes, 1993-2009," *International Studies Quarterly* 62, no. 3 (September 2018): 534-547, esp. 536-537.

White.'"[74] Different forms of solidarity antithetical to the dream of Khanga, her grandparents, and DuBois have emerged in the past decade. White supremacist organizations in Russia and the United States have forged alliances with members of the latter praising Russia as a "'white man's paradise'" where non-whites, women, and members of the LGBTQI+ community know their "rightful" place.[75] Yet beyond the realm of extremists, the Kremlin-controlled media's condemnation of Black Lives Matter protestors as violent criminals bore a striking resemblance to the commentary of members of Russia's liberal opposition and conservative media outlets and politicians in the United States.[76] Moreover, memory laws in Russia and the United States sanction the telling of distorted, self-righteous histories that deny the violence of Stalinism and slavery-Jim Crow in order to obscure their present day legacies and instill pride in ethnic Russians and white Americans whom such legislation casts as the *real* victims of discomforting histories of their respective nation's "shortcomings."[77] These twenty-first century expressions of Russian and white American superiority render it even more imperative that we revisit the dream that Khanga and her grandparents had the capacity to imagine of a Russian-U.S. solidarity that disdained chauvinism, war, and violence, and fostered "a language through which we can respect differences while embracing common humanity, a language to speak *dusha v dushu*, soul to soul."[78]

74 Christy Monet, "The Afterlife of Soviet Russia's 'Refusal to be White': A Du Boisian Lens on Post-Soviet Russian-US Relations," *Slavic Review* 80, no. 2 (Summer 2021): 316-326.

75 Natalia Antonova, "Russia as a 'White Man's Paradise' & Other Scary Reasons Why Trump Adores Putin (and what to do about it)," *The Conversationalist*, January 22, 2019 https://conversationalist.org/2019/01/22/russia-as-a-white-mans-paradise-other-scary-reasons-why-trump-adores-putin-and-what-to-do-about-it/; Michael Edison Hayden, "U.S. White Nationalist Group Linked to Pro-Kremlin Propagandist," *Southern Poverty Law Center*, October 6, 2020 https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2020/10/06/us-white-nationalist-group-linked-pro-kremlin-propagandist

76 See, for example, Ilya Budraitskis, "Russia, George Floyd, and the End of the Imaginary West," *open Democracy*, June 12, 2020 *https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/russia-floyd-imaginary-west/;* Djagalov, "Racism, the Highest Stage," 290-2; Sean Guillory, "Despite Its Complicated Past, Soviet Antiracism was Ahead of the Historical Curve," *The Moscow Times*, June 17, 2020; and Kimberly St. Julian-Varnon, "The Curious Case of 'Russian Lives Matter'" *Foreign Policy*, July 11, 2020 https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/11/ the-curious-case-of-russian-lives-matter/, and "Russia as a Mirror of American Racism," *The Conversationalist* September 17, 2020 https://conversationalist.org/2020/09/17/russia-as-a-mirror-of-american-racism/.

77 Timothy Snyder, "The War on History is a War on Democracy," *New York Times Magazine*, June 29, 2021 https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/29/magazine/memory-laws.html.

78 Khanga, *Soul to Soul*, 297.

About the author:

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Book Reviews

Eileen Welsome. *Cold War Secrets: A Vanished Professor, a Suspected Killer, and Hoover's FBI*. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2021. 229 pp., plus index and illustrations.

On March 15, 1969, Dr. Thomas Riha, Associate Professor of Russian History in the newly created Slavic Studies Department at University of Colorado, vanished and has never been seen again. Riha, born in Czechoslovakia, had moved to the United States after World War Two, studied at Berkeley, Columbia and Harvard, and spoke five languages, including, of course, Russian. (Colleagues will recognize the names of some of his professors or colleagues, such as Richard Pipes, William McNeill, Loren Graham, and Richard Wortman.) He was an exchange student at Moscow University in 1958. In the 1950s, as the Cold War was heating up, Riha had been approached by both Soviet and American intelligence agencies – the FBI interviewed him more than once and kept an active dossier on him - but it is unclear whether he ever worked for either. In fact, there is a great deal about Riha, his life, and associates that is uncertain – including his relationship with an American woman who went by the name "Galya," who may have murdered him. Within weeks of Riha's disappearance, Galya was selling his house, his car, and receiving repayment from Riha's estate for a supposed loan.

No one seems to know for sure when Galya and Riha met and began their friendship/relationship. Galya stated they met in Washington, DC, but she was a habitual liar and scam artist, so her word on this cannot be trusted. Raised in St. Louis, Galya had a troubled childhood that included physical and verbal abuse, and abandonment by her father. Her first marriage took place when she was only sixteen and was soon followed by the birth of a daughter. It is also during this period that Galya first got in trouble with the law. Her marriage ended after only three years and to make ends meet, she forged her husband's signature on a check. This would be the first of a long list of crimes involving lies, embezzlement, and forgery for monetary gain. Eventually, she would murder as well.

The mystery surrounding Riha's disappearance is magnified by the death of several of his acquaintances roughly around the same time. In June 1969, Gustav Ingwersen, a friend of Galya's in Boulder, died of what was initially determined to be a heart attack. A more careful examination revealed the cause of death to be cyanide poisoning. Galya was included in Ingwersen's will though she had only recently become his friend. Even more suspicious, when Ingwersen's family

cleaned out his house they found Riha's wedding band. Police then searched the house for Riha's body but found nothing. Months later, Barbara Egbert also died of cyanide poisoning. She had, in fact, introduced Galya to Ingwersen and the two women had become closer after his death. In mid-September, almost six months after Riha vanished, Egbert was found dead of an apparent suicide. Her will mentioned loans to Galya. Egbert's family and friends could not believe that she would take her own life, but Galya indicated to police that her friend had had many problems. Handwriting analysis would eventually determine that many of the checks and similar documents that granted Galya various sums were forged by the same hand.

Finally, the story of the vanishing professor is made more complicated and confusing by the misleading information provided by local law enforcement and national intelligence agencies. Both the FBI and the CIA claimed to have no knowledge of Thomas Riha, creating a significant obstacle for those who were attempting to find him. The author has since found heavily redacted records that these agencies had significant dossiers or Riha and knew about his disappearance shortly after it occurred, but had no intention of pursuing the case themselves or aiding anyone else. In fact, it was in part information from the FBI or CIA that led Boulder officials to state that Riha was not really missing, but in a safe location known to his attorney.

Eileen Welsome's *Cold War Secrets: A Vanished Professor, a Suspected Killer, and Hoover's FBI* relays a bizarre but true story that is full of mysteries and missing information, scams and suspicious deaths, all within the framework of the growth of America's intelligence agencies. Through persistent and dedicated research, Welsome is able to persuasively establish that Galya was definitely an FBI informant and Riha was, at the very least, being monitored by both the FBI and the CIA. She also argues that the attempts of various individuals in local law enforcement and the Denver FBI office to locate Riha or explain his absence led to J. Edgar Hoover's decision, as head of the FBI, to sever relations with the CIA, thus creating a rift between the nation's two leading intelligence agencies.

But it is this intersection between the story of Thomas Riha and the evolution of the FBI that proves to be the greatest problem with this book. The book tries to do too much and in the process the clarity of the story and the flow of the narrative becomes murky and frustrating. It is, essentially, two books in one. Welsome is an award-winning investigative journalist who received the Pulitzer Prize in 1994, so her research skills are strong. But writing articles is a different exercise from sustaining the same narrative over the length of a book, and here Welsome struggles. Consequently, though the story she tells is fascinating, with twists and turns that are worthy of a best-selling novel, one wishes that an editor had helped her tell the tale in a way that is easier to follow, with fewer unnecessary asides. (Not every person named in the text needs their own page or two of back story.) Still, the book is worth reading and readers will be fascinated by the details of this officially unsolved true crime.

Lee A. Farrow
Auburn University at Montgomery

Serhii Plokhy, *Nuclear Folly: A History of the Cuban Missile Crisis*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2021, xviii, 444 pp. Index. $35, Hardcover.

By 2022, Americans too young to have lived through the era of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the most perilous passage during the Cold War, require a scholar of extraordinary knowledge and skills to explain why the Soviet Union and the United States engaged in an "eyeball-to-eyeball" confrontation during the critical "Thirteen Days" in October 1962. Plokhy is that scholar and *Nuclear Folly* is the book they should read.

Based on a mastery of the latest American and Soviet sources, particularly the newly-released KGB files, *Nuclear Folly* takes a fresh look at a key juncture in the history of the Cold War, shedding light on the strategic balance, the secret back-channel diplomacy between the superpowers, Moscow-Havana communications as well as domestic US politics.

Plokhy's discussion of Soviet decision making during the Cuban missile standoff is highly revealing. He highlights the central role of Nikita Khrushchev in the Soviet nuclear brinkmanship. It was Khrushchev who made the decision to install missiles in Cuban to achieve his dual purposes of protecting Cuba and overcoming American superiority in nuclear missiles. He placed missiles in Cuba because he considered President Kennedy as aggressive, not passive. The Kremlin boss behaved as much from an emotional impulse to save the Cuban revolution as from any calculated determination to redress a strategic balance upset by Washington's belated acknowledgement that there was no missile gap. Within the Soviet leadership only Anastas Mikoyan opposed Khrushchev's decision, but Mikoyan remained in the minority. "One-man rule gave Khrushchev enormous latitude to be quick, decisive, and flexible in crisis situations, but it also gave him opportunities to create crises as well" (p. 60).

In reflecting on the lessons of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Plokhy blames both Nikita Khrushchev and John Kennedy for their mistakes and misjudgments that led to the crisis. He also gives them credit for remaining cool-headed at critical junctures to avoid a nuclear shootout: "they did not step into the traps so masterfully created by themselves because they did not believe they could win a nuclear war, nor were they prepared to pay a price for such a victory" (p. 359). Furthermore, Plokhy praises them for launching the era of nuclear arms control. With the conclusion of the partial nuclear test-ban treaty in 1963, they "saved the world a second time by drastically limiting radioactive fallout" (p. 359).

Plokhy has a good ear for anecdote and a sensible eye for the detail that illuminates the landscape. His descriptions of the living conditions on board the Soviet ships transporting missiles to Cuba are fascinating. To avoid American detection, for most of the long journey to Cuba Soviet officers and enlisted men had to be confined to bunks between decks, suffering from immobility and high temperatures beneath decks scorched by the burning sun. KGB agents travelling with them and monitoring their conduct discovered that many of them went to Cuba unwillingly. The KGB intercepted a letter by an officer to his wife, in which he criticized the Soviet government and questioned its policies.

According to Plokhy, Khrushchev's decision to withdraw missile from Cuba created confusion and worsened the already low morale among the Soviet soldiers, who had first been instructed to build the launch sites and then to dismantle them. They departed Cuba without the expected appreciation and gratitude from the local population. In providing a detailed and vivid treatment of the frustration and hardship of the Soviet military personnel on the ground in Cuba, Plokhy adds a previously-overlooked and much-needed human dimension to the Cuban missile saga from the Soviet side.

In sum, Plokhy's zestfully granular history of the Cuban Missile Crisis provides a new and original approach to a subject that most historians (myself included) believed to be very well-trod ground. He displays a sharp observational wit and a knack for a turn of phrase. The book is balanced and nuanced. It is enjoyable to read.

Qiang Zhai
Auburn University at Montgomery

Cynthia L. Haven, with an afterword by Valentina Polukhina, *The Man Who Brought Brodsky into English: Conversations with George L. Kline*, Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2021, 203pp. $19.95, Paper.

While visiting Warsaw in 1964, the Bryn Mawr Professor of Philosophy George L. Kline asked a Polish friend what news he had about recent writing in Russia. The friend showed him a faint typescript entitled "The Great Elegy for John Donne" written in 1963 by the young Leningrad poet Joseph Brodsky. Kline knew something about Brodsky as a person, having read the transcript of his 1964 trial as a "social parasite" that *The New Leader* had published earlier in the year, but he was not familiar with Brodsky's poetry. Although he did not have time to copy the poem or even read it thoroughly, he recognized instantly that it was the work of a major poet. Upon returning home he acquired a copy of the poem and immediately began to translate it. Thus began a fundamental transformation in his intellectual life that would profoundly affect not only upon himself but Brodsky and the rest of us in ways that no one could have foreseen on that day. What those changes were and how they played themselves out over the next thirty years is at the heart of Cynthia Haven's fascinating book.

It is a story that involves Brodsky and Kline, but also Cynthia Haven herself, who studied with Brodsky at the University of Michigan in the 1970s. When she first read his poetry then, it was in the Penguin edition of Kline's translations published in 1973. Much later, while editing a volume of interviews with Brodsky in 2002, she got to know Kline and benefited from his advice. She also realized that he was not only a rich source of information about Brodsky's life and work but someone whose translations had played a crucial role in making Brodsky's verse accessible to English-language readers in the years immediately following his immigration to the United States in 1972. She promised herself

that at some point she would "gather his memories" of the poet. Other writing commitments delayed the start of this project, but in January of 2013, when Kline was already 92, she began to interview him regularly by telephone and Skype, eventually accumulating hundreds of pages of interview materials and research notes. Unfortunately, Kline died in October of 2014, before she was able to finish the book. Fortunately for us, she pressed on to complete remarkable portraits not only of Kline and Brodsky, but of the literary and cultural era that they shared. Her portrait of Kline captures not only his keen intelligence and erudition but his extraordinary kindness and generosity of spirit. It is even more striking given the fact that she never met him face to face.

Haven's book is structured as a set of conversations with Kline. Her questions allow Kline to recall the details of his initial encounters with Brodsky's work and later of his earliest meetings with Brodsky in Russia during the late 1960s. Kline was in his late 40s at the time, while Brodsky was in his middle 20s. Time was short, since visits were brief, a few hours at best, and one could never be sure if or when would meet again. Communication was thus both intense and memorable. The two men got to know one another, obviously, but from the very outset their meetings focused upon reviewing drafts of Kline's translations. They spoke mostly Russian, but discussions of translation inevitably involved English, which Brodsky by this time knew to some degree. In the late 1960s Kline began to publish his translations in a variety of Western journals. Haven's interviews make it clear that discovering Brodsky's poetry was a genuine turning point in Kline's intellectual and personal life. He had other commitments, certainly, both as a professor at Bryn Mawr and to his family. But translating Brodsky and making the English-speaking world aware of his work became a real mission for him, one that transcended the friendship and personal admiration that he felt for Brodsky.

The possibility that Brodsky might be forced to emigrate, while real, seemed remote for most of the 1960s. In 1972, it became a reality. Given the success with which he ultimately adapted himself to life in the West, it is important to recall that emigration was a major cultural adjustment, even for him. Thanks to the efforts of Carl and Ellendea Proffer at the University of Michigan, he immediately had a teaching job that gave him an income, colleagues, and a home. George Kline was terribly important not only as a translator, but as a friend and someone he knew and could trust. Kline's translations provided him with a ready base of excellent English-language versions of his poems that allowed him to do readings on college campuses around the country immediately. Within a little more than a year, his translations would appear in a Penguin paperback with an introduction by W. H. Auden that would serve as an entrance ticket to a broader English-language public. Now able to visit one another for closer collaboration on translations, Kline worked intensely with Brodsky to increase the numbers of these available translations.

If there is a drama in Haven's book, it the gradual diminishing of Brodsky's exclusive dependence upon Kline for translations. In collaborating on translations, Brodsky would become increasingly assertive as his own mastery of English grew, something that occasionally led to tension in disagreements over word or stylistic

choices. Also, other translators inevitably appeared, as Kline had both anticipated and welcomed in principle. (He never asserted "ownership" over Brodsky translations, arguing that there was room for competing translations). Many of these translations were done by established poets who did not know Russian themselves, but worked from literal translations, sometimes in collaboration with Brodsky himself. Finally, for better or worse, Brodsky was increasingly drawn to translate his own poems. Tensions developed, but the friendship between the two men remained strong, ended only by Brodsky's death. It's worth noting that Brodsky admired Kline greatly for his role as a navigator and bombardier who flew fifty combat missions in B-24s out of Italy in World War II, for which he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Haven's book concludes with materials that will be useful to scholars interested in Brodsky's poems and Kline's translations. These include Kline's extraordinary translations of Brodsky's poems "Elegy for John Donne," "Nunc Dimittis," "The Butterfly," and "Odysseus to Telemachus"; a bibliography of Kline's published translations of Brodsky's poems; and a chronology of Kline's life and career. In an insightful afterword, Valentina Polukhina places Brodsky's poetry, Kline's translations, and the complexity of the relationship between living poets and their translators in a broader historical context.

Samuel C. Ramer
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Serhii Plokhy, Forgotten Bastards of the Eastern Front: American Airmen Behind the Soviet Lines and the Collapse of the Grand Alliance, New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. 360pp., plus index and illustrations.

Serhii Plokhy's *Forgotten Bastards of the Eastern Front: American Airmen Behind Soviet Lines and the Collapse of the Grand Alliance*, illuminates the previously unexplored depths of Operation Frantic and the initiative to use bases in Soviet territory to attack previously unreachable targets in Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe. Rather than present a narrative of the events surrounding the establishment on the airbases, the book conducts a virtual 360 performance evaluation of the Soviet-American relationship of the Grand Alliance. It examines perceptions from the US and Soviet military personnel, their associates, and their political/diplomatic representatives through Roosevelt, Truman, and Stalin. What makes this research most unique is its heavy reliance on a variety of State Security archives that thankfully are still available in Ukraine. Through surveillance reports of the SMERSH and other related organizations, Plokhy can link the seemingly mundane interactions, views, and actions of the Americans to the increasing discomfort caused by their presence. Actions by Soviet minders amplified negativity that further added to American distaste for their hosts. These reports capture inherent Soviet angst and the evolution of bilateral paranoia and distrust versus Roosevelt's hope of enhanced U.S.-Soviet ties. Plokhy demonstrates

how, despite Roosevelt's enthusiasm for this project at Tehran, unseen fault lines destroyed the new edifice before its construction.

Mary Glantz's *FDR and the Soviet Union: the President's Battles Over Foreign Policy* examines tensions in the US Embassy in Moscow and the national security bureaucracy in Washington. Plohky takes the story further, exploring fissures emerging at the ground level, where Soviet and American personnel should have been most united. He postulates their relationship was "doomed from within by conflict between Soviet and American political traditions and cultures, and it began to fall apart during rather than after World War II."[1] Initially, the establishment of the base at Poltava and its two sister installations was greeted with optimism by the newly arrived American personnel. Soon, however, this trust was tested by a German air-raid that resulted in the most significant loss of US aircraft on the ground since Pearl Harbor. Recriminations against the Soviets were severe and immediate. Denials of US requests to launch American fighters to protect the fields, combined with Soviet failure to launch an effective defense sorely tested nascent trust. Soviet anti-aircraft and early warning coordination were utterly ineffective, and subsequent requests to provide by the US to supply night fighter coverage went unanswered.

Life on the ground for American personnel was equally disappointing. Soviet facilities failed to meet even the most basic western sanitary standards, and perhaps most important to American GIs, their love-lives were even more tumultuous. Local officials and secret police threatened, harassed, arrested, and, of course, enlisted spies among the local women who dated Americans. American GIs and their Soviet dates received harassment in public, and their sweethearts were called prostitutes. For service members, then, as today, few things impact the psyche than an intrusion into ones' intimate life. Plokhy writes: "Americans were incensed by the efforts of the Soviet secret police to curtail personal relationships with their Soviet counterparts and by the campaign of harassment against women who dated Americans."[2]

Tensions only heightened as the Soviets liberated prisoners of war (POWs) in Eastern Europe. American personnel were treated almost as poorly as their Soviet counterparts. Those who surrendered and finished the war in camps were regarded by Stalin as "traitors" and treated with disregard, cruelty even death. For Americans, the view was exactly the opposite. POWs were heroes, deserving of special care and expeditious repatriation. Soviet treatment and failure to aid these former POWs' return were received with absolute bitterness from the tarmacs at Poltava up to the White House.

The more the Soviets pushed back German forces, the less relevant Poltava became. However, when the Polish Home Army rebelled against the Germans occupying Warsaw in advance of the arrival of Soviet troops, Stalin denied desperately needed ammunition and supplies. Officials vehemently denied American and British requests to drop supplies despite repeated and impassioned

1. Serhii Plokhy, *Bastards of the Eastern Front* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), iv.

2. Ibid., 289.

requests. At Yalta, Poland was a particularly sensitive point, but for "Averell Harriman, Stalin's refusal to allow the use of Poltava-area air bases to help Polish insurgents early in the uprising constituted a turning point in his relations with the Soviets. It was the last straw for the American ambassador, just as it was for many American officers at the bases, convincing them they could not do business with their Soviet hosts."[3]

After Roosevelt's death, relations on the ground at Poltava deteriorated to the point that both sides prepared for the potential of armed conflict at the base. Similarly, Truman's "White House was looking more like a change in nature of Soviet-American relations."[4] In the end, according to Plohky:

"The face-to-face encounter with their Soviet allies had made a strong impression on the Americans at the base, though for many of them, it was not transformative in the way envisioned by their commanders or welcome to their Soviet hosts. Having come to Ukraine with high expectations and great sympathy toward the Soviets, they were leaving utterly disillusioned, and more often than not, even openly hostile to the regime."[5]

Joshua Segal
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James W. Peterson, *Russian-American Relations in the Post-Cold War World.* Manchester University Press, 2017. 200pp. Index and illustrations.

Ever since US-Russia relations have plunged into the deepest crisis after the end of the Cold War, experts on both sides of the Atlantic have been turning to the preceding period of post-bipolar development. They are invariably interested in answers to the questions of why the two countries cannot find recipes for stability in their relations, and which one of them and when made the fateful mistakes.[6]

As the two states travel the road from the end of the Cold War to another spiral of tensions, embarking on the gradual process of transforming this period's history from an object of political and ideological manipulations to a subject of scholarly reflection accords particular importance to summative works that offer comprehensive and balanced interpretations of the US's relations with post-Soviet Russia. The collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War as well as the legacy of the 1990s and the 2000s, continue to prompt debates among scholars and experts. They become part of the public discourse and are used as

3. Ibid., 147.
4. Ibid., 229.
5. Ibid., 231
6. The following books offer most balanced assessments concerning the matter: Robert Legvold, *Return to Cold War* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016); Samuel Charap, Timothy Colton, *Everyone Loses: The Ukraine Crisis and the Ruinous Contest for Post-Soviet Eurasia* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Angela Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton University Press, 2014).

substantiations of foreign policy decisions and as means of handling domestic problems in both states.

This is why books such as the one written by James Peterson, Professor Emeritus in Political Science, are of special interest. This book for students is addressed not only to undergraduates and graduates, but also to politicians and experts. Having been published in 2017, at the start of Donald Trump's presidency and before the final collapse into the abyss of confrontation that reached its nadir in ambassadors being revoked from both Washington and Moscow, the book is more balanced in its assessments.

A clearly structured text based on the author's own conceptual framework centers around the principal landmarks in bilateral interactions in the post-bipolar world: the end of the Cold War, the Balkan Wars of the 1990s, NATO's eastward expansion, war on global terrorism, the US decision to invade Iraq in 2003, Russia's move to invade Georgia in 2008, the American Missile Shield project, the Arab Spring of 2011 and the Middle Eastern crisis, American and Russian "pivot to the East" connected with China's ascendance and with the changing balance of power in Asia. Following the latest Russia-NATO talks in January 2022, the discussion of new Eastern European states acceding to the alliance becomes particularly relevant.[7]

Peterson emphasizes the unwillingness of US experts, state and public figures to account for the success of Vladimir Putin's policy of advancing the idea of national greatness in post-Soviet Russia that correlates with the status of the USSR throughout the Cold War. As Peterson justly notes, a major factor in the erosion of bilateral relations is Russia's failure to understand the motives behind the US's invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan and the US's failure to understand the motives behind Russia's wars with Chechnya and the Georgia-Ossetia war in August 2008. This total incomprehension and distortion of the other state's motives stood in the way of the convergence process and was fully manifested during the Syrian Civil War (pp. 10-11).

The book's theoretical and methodological framework rests on the analysis of five world order models that center on the balance of power, bipolarity, unipolarity, multi-polarity, and continuous chaos, including five international relations theories such as Systems Theory, Legacy Theory, Critical Junctures Theory, Realist Theory, and Revised Realist Theory. Peterson uses them to explain the logic and dynamics of the US-Russia relations between the end of the Cold War and 2014.

Using the format of Soviet-American relations during the Cold War as his starting point, he is looking for its traces in the US relations with post-Soviet Russia. In his opinion, the balance of power conceived by the framers of the Yalta-Potsdam system manifests in Vladimir Putin's intent to dispute American leadership and implement an equal partnership or in the initial stage of Barack Obama's "reset" policy. Today's multi-polar international relations system is evolving a bipolar trend in Russia-US relations. I believe, however, that it is

7. About this see in details, Mary Sarotte, *Not One Inch America, Russia, and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemat*e (Yale University Press, 2022).

necessary to qualify that in this new iteration, we are talking regional bipolarity, while global bipolarity is manifested to a greater degree in US-China relations.

Peterson states that multi-polarity began to emerge within the capitalist and socialist camps back in the 1960s-1970s. The countries in each group as well as the non-alignment movement challenged the dominance of the USSR and the US. The polycentric trend subsisted to the end of the Cold War due to the strengthening standings of China and Japan. Simultaneously, however, because of the USSR weakening, the unipolar model was activated in Soviet-American relations. It was reflected in the US reveling in its triumphalism following the collapse of the Soviet Union as America was moving from leadership to hegemony.

One cannot dispute Peterson's observations on this matter as well as on two others. First, the transition from World War II to the Cold War is difficult to fit into any current models, just like it is difficult to do so with the transition from the Cold War to the post-bipolar world of the 1990s. Second, no single model could offer a comprehensive description of the dynamics of Soviet-American relations from 1946 to 1991. The same holds true for the post-bipolar world. Then, however, legitimate questions arise: how appropriate and productive is the use of the term "the New Cold War" for today's Russia-US relations? Does such a generalization afford experts and politicians some real knowledge concerning the relations' development prospects or does it, on the contrary, cloud the meaning of the current events and get in the way of their comprehensive interpretation?

Peterson justly states that when the system of relations between the US and post-Soviet Russia has gone through another cycle of hopes and disappointments (which was not the first and will not be the last) it has not become set in stone. The logic and dynamics of these relations was impacted by the Cold War legacy that manifested, for instance, in active manipulations of the "Russian threat" in the US and the "American threat" in Russia (Legacy Theory). Both countries, however, repeatedly demonstrated their desire to overcome this legacy. In its turn, Peterson's use of the Theory of Critical Junctures allows him to draw the reader's attention to the interconnectedness between changing domestic development tracks and the US-Russia relations, as it happened, for instance, when the power was transferred from Boris Yeltsin to Vladimir Putin in Russia or from the Republican and neoconservative George W. Bush Administration to the Democratic and neoliberal Barack Obama Administration in the US.

Interpreting Russia-US relations through the lens of the Realist Theory, Peterson shows that the two countries appealed to both offensive and defensive tactics in pursuing their national interests. For example, the US launched the war in Iraq in 2003 on very flimsy grounds, just like Russia did in annexing Crimea. At the same time, the US intervention in Afghanistan was a manifestation of defensive tactics, while Russia used defensive tactics in response to the Missile Shield project conceived by the Washington administration. The problem here is that the very determination of what short-term and long-term national interests actually are frequently remains debatable for the other party and prompts domestic debates as well.

Finally, by using the Revised Realist Theory, Peterson focuses on global developments (be that pandemics, international terrorism, environmental

problems, or redistribution of global energy resources) that directly influence states' actions and that need to be analyzed through the application of interdisciplinary approaches.

Peterson offers a periodization of Russian and American foreign political patterns that correlates with his theoretical insights and will be useful for both students and faculty. He distinguishes several periods in Russia's foreign policy. The first one is Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika (1985-1991) characterized by a new foreign policy concept based on the realist theory and driven by desire to protect Russia's economic interests amid increasing challenges posited by the polycentric world. The second period coincides with Boris Yeltsin's presidency (1991-2000); it is marked by his desire to appease the West and engage in a close interaction with it, which, in turn, results in the US leaning toward hegemony and unipolarity. The third period includes Vladimir Putin's first presidential tenure (2000-2008); his policy was aimed at stepping up Russia's international stance and regaining its former glory following the foreign political passivity of Yeltsin's presidential tenure. The Legacy Theory and the balance of power model explain the logic of Russia's foreign policy at the time. Finally, the fourth period spans Dmitry Medvedev's presidency and Vladimir Putin's second presidential tenure. This is the period of ramping up the glory policy manifested in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine in 2014. It is important to note that Peterson's model clearly lacks the domestic political factor, that is, the evolution of Putin's regime itself with its characteristic applied anti-Americanism, his desire to use the American *Other* to handle domestic political tasks and consolidate the national idea.

Peterson also distinguishes four periods in American foreign political patterns. From 1985 to 1993 is the period when the US was far more active than the USSR/Russia. The unipolar model is the perfect fit for explaining the politics and policies of George H.W. Bush, while the Systems Theory helps account for new actors' influence in the international process. The William "Bill" Clinton Administration (1993-2001) that faced challenges in the Balkans is best explained through application of the multilateralism-based model. The Realist Theory serves to clarify American policy that intended to protect its national interests amid increasing inter-civilizational contradictions. In Peterson's opinion, the presidency of George W. Bush (2001-2009) that saw 9/11 and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is best interpreted through the application of the model of chaos. And then, for interpreting Obama's presidency (2009-2017) rife with critical pivots and facing increasing global challenges, Peterson proposes a theoretical framework that combines the theory of Critical Junctures and Revised Realist Theory.

Of particular interest for students and faculty on the one hand, and for experts and politicians on the other is the table that presents the frequency of principal theories and models manifesting in Russia-US relations over the 25 years that elapsed since the end of the Cold War. This table makes for a better understanding of stability recipes (pp. 159-161). Peterson's analysis brings him to the conclusion that the two countries' relations should be constructed through using the balance of power, should be interpreted by applying multi-polarity (as it reflects the realities of the post-bipolar world) and the realist approach that accounts for the national

interests of the other party. The task, therefore, is abandoning the negative impact of the consequences of the Cold War and making use of the workable models of the US-Russian relations and of the constructive approaches to their stabilization. So far, this task has not been handled.

What this solid political science book lacks is a social constructivist approach to the study of bilateral relations that would allow Peterson to expand his explanatory scheme, including through applying the Legacy Theory. It is not solely the matter of the impact that political regime development traditions have had during Putin's presidency, as Peterson writes on p. 26, it is also the matter of a long-term trend of Russia using the American *Other* and the US using the Russian *Other* to shape their national identities. Causes of the new spiral of tensions should be sought in the clash between the two countries' systems of values, interests, and ambitions. Their conflicting national identities, their desire to use the counterpart as a scapegoat for their own failures make finding a common denominator for divergent interests a more difficult task. It is, however, important to remember that these identities are not static and monolithic, while the dominant American and Russian exceptionalism concepts do leave space for pragmatic interactions and do not in themselves make a conflict inevitable.

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Field Notes

New York University – Jordan Center for the Advanced Study of Russia
https://jordanrussiacenter.org/event/russia-the-wars-ideological-infrastructure-and-the-future-of-moscows-soft-power/

The Museum of Russian Art – Minneapolis
https://tmora.org/event/virtual-tour-with-the-curator-an-american-in-siberia/

https://tmora.org/2022/04/13/say-no-to-war-political-cartoons-by-ukrainian-and-russian-artists/

Stanford U.S.-Russia Forum – SURF
https://usrussia.stanford.edu/

Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES)
Look here in June for the Program for the 54th Annual Convention in Chicago

https://www.aseees.org/convention/program

Some sessions to look out for!

1. War, Suffragettes, Medicine, and Religion: The Varied and Precarious Nature of Russian-American Relations
   Chair: Svetlana Paulson, Southern Arkansas U

   The U.S. Civil War in the Russian Imagination
   Ivan Kurilla, European U at St. Petersburg (Russia)

   Precarious Partners: Suffragettes and Socialists
   Lee Farrow, Auburn U at Montgomery

   In Service to the Tsar: Dr. Earl Downer in Revolutionary Russia
   Joshua Segal, George Washington U

Paul B. Anderson and the Publication of Religion in Communist Dominated Areas
Matt Miller, U of Northwestern-St. Paul
Discussant: William Whisenhunt, College of DuPage

2. Urban Space as Intersection of Russian-American Relations
Chair: William Whisenhunt, College of DuPage

'Don't Judge Odessa as a Russian City!': Paradoxes of the Urban Image in the Representations of Russian and American Travelers in the Early 19th Century
Anton Panov, Russian State U for the Humanities (Russia)

New York as an Actor of Russian-American Relations at the Turn of the 20th Century
Victoria Zhuravleva, Russian State U for the Humanities (Russia)

Americans in the 'Russian Chicago': Samara as a Place of Russian-American Contacts
Aleksandr Okun, Samara U (Russia)

'Russians at a Chicago's Crossroads': Construction of American Urban Space in Russian Literature, from Korolenko to Pilniak
Milla (Lioudmila) Fedorova, Georgetown U

Discussant: Yasha Klots, yasha.klots@gmail.com, CUNY Hunter College

3. Russian American Encounters: New York and Petersburg/Petrograd on the Cusp of the 20th Century
Chair: Anatol Shmelev, Hoover Institution
The American Home of the Russian Revolution: The Henry Street Settlement, Russian Jewish Immigrants, and the German Jewish Elite
Lyubov Ginzburg, Independent Scholar

Into Russia's Cauldron
Steven Fisher, Independent Scholar

Slavic and Jewish Diaspora Postcards in North America, from the end of the 19th century to the 1920s
Vladimir Guinzbourg, Rossica society of Russian philately
Discussant: Dmitrii Nechiporuk, Tyumen State U (Russia)

New Publication

The English edition of *Repertoire of the Bolshoi Theater 1776-1955* has been published by Ross Publishing LLC. Written by the indomitable Russian theater historian, Vasilii Fedorov, who had an encyclopedic knowledge of Russia's performing arts, it contains a chronological list of every musical performance at the Bolshoi for 180 years, including composers, librettists, conductors, performers and synopses of the librettos. Every new production is noted for each year separately for operas and ballets, followed by a complete list of the current repertoires for that year. It is now available in a library edition at $125. info@rosspub.com