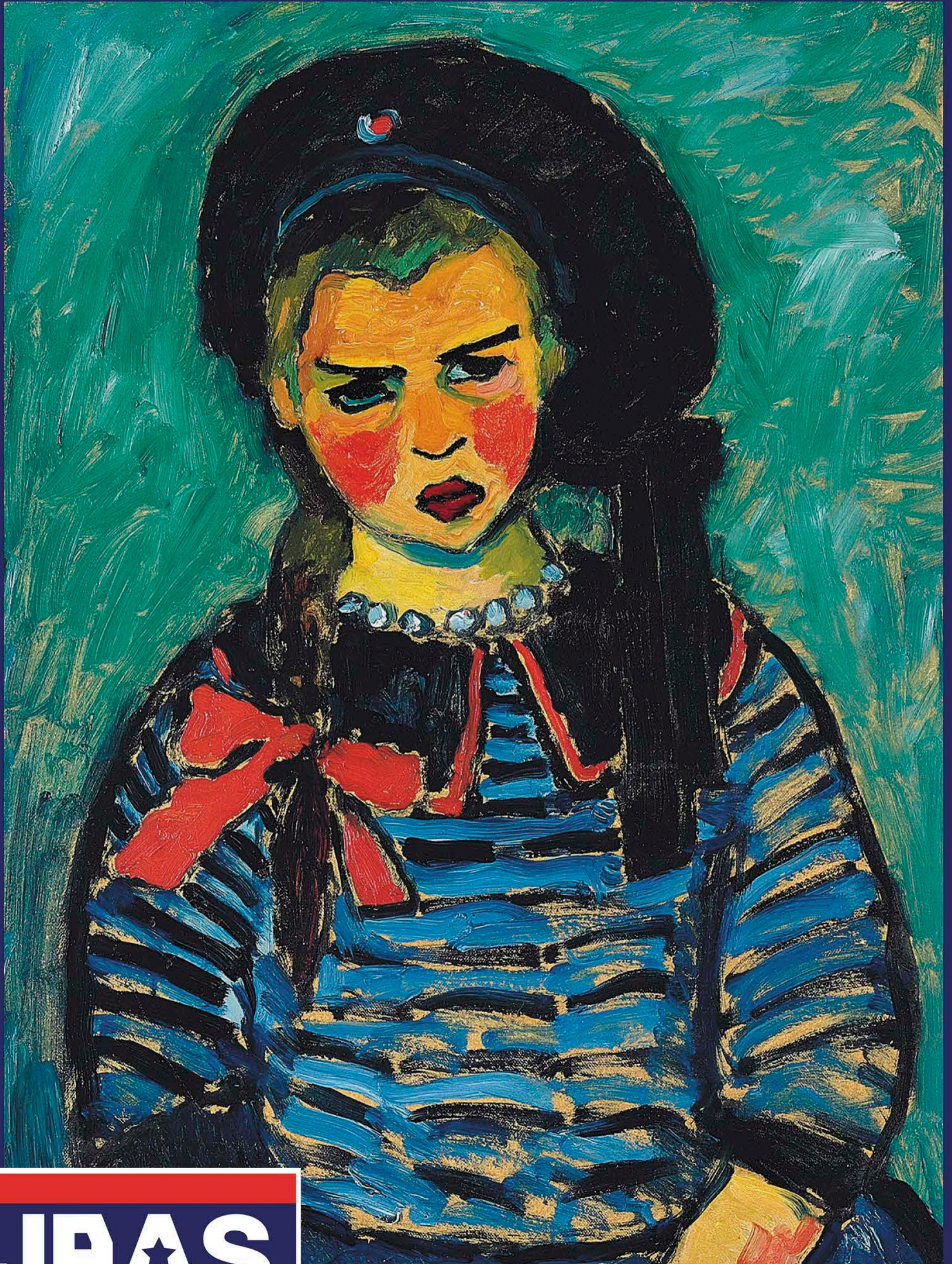


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On the Cover: *Girl with Red Ribbon*, Alexej von Jawlensky, 1911

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# Ordeal by Dinner: US Diplomats and Food Culture in the Russian Empire

**Svetlana Paulson**

Anthropologists argue that one of the main challenges that a person faces abroad is adjusting to local food and eating traditions. Patterns of food consumption and cuisine preferences in any locale are not merely based on the availability of certain foods. They are tied to many factors, including the existing political institutions and social structure. Basic awareness of food-related traditions in a foreign land may suffice for a tourist. However, those who stay and work abroad for extended periods of time have to navigate the nuances of life in a new place and figure out what factors are going to determine what they will eat, as well as when, where, and in whose company. For foreigners engaged in certain occupations – such as the diplomatic service - these considerations are especially important. While, like most people, diplomats plan their private meals at home, their jobs require that they regularly eat out at public events and official ceremonies. They accept invitations to formal breakfasts, lunches, and dinners, and in return, host similar receptions at the embassy. In order to perform these duties successfully, diplomats have to become keen observers of the local behaviors, rules, and taboos associated with food. They often record their observations in letters and diaries. Such records offer a great source of information for scholars studying cross-cultural interactions, as well as daily lives in the cities that host diplomatic missions.

For an historian of 19<sup>th</sup>-century St. Petersburg, diplomats' memoirs are indispensable. This city was founded as Russia's window to the West, and foreign "bakers and dress makers" poured into it. The lifestyle trends that they brought - including cuisine – intertwined with the local traditions and underwent changes that integrated them into the fabric of an autocratic empire. How did the members of the diplomatic corps adjust to St. Petersburg's unique cuisine and dining traditions? What observations did they make in the process, and how can these observations help historians develop a better understanding of life in the capital of an autocratic state? These questions are particularly interesting to examine in relation to American diplomats. They represented a republic. A monarchy was alien to them, and even for those who had worked in London, Berlin, or Madrid, an encounter with Romanovs' autocracy presented a challenge.

The first US Minister to St. Petersburg John Quincy Adams arrived in 1809. He had already traveled there as a teenager with Francis Dana's mission, and learned that the cost of living was high. Wishing to present himself well upon returning to Russia, Adams purchased European clothes. His black suit, however, did not impress the Russians, in whose eyes, a high-ranking official like a minister had to dazzle the world with a glorious uniform. Anything less undermined his status. Thus, Adams encountered the Russian obsession with social status and its outward manifestations. The origin of this phenomenon lay in the autocratic nature of the Russian state. The monarch's autocratic power rested upon strict hierarchy in society and its division into ranks. Subjects were supposed to fit like cogs into this mechanism, promoting discipline and obedience among them.<sup>1</sup> The Table of Ranks, introduced by Peter the Great in 1722, created fourteen grades in the military and civil service. The Table and subsequent legislation determined the social status and responsibilities of each grade, and even assigned uniform designs - specific down to the last button.

In his first weeks in St. Petersburg, Adams discovered that Russian obsession with rank made an impact on the diplomatic corps. Among its members, games for asserting one's status were played with an intensity that Adams had not seen before, and one of the main arenas for these battles was the dinner table. A minister newly arriving on Neva's shores was not expected to receive anyone in his residence until he was formally presented to the Tsar. Meanwhile, the heads of other missions invited him for a round of dinners at their homes, providing an opportunity to meet colleagues and form first impressions of the local traditions. It turned out that St. Petersburgers lived by the maxim "everybody eats, but only a true gentleman dines." High society, court members, and top bureaucrats asserted their belonging to the elite by cultivating a reputation as gourmards, and throwing dinner parties at astronomical cost. Some prominent aristocrats, in the quest for prestige, spent their entire fortunes on hosting dinners, and died in poverty. In order to maintain respect for their country and their own lofty status in Russian eyes, foreign diplomats also organized lavish lunch and dinner receptions. On Napoleon's orders, French ambassador Armand de Caulaincourt acquired a spectacular palace where he entertained hundreds of guests in the most opulent style. Through these displays, Napoleon was signaling that even though he was not royal by birthright, he knew how to present his monarchy internationally with proper grandeur. Adams reported that Caulaincourt's dinners were the talk of St. Petersburg. Guests were offered "a succession of seven or eight courses of rising novelty before the main one was reached. Different wines were served with every dish, the butlers whispering to each guest the year of the vintage and the name of the vineyard."<sup>2</sup> The French ambassador's annual budget was about a million roubles (\$ 300,000.00).<sup>3</sup> Other embassies could not compete with his regularly, but they made efforts to give occasional dinners that would rival the French.

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1. A.I. Herzen, *Sobranie sochinenii v 8 t.*, vol. 5 (Moscow: Pravda, 1975), p.479.

2. William Harlan Hale, "The Yankee and the Tsar," *The American Heritage* V.9, Issue 2 (Feb 1958). <https://www.americanheritage.com/yankee-and-czar#3>

3. Ibid.

Adams witnessed this when he attended dinner at the Austrian mission: “there was in the dinner, and everything connected with it, an effort of magnificence, seemingly to equal or outdo that of the French Ambassador.”<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, Minister Count St. Julien was not known for refined taste. His reception proved a tragicomical show of excess. The chasseurs waiting on him at the table wore “hussar dresses, bedizened with silver lace and tassels and sashes to such a degree that scarcely any part of the clothing under them was visible. Their mantles, bordered with furs, hung crosswise behind them from shoulder to shoulder.”<sup>5</sup> The need to keep all that fur out of the food and sauces hardly made anyone happy. Adams remarked how unsuitable the chasseurs’ uniforms were. The gourmet highlight was pineapple jelly, but guests could not properly enjoy it due to the “thundering” music: instead of a chamber orchestra St. Julien ordered one “fit only for the field.”<sup>6</sup>

Examples like this illustrated the saying that more was not always better. Most of the US diplomats, at any rate, could not organize lavish dinners. As compared to the \$ 300,000.00 available to the French ambassador, Adams earned \$ 9,000.00.<sup>7</sup> By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, US ambassadors made \$ 17,000.00. For the Americans, the best strategy was hosting small lunches and dinners with a tasteful, warm atmosphere and quality food. However, planning even these was not trivial. Premier historian of St. Petersburg culture Yuri Lotman observed that high society dinners in the Tsars’ capital could be likened to theater plays where every detail was scripted to embody aristocratic traditions and esthetical values. Such details - ranging from stylish china to the “verbal décor” of elegant conversation in French - were supposed to elevate dinner to an event with the holiday atmosphere in which Russia’s privileged few dwelt.<sup>8</sup> Which of these elements did Americans adopt for their mission’s needs? Which ones did they modify, and what remained completely alien to them?

Preparation for hosting lunches and dinners started with the acquisition of tableware. In the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Russian aristocracy mostly used silver. However, as the century progressed, porcelain became more popular. Owning Sèvres brand was considered particularly impressive, a fashion inspired by a magnificent Sèvres china service that graced the table of Catherine the Great.<sup>9</sup> When Adams dined at Chancellor Nikolai Rumyantsev’s, the host invited him to inspect his Sèvres vases, underscoring that he was a true VIP. Table décor on a par with this was outside of Adams’ price range. Some of his successors – those who were very wealthy – managed to rival the Russian splendor. In the 1830s, George Mifflin Dallas rented a beautiful Bobrinskii palace on Galernaia Street

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4. Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848*. Vol. II. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1874), p. 311.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 311-312.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 312.

7. Hale, <https://www.americanheritage.com/yankee-and-czar#3>

8. Yuri Lotman and Jelena Pogosjan, *High Society Dinners. Dining in Tsarist Russia* (Malta: Gutenberg Press, 2014), pp. 44-45.

9. Darra Goldstein, “Introduction to the English Edition,” in: Yuri Lotman and Jelena Pogosjan, *High Society Dinners*, p. 23.

where he entertained St. Petersburgers and members of the diplomatic corps in grand style.<sup>10</sup> Henry Middleton, one of the richest men in South Carolina, was also known in St. Petersburg for his elegant dinners.<sup>11</sup> The Ministers who could not supplement their salaries with vast personal funds came up with creative ways to make their table service and décor look admirable. One of the methods was to collect antique tableware and centerpieces. The individual items did not have to match perfectly: when artistically arranged on the table, they created a chic atmosphere. The wife of Ambassador Clifton Breckinridge, Katherine was an expert at finding antiques at reasonable costs. Native of St. Petersburg Mme. Gasser introduced her to a Russian who “made it her business to travel through the interior of Russia, collecting curious and interesting things.”<sup>12</sup> She brought them for sale to the capital. Breckinridge was especially proud of “a handbeaten dish and cup, dating about a hundred and twenty years back, some little silver vodka cups” purchased from this dealer.<sup>13</sup> The American also became a virtuoso incognito shopper, venturing to markets on Sadovaia Street – a home to hundreds of second-hand stores. “The Russians travel a great deal, especially to France, - explained Breckinridge. – They spend freely, often buying beyond their means, then they must sell... As antique hunters have not invaded this part of the world... these things are accessible to the purses of people of moderate means.”<sup>14</sup> The American purchased fine Saxon plates, as well as prestigious Gardner china produced in Russia in the reign of Catherine the Great. She wrote to her aunt that her protestant frugality helped her face the challenge of St. Petersburg.

Other diplomats avoided the expense of buying Sèvres or Meissen Saxon china by shipping their American tableware to St. Petersburg. The Russians and European diplomats, as it turned out, knew little about porcelain and glass made in the US. The wife of George Van Ness Lothrop, Almira, wrote that members of the diplomatic corps thought they were low-quality. German Ambassador General Schweinitz asked Lothrop what kind of glassware she was getting for the US mission. “When I told him the glass was made in Boston, he looked as surprised as if I had told him the moon. He seemed to think handsome glass could not be made in America.”<sup>15</sup> The German was so intrigued that he called on the Lothrop's to see the glass. The Americans “showed him some pieces which he admired very much. There were several people who also admired them and were... a little surprised to learn that they were made in America.”<sup>16</sup> Using US

10. Anastasiia Dolgosheva, “Naznachenie v SShA,” *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, March 6, 2007. [https://spbvedomosti.ru/news/career/naznachenie\\_v\\_nbsp\\_ssha060307/](https://spbvedomosti.ru/news/career/naznachenie_v_nbsp_ssha060307/)

11. Paul Bushkovitch, “Henry Middleton and the Decembrist Revolt,” *Zapiski russkoi akademicheskoi gruppy v S.Sh.A.* 38 (2013): 131-156. <https://digitallibrary.vassar.edu/islandora/object/vassar%3A77729>

12. Katherine Breckinridge, “Letter to Susan Lees, January 22, 1895,” in: Katherine Breckinridge's Papers, Private Collection, Magnolia, Arkansas, in the author's possession. Heretofore cited as K.B. and the date when the letter was written.

13. Ibid.

14. K.B., December 19, 1894.

15. Almira Lothrop, *The Court of Alexander III* (Philadelphia: The John Winston Company, 1910), p. 38.

16. Ibid, p. 45.

tableware was unique, attracted interest, and allowed the diplomats to advertise domestic products.

Wise menu selection was also important for the image of the mission. When the USA and Russia established diplomatic relations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the European continent was being conquered by French cuisine. The Revolution affected culinary arts in France. Chefs who used to work for the aristocracy lost their jobs. In an effort to attract new customers, some of them opened restaurants - not only for the wealthy, but for a broader, middle-class clientele: fine cuisine was supposed to become more mainstream. Others sought employment abroad, including Russia. While they opened several French restaurants in St. Petersburg, high French cuisine primarily produced an impact on the eating habits of the elite. French chefs found jobs with numerous aristocrats. Their exquisite culinary creations impressed the guests at lavish dinner parties. Hiring a French chef became a matter of prestige and a demonstration of lofty social status. High society members wishing to emphasize their sophistication had their chefs follow Parisian trends and serve the newest dishes popular there. Taking these local traditions into consideration, at their receptions in St. Petersburg diplomats also offered French cuisine.

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, US ministers and ambassadors consistently hired French chefs. Sometimes it was hard for the Americans to adjust to the earnest homage that St. Petersburgers paid to the Parisian novelties. In the beginning of the century, a trendy dish in Paris was consommé. It was very versatile, and could be served alone or as a clear soup with asparagus and eggs, crepes, vermicelli, rice, and quenelles. The St. Petersburg elite quickly adopted consommé, and even started circulating jokes about those who showed no interest in consommé or consommé-based soups. Even famous people, like poet Ivan Dmitriev who had moved to Moscow, became characters in these fables: “Vasilii L’vovich Pushkin loved bragging about his innovations. At an evening party in his house guests were served this type of bouillon – according to the tradition that he evidently brought from St. Petersburg or Paris. Dmitriev rejected the bouillon. Vasilii Lvovich runs up to him and says: “But Ivan Ivanovich, this is consommé!” “I know, - Dmitriev replies with some vexation, - that this is no chamomile. Nonetheless, I do not want to drink it.”<sup>17</sup> The fascination with consommé and soup among the St. Petersburg elite received a major boost after French chef Nicolas Appert, in 1804, invented the method of preserving food in hermetically sealed containers. Soups directly from Paris were shipped to the tables of the wealthy at enormous cost, and chefs working in the Russian capital came up with recipes imitating these soups.<sup>18</sup>

When the Adams came to St. Petersburg, they did not know such nuances. The first dinner reception that they gave in their residence turned into a soup drama. Among the attendees were members of the legation and such influential guests as Baroness Stroganova, the Bettancourts, and the Colombis. Louisa

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17. Petr Andreevich Vyazemskii, *Zapisnye knizhki* (Moscow: Zakharov, 2017), p. 54.

18. Lavrent’eva E.V., *Kul’tura zastol’ia XIX veka. Pushkinskaia pora*. (Moscow: Terra-Knizhnyi klub, 1999), p. 103.

Adams hired a French chef. Dinner started well, but “alas... the cook forgot the soup.”<sup>19</sup> Mrs. Adams had accompanied her husband on previous diplomatic missions, and in Berlin played the role of a hostess for both the US and British missions. The lack of soup would not have been a major catastrophe there, and she took it calmly in St. Petersburg. However, US Consul Levett Harris who had arrived in the Russian capital before the Adams, and was aware how serious the locals were about soup, was mortified. Being an impressionable person, he remained in a state of distress the entire evening: “we danced until one o’clock but his horreur at the oversight was not to be overcome.”<sup>20</sup> Mrs. Adams made sure that, at subsequent dinners, soup was served.

Sometimes French cuisine in St. Petersburg proved a disappointment for the American tastes. In 1819, celebrity chef Marie-Antoine Carême came to work in the capital of the Tsars. While he introduced the locals to his famous – and truly extraordinary – desserts, he also cooked main dishes.<sup>21</sup> He noticed that the Russians did not seem fond of minced meats in his recipes, and substituted them for whole pieces of meat: entrecôtes or escalopes thinned out by a mallet. Carême’s entrecôtes and escalopes became very popular. In the 1894, the Breckinridges hired a French chef to prepare dinner for a Thanksgiving celebration at the legation. The main dish was supposed to be turkey. When the Americans saw it, they were in disbelief. “Apparently someone had taken an axe or a club and pounded the breastbone until it was cashed flat. Then, with a sharp instrument it had been cut... into even squares. We each helped ourselves to a square of turkey... It did not taste any more like home than it looked,”<sup>22</sup> – complained Katherine Breckinridge. She learned that if she did not want French food, she had to give specific instructions.

Offering French cuisine to guests was prestigious, but eating it all the time could grow tiring. Diplomats admitted to craving more variety. Some embassies used this to their advantage. In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a great delicacy in St. Petersburg was macaroni. They were imported from Italy, and usually served with Parmesan cheese. Neapolitan macaroni were considered the best, and to the delight of high society and the diplomatic corps, the Neapolitan minister gave dinners featuring this dish. George Mifflin Dallas recalled dining at Minister Prince Butera’s in 1837: “The dinner... was exquisite, especially... Neapolitan macaroni and the glass of imperial Tokay.”<sup>23</sup> Members of the US legation often received questions about American cuisine. Since food preferences in the US notably differed from region to region, they felt it was difficult to name a representative

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19. Louisa Catherine Adams, *Diary and Autobiographical Writings of Louisa Catherine Adams. Vol. I, 1778-1815* (Cambridge: Massachusetts, 2013), p. 331.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Alain Drouard, “Chefs, Gourmets and Gourmands. French Cuisine in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries,” in: *Food: The History of Taste* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 263-264.

22. K.B., December 26, 1894.

23. George Mifflin Dallas, *Diary of George Mifflin Dallas While United States Minister to Russia 1837-1839, and to England 1856-1861* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1892), p. 40.



national dish. Almira Lothrop stated that it was oysters. She reasoned that this would be a clever reply: both Russians and Americans enjoyed them, and they were gourmet food. This, indeed, was perfect for impressing St. Petersburgers. People of means there had special love for this dish. On the Neva embankment near the Stock Exchange, stalls serving Ostend and Flensburg oysters never lacked customers. And every April gourmards awaited a printed announcement that the first shipment of fresh oysters had arrived at Libava Port, and would soon be at the capital's stores.<sup>24</sup> In the 1860s, Minister Cassius Marcellus Clay generously offered oysters at his receptions. Lothrop did not mention whether she did the same. However, she made an effort to follow the trend started by other embassies, and introduce the locals to some authentic American recipes. She decided on Boston codfish balls, albeit with some hesitation: cod could be perceived as low-brow.<sup>25</sup>

The logistics of preparing American cuisine proved nightmarish. Lothrop's French chef could not read English. She translated the recipe into German, and her local servants who spoke both German and French, translated it into French. Then the American could not procure cornmeal. The Russians, relying on flour or potato starch, did not know what it was. Lothrop enlisted the help of her local friend, Mme. Struve: "I said to Mme. de Struve I wish I could get some corn meal; and she replied it could be found here, and that she would send me some. The next day came a paper of cornstarch."<sup>26</sup> The butler dispatched to buy codfish returned with salted sturgeon.<sup>27</sup> Lothrop's premonition turned out right – St. Petersburgers could not fathom why a high ranking official like a Minister would want to serve his guests cod.

Tasty food and elegant tableware were necessary for a good dinner, but a dinner reception was much more than that. The conversation and the highly prescribed etiquette were supposed to provide the right atmosphere. In an autocratic state, where status was everything, a dinner for top-ranking officials and high society was a theater play where each detail was scripted and meant to emphasize that the attendees were no mere mortals, but the select few living privileged lives. According to tradition, the guests first assembled in the ante-room, formed pairs, and marched to the dining room. This dance-like procession allowed them to admire each other's outfits and glittering jewelry and feel that the evening was special.<sup>28</sup> The conversation at the table was supposed to flow in French, fluency in which was an indicator of belonging to the elite. For the US diplomats, table talk often was a serious challenge. Among those who served in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century in Petersburg, there were some excellent French speakers, such as the Adams, Henry Middleton, or Henry T. Allen. However, the majority either had limited skills, or did not know French at all. In such cases, Americans had to

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24. Albin Konechnyi, ed., *Chuvstvitel'nye puteshestviia i progulki po Nevskomu prospektu* (St. Petersburg: Petropolis, 2009), p. 165.

25. Lothrop, p. 173.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

27. *Ibid.*

28. Lavrent'eva, pp. 16-17.

come up with creative ways of communicating. Mrs. Lothrop recalled her dinner conversation with a Dutch diplomat. He addressed her in French, she responded in English, throwing in a few French words, and this proved enough to avoid awkward silence.<sup>29</sup> Clifton Breckinridge once sat next to a Russian who tried to speak to him in French and German.<sup>30</sup> She looked frustrated after receiving a shoulder shrug. The US Minister then smiled and mustered the courage to say one of the very few phrases he knew in French: “But madam, I find your company so pleasant.”<sup>31</sup> His neighbor was charmed. Minister Neill Smith Brown did not have such great social skills, and therefore he attended dinners accompanied by a translator, his secretary Edward Wright.<sup>32</sup>

St. Petersburg etiquette also required that all the guests’ needs should be attended to by servants. The host could offer some small assistance, but nothing beyond it – otherwise he risked debasing his social status, acting like hired help. Those who violated that social expectation were ridiculed. The consommé enthusiast V.L. Pushkin, for instance, gossiped that: “Yesterday our new comrade gave a dinner to which I was invited. There was only one woman, the hostess. A vulgar idiot, she did not sit at the table a single minute – she shut the windows herself to make sure that we did not get sunburned, she went to get us a bottle of warm champagne, and she poured it into our flutes herself.”<sup>33</sup> American attitudes regarding appropriate host behavior were less restrictive, and diplomats sometimes crossed the Russian lines of the acceptable. Minister Alfonso Taft was affluent. His dinners in the Russian capital in the 1880s showcased tasty food, elegant décor, and trained service personnel. Once, at his dinner given for the members of the diplomatic corps “a servant was directed to open a window but was unable to do so, when Judge Taft arose from the table, went over to the window and with his powerful arms easily raised it. When the visitors had gone, Mrs. Taft protested to her husband against his act of leaving the table to open the window, assuring him that in Russia such an act on the part of the host was by no means conventional. The Judge heard her out and replied, “Whenever I’m not permitted to open a window in my own house I want to go home.”<sup>34</sup>

Americans rightfully expected to find the strictest dinner protocol in St. Petersburg at the royal palace. Breakfasts, lunches, and dinners at the Tsars’ residences – from small receptions to the grand balls where hot meals were served to four thousand guests – by virtue of the monarch’s engagement, were state events. They functioned as a venue propagating the lofty status and power of an absolute monarch. The Hoffmeister Department, responsible for catering at these events, meticulously planned every detail, including guest lists, seating arrangements, the menu, and the purchase of provisions. Dinner organization and rules of

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29. Ibid, p. 31.

30. K.B., November 24, 1894.

31. Ibid.

32. Edward H. Wright, “Letters from St. Petersburg, 1850-1851,” in: *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society*, v. LXXX, No. 2, April 1964, p. 158.

33. Lavrent’eva, p. 24.

34. Alexander Leonard Lewis, *Life of Alfonso Taft of Cincinnati* (New York: Hawke Publishing Company, 1920), p. 185.

conduct for the attendees have been described by numerous memoirists. US diplomats did not add anything new in regard to how these rules were composed. However, while recording their own experiences at the imperial receptions, they mentioned not only the instances where protocol was followed, but also where it was disrupted. Such details are particularly valuable because they allow scholars to reconstruct a fuller, more realistic picture of life in the Romanov palaces. In addition, diplomats' memoirs shed light on what representatives of a republic felt when sharing a meal with an autocrat.

Katherine Breckinridge, for instance, pointed out an important nuance: before one could taste food at the Tsar's receptions, one could smell it. Guests at January ball dinners had to line up in the small throne room aired out after the dances. Cold, tired, and hungry, they smelled the aroma of enticing food emanating from the adjacent dining area. However, they had to wait a long time until the imperial family should pass by, and they were allowed in. As a wife of former US congressman, Breckinridge had attended dinner ceremonies in Washington, D.C. By comparison, the Romanovs' arrangements struck her as drawn out. Imposing a long wait on the guests was certainly meant to instill humility in the royal subjects and emphasize the special status of the autocrat. Republican Americans, in Breckinridge's words, felt "aggravated" rather than impressed: "as we stood there the waiters filed by carrying great silver dishes of steaming, hot, good things to eat. It required great self-restraint not to make a raid on them and capture something to satisfy the cravings of the inner man and to fortify our bodies."<sup>35</sup>

Once seated at their tables, the Romanovs' guests experienced a true culinary extravaganza. The Tsars' chefs were experts not only at French and Russian, but a variety of world cuisines. Throughout the nineteenth century, US diplomats consistently voiced amazement at the diversity and multitude of offerings on the palace menu. Pondering the autocrat's extraordinary display of opulence, Louisa Adams broke into verse:

The brain bewilder'd floats in gay delight  
The sight enchanted swims in rays of light...  
While tables groaning pall the varied taste  
Luxurious splendors of profusion waste.<sup>36</sup>

Next to their plates, the guests found menu cards - a new tradition that originated in nineteenth-century France and spread to other countries. Having become ubiquitous both at private dinners and government receptions, they quickly turned into collector items. Dinner guests saved them, lovingly inserted them into their diaries, or bound them into scrap books to be shared with friends, family, and acquaintances. Culture historians Yuri Lotman and Jelena Pogosjan explained the popularity of menu cards by the fact that, for the diners, they served as a great means of preserving their personal, as well as family history.<sup>37</sup> Often,

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35. Breckinridge Family Papers, 1752-1965, The Library of Congress Manuscript Division. Box 863, 1896-97, *Katherine Breckinridge to Lily*, March 5, 1896.

36. Louisa Adams, p. 307.

37. Yuri Lotman and Jelena Pogosjan, p. 12.

at dinner individuals first met their future spouses, friends, and even business partners. Showing up at dinner in a brand new uniform, they celebrated their rise on the career ladder. An invitation to the Tsar's reception, and an opportunity to try rare dishes from the palace menu were viewed as a matter of particular prestige, and an indicator of the person's high social status and sophistication. Since menu cards served as keepsakes for special moments, they were beautifully designed. The ones printed for the imperial catering service at the Semennikov Printing House on Bolshaia Morskaia, became prized possessions of art enthusiasts.

American diplomats in St. Petersburg saved menu cards – for similar reasons as the locals. Writing home about dinners at the Tsar's residences, and discussing the food that was served, they celebrated their success in a career that opened up opportunities to see the world. Americans also appreciated the artistic value of menu cards. The wife of US Minister William H. Hunt, Sarah, reported to her sister: "The menus were large sheets of paper with colored pictures painted in oils, very handsome, and the dinner was quite up to them."<sup>38</sup> Katherine Breckinridge enthused about these "works of art," describing them to her aunt in great detail, and mentioning her intention to frame them.<sup>39</sup>

Minister John Foster decided to send a menu from Gatchina Palace to his family in the US. His letter about this offers unique insights into the work of the Hoffmeister Department. As Foster reached to pick up his card from the table, he realized that it was already gone. He asked the US Legation's local groom who had friends among the palace staff to get him a replacement. It was procured, but the request had caused a commotion: "the head waiter was quite exercised."<sup>40</sup> It turned out that the cooks had not sent up two dishes listed on the menu: a failure for which many employees working at the Gatchina breakfast that day, or responsible for organizing it, could get fired. Meanwhile, employment at the Hoffmeister Department was highly prized: it was officially equal to military service, and came with the military ranks, perks, and medals. Foster's groom explained that the original menus had not disappeared by accident. The waiters quietly removed them as evidence that breakfast had not gone according to the plan. Foster's story revealed fascinating details on what was happening behind the scenes in the imperial catering, and how its employees covered up their mistakes to make it look like everything at the autocrat's receptions was perfect.

Among the foods that impressed them at the palace events Americans usually mentioned fish and fruit, especially in the winter. Before the advent of the railroad, fast shipment of fish and fruit to the Tsars' capital presented a major logistical problem, and was done by special courier service. For instance, the famous Romanovs' hot houses were located near Moscow, and couriers had to brave treacherous icy roads delivering perishable cargo to St. Petersburg. In

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38. Sarah Hunt, "Mrs. Hunt's Letters," in: *Thomas Hunt, The Life of William H. Hunt* (Brattleboro, VT: E.L. Hildreth & Co., 1922), p. 349.

39. Breckinridge Family Papers, 1752-1965, The Library of Congress Manuscript Division. Box 863, 1896-97, *Katherine Breckinridge to Susan Preston Lees*, June 9, 1896.

40. J. W. Foster, *Diplomatic Memoirs* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909), p. 204.

addition, they had to be on the lookout for thieves. In February of 1809, pears grown at the Tsar's hot houses were stolen. The police caught the thief, but by that time some of the pears – valued at an astronomical one hundred rubles each - had gone rotten.<sup>41</sup> The next year, in her diary Louisa Adams described having seen large pears cultivated in hot houses for a dinner *fête* in honor of Empress Maria Fedorovna. The American noted that since these were few in number, they were not offered to the guests, but reserved for French Ambassador Caulincourt.<sup>42</sup> Given the limited supply, at dinner Alexander I often gifted fruit to his favorite courtiers, as well as foreign ambassadors. With the construction of new hot houses near the capital and opening of rail communication later in the century, fruit became readily available to the Tsar's guests all year round, and at receptions both in St. Petersburg and Moscow. In 1883, Sarah Hunt reported that at Alexander III's coronation dinner which she attended, forty-five hundred guests were served strawberries "at that time selling in Petersburg at twenty-five dollars the pound."<sup>43</sup>

Americans also shared rare information about the consumption of alcohol at the royal receptions and festivities. A wide selection of alcoholic beverages was served generously, and there were the proverbial "rivers" of champagne that gained popularity after the Russian campaign in France during the Napoleonic Wars. The guests, however, preferred to imbibe in moderation: being seen drunk by the Tsar was risky. Alexander I and Nicholas I, in particular, did not tolerate drunks. The courtiers circulated a story of how Alexander I punished those who loved spirits. On his summer walks, the Tsar "passed by a house nearly every day where there was a parrot in a cage at the open window. It shouted incessantly: "Gavrishkin is here. Serve up the vodka!"<sup>44</sup> The Tsar took a notice and, when Gavrishkin came up for promotion in government service, he refused to sign the papers, destroying his career. Despite such risks, occasionally palace etiquette was violated. While enjoying a glass of champagne at Nicholas I's masqued ball, Secretary of the US Legation Edward Wright witnessed a curious incident. An officer flirted with a beautiful domino, but when she lifted her mask, he visibly panicked. He exclaimed that he had tried to seduce his own wife, and grabbed a bottle from a waiter, hoping to drown his imminent troubles in drink.<sup>45</sup> Wright's recollections revealed fascinating non-standard situations that occurred at the imperial dinners, and explained what sometimes caused the guests to ignore behavior expectations. Overall, American memoirs demonstrated that attending breakfasts and dinners with the autocrat required learning to notice and navigate numerous nuances. US diplomats rose to the challenge.

If dinners in the aristocratic circle were a lot of work for the US diplomats, eating in the company of the Russian merchant class was more informal, and more of an adventure than a challenge. Foreigners who penned memoirs about

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41. Lavrent'eva, p. 39.

42. Louisa Adams, p. 319.

43. Hunt, p. 348.

44. Vyazemskii, p. 72.

45. Wright, p. 157.

their life in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century St. Petersburg rarely mentioned much about merchant milieu. Memoirs of US diplomats such as Cassius M. Clay and Jeremiah Curtin contain invaluable details about their interactions with merchants. They served in Russia the 1860s, a time when the US was torn by the Civil War, the Russian Empire struggled through the Great Reforms. Both countries sought each other's support. To St. Petersburg US sent representatives capable of establishing close rapport with the Russians. Minister Clay charmed them with his enthusiasm for meeting people, and the legation secretary Curtin impressed them with fluency in their language. The two diplomats were invited to numerous banquets given by the Merchants' Association of St. Petersburg. Curtin noted that "the merchants just at this time were beginning to get power."<sup>46</sup> They did not wish to stay within the confines of the status into which the autocratic state pegged them. "They were proud of their wealth and influence and wanted to make it felt against the nobles,"<sup>47</sup> - noted the American. Inviting foreign diplomats to dinners was a statement that merchants had an opinion regarding foreign policy, and that they wanted it noticed. Décor at such dinners rivaled the splendor of aristocratic gatherings. At the merchant clubhouse on Nevskii "four hundred persons sat down at tables glittering with silver and glass and adorned with beautiful vases filled with flowers; an unusual decoration was ripe pineapples growing in ornamented boxes."<sup>48</sup> And at a fête at the villa of lumber merchant Vassili Petrovich Gromov the guests enjoyed magical ambiance created by thousands of lanterns arranged in various designs. In the center the lanterns formed "Russia-America 1863-1866." Food selection featured "the luxuries of many countries."<sup>49</sup>

The atmosphere at these gatherings differed from the one that governed dinners in aristocratic circles. It was far from a scripted theater play. Among the guests there were those who possessed impressive linguistic expertise. At several banquets, for example, Curtin spoke to a merchant who had translated Dante's *Inferno*. However, the guests were not using foreign language skills as a status symbol. Minister Clay's speeches were translated into Russian for everyone. Table-talk was flowing freely in Russian as well, and since Curtin could easily participate in it, he became the merchants' favorite. Both Clay and Curtin felt very comfortable at these dinners. Moscow merchants, wishing to rival St. Petersburgers, invited the Americans for a visit as well. The guests at merchant banquets showed their respect for Curtin by addressing him in a polite Russian manner as *Yeremei Davidovich*. The translator of Dante expressed this admiration without artifice, stating: "Yeremi Davidovich, you must marry, for we in Russia want to see a son begotten by you."<sup>50</sup>

US diplomats often ate out at special events or gave formal diplomatic dinners at the legation. However, they also ate their meals at home, in the private

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46. Joseph Shafer, ed., *Memoirs of Jeremiah Curtin* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1940), p. 94.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

49. *Ibid.* p. 112

50. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

family circle. For the needs of their household, Americans hired local help. Ordering provisions for the minister's meals and overseeing the meal service was the responsibility of the *maitre d'hôtel*. For this position US ministers usually hired men who had served for years in the families of St. Petersburg high society. On the one hand, having staff who understood local traditions was useful. On the other, dealing with St. Petersburg *maitres d'hôtel* and chefs was sometimes frustrating. These men prided themselves on knowing what the Russian nobility ate in private, and believed that if they did not offer the same menu staples – and on the same time schedule - to such dignitaries as US diplomats, that would be their professional failure. Persuading them to be more flexible and serve the foods that Americans preferred was no easy task. St. Petersburg's high society spent their evenings at balls, and various other gatherings, returning home around two or three A.M. When they woke up in the morning, they typically had French croissants and coffee for a light breakfast. A more solid second breakfast, served at one P.M., featured *kasha* porridge, *kalach* bread, and/or eggs. Families of US diplomats preferred to have just one, but hearty breakfast. Sarah Hunt reported having breakfast wars with her chef. Upon their arrival in St. Petersburg the Hunts rented an apartment from a Frenchman Monsieur Petit, who included food service in their contract. Mr. Petit turned out to be a well-known chef. However, this was a mixed blessing. He refused to recognize that Americans came from a different food culture, and insisted on providing them the same service as to his regular local customers. In her letters home Mrs. Hunt complained: "I have struggled to have an American breakfast served at nine, as we have at home, - no use! Mr. Petit could not understand it, and we have resumed the coffee and rolls served in our room just as we get up, with a hearty meal called breakfast at one o'clock."<sup>51</sup> The Breckinridges had better luck. At first, their cook served them *kasha*. One of the more popular varieties in St. Petersburg was buckwheat porridge. Breckinridge admitted that her family did not care for it. She managed to persuade the cook to substitute porridge for "grits from the United States and oatmeal from Scotland."<sup>52</sup>

When families craved a particular American food, diplomats' wives sometimes went grocery shopping in person instead of relying on *maitre d'hôtel*. In the beginning of the century, it was considered below a proper lady's station to do grocery shopping. However, as the century progressed, and it became more acceptable, Americans began to venture into the stores. While such items as cornmeal were hard to find in the Russian capital, a few familiar foods were available. Almira Lothrop, for example, bought brown sugar as a treat for her family. It was sold as a rare specialty product, and packaged as a gift item in a nice little round paper box and delicate tissue paper.<sup>53</sup> In order to provide their families a taste of home once in a while, the wives of US diplomats also personally cooked some of their favorite treats. Usually, they did it in the summertime during the

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51. Hunt, pp. 305-306.

52. K.B., January 10, 1895.

53. Lothrop, p. 47.

break in the diplomatic season, or on holidays. They made cakes and sweets, and mixed various punches.<sup>54</sup> In December, eggnog was especially popular. It brightened the spirits of those who were spending Christmas away from their homeland and their loved ones. One of the more curious eggnog stories was recorded by the US Naval Attaché Henry T. Allen. In 1894, when Breckinridge arrived in St. Petersburg as a new ambassador, Allen noted the first impression that he produced: “The Breckinridge family arrived and presented a very sorry sight... very plain people. They are not all qualified for the new role that they are about to assume...”<sup>55</sup> The legation staff doubted that their new boss possessed enough sophistication to make headway in St. Petersburg. However, the Breckinridges invited their staffers for Christmas eggnog that turned out to be “excellent.”<sup>56</sup> At a card party that followed the ambassador engaged in eggnog mixing again, and it became the highlight of the evening. Allen even wrote down the recipe: “...12 eggs, 1 pint of cream, 12 table spoons of whiskey, 6 of rum.”<sup>57</sup> The Breckinridges’ culinary skills gradually warmed up the legation personnel to them, causing it to concede that perhaps the ambassador possessed the abilities to make good progress in St. Petersburg’s diplomatic circles. Home cooking proved an effective tool in improving collegiality at the US mission.

During the summers in the second half of the nineteenth century, the ambassadors’ wives often found themselves at the stove. The expansion of railway networks near St. Petersburg in the 1870s caused a boom in *dacha* vacationing. US diplomats followed the trend and regularly rented *dachas* in Finland – within a manageable train ride from the Tsar’s capital. Relocating to a *dacha* for the summer presented a number of challenges. For instance, the chefs and cooks who worked for the US mission typically excluded summer from their contracts: they did not wish to be separated from their families in St. Petersburg for months. The Americans had to hire local Finns. Unfortunately, there was a shortage of real cooks at the Finnish vacation spots, and *dachniks* often ended up using the services of individuals who had only a remote idea about professional cooking. The Allens complained that their local chef was awful. The Breckinridges thought it better to find a “cheap cook” in St. Petersburg who would relocate. However, this man’s culinary creations proved subpar. Once he served such a questionable game dish that the ambassador lost his cool and, with interpretative help from his son and *maître d’hôtel*, demanded an explanation: “Andre [the *maître d’hôtel* – S.P.] faced the cook and asked him in Russian how he dared to serve His Excellency crow for dinner. The chef volubly disclaimed in Russian to Andre and declared never was anything further from his mind than to be guilty of such conduct... The conversation proceeded, waxing hot and confused as the chef vowed that such a thing as serving crow to His Excellency was as impossible to contemplate as it

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54. Henry T. Allen Papers Collection, The Library of Congress Manuscript Division. Box 1, 1893-95, *Dora Allen Diary, 1894*, September 22, 1894.

55. Henry T. Allen Papers Collection. The Library of Congress Manuscript Division. Box 1, 1893-95. *Henry T. Allen Diary, 1894*, October 15, 1894.

56. *Henry T. Allen Diary*, December 18, 1894.

57. *Ibid.*, December 26, 1894.



was to do.”<sup>58</sup>

Since *dacha* meal service could be uninspiring, diplomats’ wives learned to supplement family menus by making tasty American treats. Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Pierce brought cookbooks from the US, and in the summer eagerly exchanged recipes. They personally cooked lunches, as well as snacks for outdoor picnics, and baked for the children. In her diary, Dora Allen recorded both her success stories and mishaps: “In the afternoon made a cake which came to a sad end as the children put their fingers in it and then knocked it out of the window.”<sup>59</sup> In the 1890s, when these diary entrees were written, cooking remained unconventional for the wives of high-ranking officials in St. Petersburg. However, *dachas* were at a safe distance from high society’s eyes. This allowed the Americans to maintain diplomatic decorum while doing what was necessary in order to make their experience in a foreign land more palatable.

Memoirs, letters, and diaries penned by families of US diplomats in St. Petersburg reveal how representatives of a republic dealt with an immersion into food culture of the Russian autocratic state; how they survived the ordeal by this culture, and what observations about its nature and inner workings they made in the process. One of the more fascinating aspects of these memoirs is the evidence that they provide as to how much food was a part of a social-distinction signaling system. The autocracy expected everyone to fit the image of their rank. Top ranks, starting with the monarch, asserted their belonging to the elite through the extremely elaborate rituals of food consumption. Exquisite menu selections were framed with exclusive table décor and exclusive table-talk (accessible to those who could afford to be bi-or-trilingual). Americans offered great observations on how in St. Petersburg foreign cuisine got incorporated into this setting, and how, in the process, it acquired new meanings. While, in the nineteenth century, fine French cuisine was becoming more mainstream in its homeland, in Russia it served the opposite purposes. For US diplomats, who, by nature of their occupation, had to revolve in the top circles of Russian hierarchy, this emphasis on everything French was challenging to deal with. In order to communicate with their chefs, they often had to get their messages translated first into German, and then from German into French. Those Americans who did not speak fluent French, had to find creative ways to communicate with other guests at the dinner parties. Hosting dinners, with expensive European-made décor, presented a financial burden. US diplomats’ memoirs demonstrate that they managed to adapt to the situation successfully. They resorted to clever methods of saving money, including shopping at the inexpensive antiques dealers’ or shipping table service from the USA. They even advertised American products and food by shipping tableware from the USA, and serving American food at their dinner events. In the summer, US diplomats found respite from the aristocratic etiquette and French food at *dachas*. Away from the eyes of the Russian elite, they diversified their diet by personally cooking American dishes. The experiences of American diplomats confirm historians’ findings that *dacha* vacationing gained enormous popularity in

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58. K.B., June 16, 1895.

59. *Dora Allen Diary*, June 12, 1894.

the 19<sup>th</sup> century because it gave *dachniks* a temporary escape from many societal constrictions. While US memoir writers mostly described dealing with high society, they also provided unique glimpses into the lifestyles of the emerging Russian bourgeoisie that was beginning to change the political and economic landscape of the autocracy. Stories recorded by Americans demonstrate that the Russian “merchant class” was using banquets and dinner parties as a forum for voicing their political interests. The details that reminiscences of American diplomats add to the existing understanding of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian culinary scene and its broader social meanings, as well as the story of Russian-American cultural interactions, are invaluable, and deserve to be examined by historians in more detail.

### **About the Author**

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# Diplomatic Differences: Official U.S. Reactions to the Moscow Show Trials, 1936-1938

Jeanie Welch and Kelly Evans

During Joseph Stalin's Great Terror, the Soviet government conducted three show trials of leading government and Communist Party officials between 1936 and 1938. While much has been written about the Great Terror and the Moscow show trials, little attention has been paid to the contemporaneous reactions of the U. S. diplomats who were eyewitnesses to the proceedings. These diplomats were Ambassador Joseph E. Davies and Embassy secretaries Loy W. Henderson, George F. Kennan and Charles "Chip" Bohlen. Davies and the Embassy secretaries had differing views on the trials. Davies accepted the Soviet line that the defendants were guilty of these heinous crimes. In accepting the official Soviet line, Davies was in sharp contrast to the opinions of the Embassy secretaries who were very skeptical and disbelieving in the charges and confessions. Ultimately the Embassy secretaries were proven right with the revelations of Nikita Khrushchev's "secret speech" in 1956 and with the opening of the Soviet government and Communist Party archives after the fall of the Soviet Union. This paper discusses these differing views, based on official communiqués and on the later memoirs of these diplomats.

## Background of the Show Trials

By 1929 Joseph Stalin had won the power struggle against his rival Leon Trotsky for control of the Communist Party and of the Soviet government. Trotsky was in foreign exile, and Stalin had embarked on his five-year plans to collectivize agriculture and to rapidly increase industrialization. To further seal his power, Stalin instigated the Great Terror which was sparked by the assassination of Leningrad Party leader Sergei Kirov in 1934. Stalin ordered purges, imprisonments and executions on a massive scale throughout the 1930s. The huge extent and horrors of the Great Terror have been widely documented.<sup>1</sup>

A central feature of Stalin's rule was the three Moscow show trials of 1936-

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1. See J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 588.

1938. These were the trials of veteran Bolshevik revolutionaries, government officials and Party leaders who were tried along with lesser-known defendants. These accused men were forced to make public self-criticism (*samokritika*), were ousted from their posts and from the Party, arrested, imprisoned and interrogated by NKVD agents. They were forced to sign confessions to a host of crimes against the state and stood trial before the Military Tribunal of the Supreme Court under Article 58 (“Crimes Against the State”) of the Russian Penal Code, which had been revised after Kirov’s murder.<sup>2</sup> The defendants were accused of a number of crimes punishable by death, including counterrevolutionary plotting to restore capitalism, “wrecking” (sabotage), assassinations and assassination plots, and plotting to cede Soviet territory to foreign governments, often in collusion with an unnamed foreign power, usually Nazi Germany. The exiled Leon Trotsky was accused of being the mastermind behind these alleged crimes, and he and his exiled son Lev Sedov were subject to arrest if they ever returned to the Soviet Union. Trotsky incessantly denied the trials’ charges and criticized the Stalinist regime.<sup>3</sup>

The defendants gave self-incriminating confessions and testimony, implicating themselves and others, and all were convicted, either getting the death penalty or getting prison sentences from which none survived. The defendants had the right to ask for clemency which was never granted. The chief judge was Vasily V. Ulrikh; the chief prosecutor was Andrey Vyshinsky. Vyshinsky vilified the defendants, calling them “mad dogs,” among other derogatory names. During the three Moscow show trials, the Comintern (Communist (Third) International) sent a steady stream of propaganda directives to foreign communist parties, including the Communist Party USA, ordering them to support the trials, to vilify the defendants and to vilify Trotsky and his supporters.<sup>4</sup> The Communist Party USA blindly supported the Soviet government and the show trials.<sup>5</sup>

### The Diplomats

The United States established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1933, the last major power to do so. Thus, U. S. diplomats were in Moscow during the Great Terror and during the Moscow show trials. Four diplomats attended the three Moscow show trials and sent their eyewitness accounts in official communiqués to the Department of State. They also reported on these trials

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2. For the 1934 version of Article 58, see Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, *Penal Code*, Article 58, accessed June 7, 2022, <http://www.cyberussr.com/rus/uk-rsfsr.html>.

3. For an example, see Leon Trotsky, “An Interview with Leon Trotsky on the Recent Moscow Trial,” *Socialist Appeal*, October, 1936.

4. For an example, see Communist International, Executive Committee, “Letter from the ECCI Secretariat to Leaders of Selected Communist Parties Regarding Propaganda Work during the Trial of Radek, Byatakov and Others,” in William J. Chase, *Enemy at the Gates? The Comintern and the Stalinist Repressions, 1934-1939* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2010): 192-193.

5. For an example, see “Terrorist Plot by Trotskyists Bared in the USSR,” *Daily Worker*, August 15, 1936.

in their memoirs, published in later years. These diplomats had differing views as to the veracity of the charges and to the self-condemning confessions of the defendants.

Three Embassy secretaries attended these trials; they were all Russian speakers and experts on the Soviet Union. The first was Loy W. Henderson, the only U. S. diplomat to attend the first trial in 1936. He went on to a lengthy diplomatic career. George F. Kennan attended the second show trial in 1937 to serve as an interpreter for the newly arrived Ambassador Joseph E. Davies. He became the most prominent expert on Soviet affairs during the Cold War. Charles “Chip” Bohlen attended the third show trial in 1938 with Ambassador Davies. He became the U. S. ambassador to the Soviet Union in the 1950s. These secretaries all were skeptical of the trials’ charges and of the defendants’ self-condemning confessions and testimony. Future revelations would prove them to be correct.

U. S. Ambassador Joseph E. Davies was a successful attorney and a heavyweight in the Democratic Party. He had no diplomatic experience and was a purely political appointee by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. He arrived in Moscow in 1937, just before the second Moscow show trial. He was married to Marjorie Merriweather Post, the heiress to the Post cereal empire and one of the richest women in America. They entertained lavishly at the Embassy and had met several future trial defendants in social settings. As an ambassador Davies had to walk a fine line between fulfilling President Roosevelt’s optimism about positive relations with the Soviet government and the harsh realities of everyday dealings with the Soviets, a conundrum that was apparent from the earliest days of diplomatic recognition.<sup>6</sup> In his diplomatic communiqués, private writings and memoirs, Davies chose the easier path of believing the Soviet line and believing in most of the trials’ charges and in the defendants’ confessions. He only expressed dismay over the failings of the Soviet justice system to protect the rights of the accused.

### **The Three Moscow Show Trials**

The first Moscow show trial was held in March, 1936, with veteran Party activists Lev Kamenev and Grigori Zinoviev as the leading defendants among the 16 accused. They were accused of complicity in the assassination of Kirov and in plotting the assassinations of other Soviet leaders, including Stalin. All were convicted and condemned to death.<sup>7</sup>

The second Moscow show trial was held in February, 1937 with Georgi Pyatakov, former Assistant People’s Commissar for Heavy Industry, and the Polish-born journalist Karl Radek as the leading defendants among the 17 accused. Other prominent defendants were Grigori Y. Sokolnikov, former

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6. Robert Paul Browder, *Origins of Soviet-American Diplomacy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 218-219.

7. Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, People’s Commissariat of Justice, *The Case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre: Report of the Court Proceedings Heard before the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R., Moscow, August 19-24, 1936* (Moscow: The Commissariat, 1936).

Assistant People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs and former Commissar for the Timber Industry, and Leonid P. Serebryakov, a former prominent Party official and Assistant People's Commissar for Ways of Communication. They were accused of treason, espionage, and wrecking, among other charges. Radek was accused of being in contact with the exiled Trotsky. All were found guilty with a few defendants (including Radek) getting prison sentences from which none survived.<sup>8</sup>

The third Moscow show trial (the "Trial of the 21") was held in August, 1938 with Nikolai Bukharin and former NKVD head Gengrikh Yagoda as the leading defendants. Bukharin, a political theorist and influential editor, was considered to be the "big fish" among all of the trial defendants. Yagoda had been removed as head of the dreaded NKVD and had been replaced by Nikolai Yezhov who was later purged. Besides the usual charges of treason, espionage and wrecking, this trial had the added charge of medical murder against three prominent Soviet physicians. They were accused of being part of Yagoda's "poison laboratory" and of killing leading author Maxim Gorky, among others. A "special commission" of doctors was used by the Kremlin to back up these insane charges.<sup>9</sup>

### The Accounts of U. S. Diplomats

As the only U. S. diplomat to attend the first trial of Kamenev and Zinoviev, Loy W. Henderson's long, thorough communiqués are the only official U. S. eyewitness accounts and are valuable insights to the falseness of these trials. At the end of the trial Henderson wrote:

The few foreign journalists and diplomats permitted to attend the trial ... were puzzled and astonished at the manner in which the defendants denounced themselves and Trotsky and dragged in the names of other prominent Soviet leaders who in the past had been opposed to Stalin. ... The persons testified as they did with the hope of escaping torture, obtaining commutation of sentence or from fear that failure to testify would result in harm to members of their families and friends.<sup>10</sup>

Henderson further asserted that Zinoviev and Kamenev had not had conversations about assassinating Stalin, that Trotsky had not instructed them to commit terrorist acts and that the German police were not involved. He reported that the Embassy staff believed that the motives for the trial were to: prevent any expressions of dissatisfaction within the Party, send a message that the new constitution would not

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8. Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, People's Commissariat of Justice, *The Case of the Anti-Soviet Trotskyite Centre: Report of the Court Proceedings: Heard Before the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R., Moscow, January 23-30, 1937* (Moscow: The Commissariat, 1937), 17.

9. Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, People's Commissariat of Justice, *Report of the Court Proceedings in the Case of the Anti-Soviet "Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites"* (Moscow: The Commissariat, 1938).

10. Loy W. Henderson, "The Chargé in the Soviet Union (Henderson) to the Secretary of State (August 27, 1936)," in U. S. Department of State, Foreign Relations Branch, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Soviet Union, 1933-1939* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1952): 300-301; hereafter cited as *FRUS, 1933-1939*.

allow criticism of Stalin's policies, eliminate the influence of former leaders whom Stalin distrusted, blame any failings of the five-year plans on sabotage, destroy Trotsky's reputation and "increase the hatred of foreign Soviet sympathizers for German fascists." Henderson also remarked that "hundreds of active or former Party members are being arrested," a reference to the Great Terror as it spread across Moscow.<sup>11</sup>

In September, 1936 Henderson wrote another communiqué in which he stated that the trial was "beautifully staged," that Vyshinsky was like a "circus director putting a group of well-trained seals through a series of difficult acts" and that the defendants were expecting to receive the death penalty. Other Embassy secretaries would echo his opinion of Vyshinsky in their own accounts, often in much harsher terms. He concluded:

I have not been convinced from what I saw at the trial ... that the accused were really implicated in a specific plot to kill Stalin, Kirov, or other prominent Soviet leaders, that Trotski [*sic*] ever gave instructions to his adherents to assassinate Stalin, or that the German police had connections with any of the defendants.<sup>12</sup>

Henderson also noted that eleven of the defendants were "Jews of a pronouncedly eastern European type and that it is difficult to imagine that there should have been any relations between them and officials of the German Fascist Government." He again remarked on the fact that "hundreds of persons have been arrested on charges of disloyalty to Stalin and the Party and that some of them are being tried in secret" and that any Party members who had been friendly to Trotsky were "now terror-stricken." He also reported that Soviet officials who dealt with foreigners "are apparently afraid to come to any decisions without protracted consultations with their superiors," a portent of the purge of officials and diplomats in the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs in 1937.<sup>13</sup>

In his 1986 memoir *A Question of Trust*, Henderson reflected on the Moscow show trials and on the Army trial of 1937. In writing about the trials, he wrote the following about the defendants' confessions and testimony:

Their willingness to testify might have had a desire by their abject confessions and breast-beating to contribute to the unity of the Communist Party and to the strengthening of the Soviet State. They might have been persuaded that, by their allegations of wrongdoing and by their praise of Stalin, they would be promoting the cause of international communism to which most of them, despite their differences, had dedicated their lives.<sup>14</sup>

Henderson also wrote that, during the trial, he sat behind the prominent Soviet journalist Karl Radek when Radek's name was mentioned during the proceedings.

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11. *Ibid.*, 301.

12. Loy W. Henderson, "The Chargé in the Soviet Union (Henderson) to the Secretary of State [Extracts] September 1, 1936," in *FRUS, 1933-1939*, 302.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Loy W. Henderson, *A Question of Trust: The Origins of U.S.-Soviet Diplomatic Relations: The Memoirs of Loy W. Henderson*, ed. with an intro. by George W. Baer (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), 458-459.

Radek was visibly stunned by this. He would be a leading defendant in the second Moscow show trial in 1937.<sup>15</sup>

During the second Moscow show trial of Pyatkov and Radek, George F. Kennan served as the translator for the newly arrived Ambassador Joseph E. Davies. Kennan sent a long, skeptical memorandum after this trial. He called the lesser defendants a “somewhat motley company,” “lesser lights” and “evidently spies and stool pigeons.” His contempt extended to the fact that the leading defendants had “obviously never seen before in their lives or even heard of” some of their alleged co-conspirators. He also remarked upon the “magnificent verbal duel between Vyshinsky” and Radek and stated that Radek managed to convey that he had not committed some of the crimes but confessed to them “for ulterior motives.” Kennan was unimpressed with the evidence presented but opined that the “small fry among the defendants” may have been guilty of espionage. He did not think that the Trotskyists among the defendants were guilty of sabotage, and he was sure that the four leading defendants were not part of an organized “reserve center” to carry out any plots left undone by the defendants in the first Moscow show trial. He carefully analyzed Pyatkov’s and Radek’s testimony and found the allegations of an international conspiracy to be “based on a very shaky foundation.” Kennan cast doubts on the confessions but assumed that the defendants had been guilty of some things (e.g., working for Trotsky) “to warrant their humiliation and punishment.”<sup>16</sup>

In his 1967 *Memoirs* Kennan continued his criticism of the trial proceedings and of State Prosecutor Vyshinsky. He characterized the trial as Vyshinsky delivering “thundering brutalities” and some of the defendants delivering “cringing confessions.” Kennan had been unhappy about Davies’s appointment and about the way that Davies treated the Embassy staff. Regarding Davies he wrote: “He placed considerable credence in the fantastic charges leveled at these unfortunate men.”<sup>17</sup> In his later work *Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin*, he wrote that Stalin “launched a series of fantastic show trials and purges ... killing people by the thousands, destroying the greatest part of the existing leadership.”<sup>18</sup>

Ambassador Davies included his thoughts on the second Moscow show trial in his 1941 best-selling memoir *Mission to Moscow* which included communiqués, letters and diary entries from his time in the Soviet Union. In a lengthy, confidential memorandum to Secretary of State Cordell Hull that included the political background of the trial, Davies called the trial “terrific in human drama.”<sup>19</sup> He described the demeanor of the defendants and Radek’s sharp testimony, remarking that the defendants “seemed eager to heap accusation upon

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15. *Ibid.*, 440.

16. George F. Kennan, “Memorandum by the Second Secretary of Embassy in the Soviet Union (Kennan) (February 13, 1937),” *FRUS, 1933-1939*, 362-369.

17. George F. Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925-1950* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967): 83.

18. George F. Kennan, *Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin* (Boston: Little Brown, 1961), 294-295.

19. Joseph E. Davies, *Mission to Moscow: A Record of Confidential Dispatches to the State Department, Official and Personal Correspondence, Current Diary and Journal Entries* .... (London: Gallanz, 1941), 31-45.



accusation upon themselves.” In contrast to Kennan’s criticism of Vyshinsky, he called Vyshinsky’s summation a ”scholarly, able presentation.” However, he considered the trial to be “useless” in that everyone had already confessed and that the trial had been held for “propaganda purposes” to “warn potential plotters,” to “discredit Trotsky” and to show Germany and Japan as “foreign enemies.”<sup>20</sup>

By this time the Moscow show trials had been noticed at the highest level of the Department of State. Secretary of State Cordell Hull met with Soviet ambassador Troyanovsky in October, 1937, to discuss the trials. Hull echoed the skepticism of the Embassy secretaries and was puzzled why so many defendants “spontaneously rose up ... and fairly shouted their own personal guilt, when they knew it would mean death.” Troyanovsky replied that under “cross-questioning” their spirits had given way. Hull was still amazed that they confessed.<sup>21</sup>

Called “Chip” by his colleagues, Embassy Secretary Charles Bohlen attended the third Moscow show trial of Bukharin and Yagoda in 1938 with the exception of the first day. Ambassador Davies found another diplomat who spoke both English and Russian to interpret for him. All official dispatches on this trial were sent by Davies. In his memoir *Witness to History*, Bohlen called the trials “complete frame-ups.”<sup>22</sup> He described State Prosecutor Vyshinsky as:

One of the most unsavory products of Bolshevism. ... He had a gift of oratory, *particularly of invective* and was highly intelligent. Anyone who saw him, as I did, *mercilessly pursuing, mocking, and prodding defendants* will never forget the ferretlike quality of Vishinsky.” ... The trial had only the trappings of justice.<sup>23</sup> [Italics added.]

Bohlen also wrote that Chief Judge Ulrikh “looked like a sadistic pig.”<sup>24</sup> Bohlen was impressed by Bukharin’s composure during the trial and considered Yagoda’s testimony on the alleged murder of Gorky to be “unbelievable.” Bohlen also correctly predicted the downfall of Yezhov, Yagoda’s successor at the NKVD. He wrote: “We were sure that force, threats, and promises had been used to obtain confessions.” The guilty verdicts shocked him. Bohlen concluded that the trials were to absolve Stalin from the failures of the Five Year Plan. In his memoir he wrote that “Ambassador Davies was not noted for an acute understanding of the Soviet system” and that Bohlen “still blushed” at the official communiqués on this trial that had been sent under Ambassador Davies’s name.<sup>25</sup>

In contrast to the skepticism of the Embassy secretaries’ accounts of the two previous trials and their memoirs, Davies’s official communiqués were less judgmental and more matter of fact in recounting the proceedings. However, he

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20. Ibid.

21. Cordell Hull, “Memorandum by the Secretary of State of a Conversation with the Ambassador of the Soviet Union (Troyanovsky) [Excerpt] (October 26, 1937),” in *FRUS, 1933-1939*, 396-397.

22. Charles E. Bohlen, *Witness to History, 1929-1969* (New York: Norton, 1973): 54.

23. Ibid., 48-49.

24. Bohlen, *Witness to History, 1929-1926*, 51.

25. Ibid.

did criticize the Soviet justice system.<sup>26</sup> His “initial impressions” were that the proceedings were meant to show that the defendants had been “provided with constitutional protection,” that the defendants’ admissions of guilt and “alleged statements” “gave the impression of propaganda,” that opinions of the trial should be based on the defendants’ confessions and on the credibility of the proceedings. He opined that “if the charges are true, a terrible a sordid picture of human nature at its worst is being unfolded.”<sup>27</sup>

A follow-up communiqué stated that while the Soviet system of justice “affords practically no protection for the accused,” he believed in the guilty verdicts with the exception of the charges against the doctors. According to his account, while not all of the charges had been proven, there was “sufficient fact ... to prove that these defendants had plotted to overthrow the present Soviet Government.” On the other hand, he repeated that he found it hard to believe that “there does exist still a modern system of jurisprudence which affords so little defendants” and that “there does exist still a modern system of jurisprudence which affords so little protection to the accused and to the rights of the individual.”<sup>28</sup> He reported that he had been treated by one of the accused physicians, Dr. Dmitri D. Pletnev the Soviets’ leading cardiologist. He felt sorrow in seeing him and the other defendants whom he had previously met now on trial.<sup>29</sup>

As he was leaving his post in Moscow in 1938, Davies sent what he termed a “brief resumé” to the Department of State on conditions in the Soviet Union. In a section entitled “The Treason Trial,” Davies acknowledged that in this trial, “here was developed much that was untrue” and that “many crimes [were] alleged that were not proven,” but that “it was established beyond a reasonable doubt that “a very strong groups of men in the Government ... permitted themselves ... to either drift into or be placed in positions of unlawful and treasonable activities.” He concluded that Stalin and his cronies had acted “with great vigor and speed.”<sup>30</sup>

### Other Purge Trials

There were two other noteworthy, closed purge trials in 1937. They were the Army trial and the trial of top officials in the People’s Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. In that year Stalin reintroduced military political commissars, Party officials who had equal power with military commanders in decision making. This was considered to be a move to tighten his control of the military. This was also a signal that the armed forces were now under suspicion. The Army trial was in June with one marshal and seven high-ranking Army generals as defendants (the “Case of the Trotskyist Anti-Soviet Military Organization”). The charges included espionage, plotting a *coup d’etat* and plotting to restore capitalism. The defendants were heroes of the Civil War and held command posts in major military districts and in the reserves. Other high-ranking generals were among

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26. See Joseph E. Davies, “The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Davies) to the Secretary of State,” in *FRUS, 1933-1939*, 527-528, 532-533.

27. Davies, *Mission to Moscow*, 176-179.

28. Davies, *Mission to Moscow*, 178.

29. Davies, in *FRUS, 1933-1939*, 545-546.

30. Davies, *Mission to Moscow*, 177.

the judges. After a one-day trial, all were found guilty and summarily shot. The leading trial defendant was Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky, a hero of the Civil War and a leading spokesman on conditions in the Army. He is now considered to be one of the great military tacticians of the twentieth century.<sup>31</sup> This trial started an extensive purge of the officer corps of the Red Army and Navy, and, due to the lack of qualified officers caused by the purges, led to the poor showing of the Soviets in the early days of the winter war with Finland and in the early days of World War II.

Embassy Secretary Loy W. Henderson sent communiqués on the announcements of the demotions of these Army leaders, on the reintroduction of military political commissars in the Army and Navy and on the rumors of the arrests of Marshal Tukhachevsky and the generals.<sup>32</sup> After the defendants had been executed, Henderson sent a communiqué that began with disbelief in their guilt and attributed their collective downfall to their objections to “Stalin’s recent actions,” to Stalin’s distrust of “those about him and to possible discussions of a *coup d’état* that never developed into a plot.”<sup>33</sup>

In contrast to Henderson, Ambassador Davies believed the charges against the Army leaders. In *Mission to Moscow* he reported that: “It is generally accepted . . . that the accused must have been guilty of an offence which in the Soviet Union would merit the death penalty.” This was in light of the fact that other high-ranking general had been among their judges.<sup>34</sup> Davies recounted the rumors about the alleged Army *coup* in collusion with Nazi Germany, while Davies still believed in the existence of a conspiracy, he was also troubled by the lack of facts concerning the alleged plot and reported that the “general opinion is . . . that the charge is not justified.” However, Davies still held the belief that they were guilty, due to their frustration with the lack of support from industry, with being spied upon by the secret police and with the reintroduction of military political commissars. In light of these supposed threats, Davies concluded that Stalin “acted with great speed and ruthless severity.”<sup>35</sup>

To reinforce the Soviet line that they were surrounded by capitalist enemies, Stalin also waged an extensive anti-foreigner campaign in 1937 and 1938. Foreigners were portrayed as spies and saboteurs; Soviet citizens who had dealings with foreigners were arrested. This campaign culminated in the purge of the People’s Commissariat for Foreign Affairs and a closed trial of its high-ranking officials in December, 1937. Soviet diplomats in overseas posts were recalled and then disappeared.

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31. See Stephen J. Main, “The Arrest and ‘Testimony of Marshal of the Soviet Union M. N. Tukhachevsky (May-June, 1937),” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 10, no. 1 (1997): 151-195 and William J. McGranahan, “The Fall and Rise of Marshal Tukhachevsky,” *Parameters: Journal of the US Army War College* 7, no. 4 (1978): 62-72.

32. Loy W. Henderson, “The Chargé in the Soviet Union (Henderson) to the Secretary of State,” in *FRUS, 1933-1939*, 376-380.

33. Loy W. Henderson, “The Chargé in the Soviet Union (Henderson) to the Secretary of State (June 8, 1937),” in *FRUS, 1933-1939*, 383-385.

34. Davies, *Mission to Moscow*, 137.

35. *Ibid.*

### The Dewey Commission

A noteworthy, unofficial U. S. reaction to the Moscow show trials came in April, 1937, when the five-member Dewey Commission went to Mexico to interview the exiled Leon Trotsky concerning the charges against him in the show trials. Conducted in a courtroom-style setting proceedings and led by well-known philosopher and educator John Dewey, the Commission was formed by the American Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky and was a stage for Trotsky to continue to proclaim his innocence and to condemn Stalin. The Commission members issued reports and held meetings, in which they concluded that Trotsky and his son Lev Sedov were innocent of the trials' charges.<sup>36</sup> Their findings had no influence on the course of events but would later be proven to be correct.

### Aftermath

Joseph Stalin died in 1953, and by 1956 Nikita Khrushchev emerged as the new leader of the Soviet Union. The vindication of the Embassy secretaries' skepticism came when the truth about the falseness of the charges, confessions and testimony in the three Moscow show trials began to officially emerge in February, 1956. In a closed session of the 20<sup>th</sup> Communist Party Congress. Khrushchev, who had risen to prominence under Stalin during the 1930s, delivered a bombshell speech, entitled "On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences" before a stunned audience. In a complete reversal of twenty years of Soviet propaganda, and in spite of the fact that he had risen through the ranks thanks to Joseph Stalin, Khrushchev enumerated Stalin's crimes against Leninism, condemned the Great Terror, the decimation of Communist Party ranks, the Moscow show trials and the Army trial.<sup>37</sup>

The Department of State was wholly unprepared for this momentous turn of events and had to scramble to get an authentic copy of the speech. Departmental agencies held numerous meetings on interpreting the speech, on ascertaining Khrushchev's motives and on deciding how to exploit this denunciation of Stalin to the advantage of the U. S. during the Cold War. It issued policy papers on the possible meaning of the speech and its impact on the future of the Communist Party, on Soviet government leadership and on future Soviet domestic and foreign policy.<sup>38</sup>

Discussion of the speech reached the highest level of the U. S. government in

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36. John Dewey, *Not Guilty: Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Charges Made Against Leon Trotsky in the Moscow Trials* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1938).

37. Nikita S. Khrushchev, "Khrushchev's Secret Speech, On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences, Delivered at the Twentieth Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," Wilson Center, Digital Archive, accessed September 10, 2022, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115995>.

38. For an example, see U. S. Department of State, Office of Intelligence Research, "The Desecration of Stalin: Intelligence Brief Prepared by the Office of Intelligence Research," in U. S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Soviet Union and Eastern Mediterranean, 1955-1957* (Washington, DC: Govt. Print. Off., 1989):88-91; hereafter cited as *FRUS, 1955-1957*.

President Eisenhower's cabinet discussions with the National Security Council.<sup>39</sup> The Central Intelligence Agency and a U. S. congressional hearing also weighed in on the meaning and implications of this speech.<sup>40</sup> All of these efforts were filled with conjecture, and the Congressional hearing reeked of skepticism.<sup>41</sup> [Authors' note: All of the U. S. diplomats who had attended the Moscow show trials were alive at the time of Khrushchev's speech.]

The secret speech was finally published in the Soviet Union in 1989.<sup>42</sup> In 1991 the Soviet Union was dissolved, and revelations from the Communist Party archives documented their efforts to defame the trials' defendants and to defame Leon Trotsky and his supporters.

## Conclusion

Khrushchev's belated denunciations of Stalin, the Great Terror and the Moscow show trials, the subsequent destalinization in the Soviet Union and the subsequent revelations from the archives proved that the three Embassy secretaries were correct in their skepticism about the trials and in their beliefs in the falsity of the charges and in the falsity of the defendants' self-condemning confessions and testimony. Ambassador Davies's beliefs in the defendants' guilt were disproven. However, in his "brief resumé" of 1938, and, undoubtedly bearing the stamp of Bohlen and other Embassy personnel, an official communiqué sent under Davies's name summarized conditions in the Soviet Union at that time in a section entitled "The Terror." This section concluded with this hard-hitting assessment which condemned "Party Leaders" as follows:

They take the position that they must do this to save their cause, which is supreme and that the successful elevation of the condition of life of the proletariat will, in historical perspective, justify their present course. They wrap themselves about in the mantle of the angels to serve the devil. They are undoubtedly a strong, able group of ruthless idealists. But tyranny is tyranny, whatever be its government.<sup>43</sup>

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39. For an example, see S. Everett Gleason, "Memorandum of Discussion at the 280<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, March 22, 1956," in *FRUS, 1955-1957*, 72-75.

40. U. S. Central Intelligence Agency. Senior Research Staff on International Communism, *The Twentieth CPSU Congress in Retrospect: Its Principal Issues and Possible Effects on International Communism* (Washington, DC: The Agency, 1956).

41. U. S. Congress House. Committee on Un-American Activities. *The Great Pretense: A Symposium on Anti-Stalinism and the 20th Party Congress of the Soviet Communist Party* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1956).

42. Michael Dobbs, "Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech' Printed," *Washington Post* (April 6, 1989).

43. Joseph E. Davies, "The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Davies) to the Secretary of State (March 2, 1938)," *FRUS, 1933-1939*, 546.

The official communiqués and later memoirs of the three Embassy secretaries—Loy W. Henderson, George F. Kennan and Charles E. Bohlen—are examples of their professionalism and expertise in the face of heavy Soviet government surveillance and incessant propaganda. They saw the absurdity and injustice of these trials. On the other hand, Joseph E. Davies bought the Soviet line of the existence of antigovernment plots and the guilt of the defendants. While he had to walk the fine line of dealing with the Soviets during this difficult time, he persisted in believing the false charges and forced confessions. History would prove him to be wrong in both many of his assumptions and conclusions about these trials and defendants.

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# The Lobbying Problem in the Pages of the Soviet Press (1917-1990)

Fedor Sinitsyn<sup>1</sup> and Irina Vavochkina<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

The subject of the research of this article is the coverage of the problem of lobbying<sup>3</sup> in the Soviet periodical press. The research tasks set by the authors include identifying possible reasons for the interest in the topic of lobbying on the part of journalists, assessing the objectivity of the information spread about American lobbying and the form of presenting these materials. The article pays special attention to the ideological attitudes and the system of control over the Soviet media (and, accordingly, the state of mass consciousness in the USSR). The research is based on the archive of *Pravda* newspaper (the central printing

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3. Lobbying is a widespread multidimensional phenomenon that has long been rooted in the field of politics. As *Lobbying Manual* put it, lobbying is “the effort of groups and individuals to secure the enactment or defeat of legislation by their elected representatives” (See: *The Lobbying Manual: a Compliance Guide for Lawyers and Lobbyists*. William V. Luneburg, editor. (Chicago: American Bar Association, 1998), p. 5). In fact, lobbying activities are directed at various branches (representative, executive, judicial) and levels (federal, state, local) of government. Modern lobbying is characterized by the division of labor and specialization of lobbying activities, a developed organizational structure, the presence of professional staff and a variety of lobbying techniques.

organ of the Central Committee of the CPSU<sup>4</sup>) which had a huge readership.<sup>5</sup> The reflection of the problem of lobbying in the Soviet press has not previously received a proper assessment in the historiography. The relevance of the research presented in the article is also determined by the fact that the press is not yet being used productively enough as a historical source, whereas a frontal analysis of the content of periodicals allows us to reconstruct the general atmosphere in the country in various periods of history, recreate the mood of society, and determine the degree of influence exerted upon them by mass media.<sup>6</sup>

### “Tolkachi”<sup>7</sup> and “lobbyists”

What did they in the USSR know about lobbying? To answer this question we should start with mentioning the fact that the existence of lobbying, lobbying practices in the Soviet Union itself was denied. Russian scholars considered this phenomenon to be characteristic exclusively of Western “bourgeois democracy.”<sup>8</sup> The object of their research was primarily the United States of America, where laws regulating lobbying activities were adopted earlier than in other countries.<sup>9</sup>

Since the effectiveness of pressure groups is directly dependent on the economic power of the social forces whose interests they represent,<sup>10</sup> the lobbying efforts of business structures usually arouse the greatest interest of the expert community. Soviet scholars and journalists were no exception here.

The first Russian student of political science who paid attention to the problem of lobbying in the politics of a democratic society was Moses Ostrogosky.<sup>11</sup> His book *Democracy and The Organization of Political Parties* was first published

4. In 1912–1914 *Pravda* was the press organ of the Bolshevik faction of the RSDLP, in 1917–1918 – the Central Committee and the Petrograd Committee of the RSDLP, in 1918–1952 – the Central Committee and the Moscow Committee of the RKP(b) / VKP(b), in 1952–1991 – the Central Committee of the CPSU.

5. In 1931 the newspaper had circulation of 1.5 million copies (See: *Vsya Moskva. Adresnaya i spravochnaya kniga s prilozheniyem novogo plana g. Moskvy*. (Izdatel'stvo Mosoblispolkoma, 1931), p. 210). By 1977 its circulation was already 10.6 million copies (See: Rafail P. Ovsepyan, *Istoriya otechestvennoy zhurnalistiki (uchebnoye posobiye)* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta (MGU), 1999), ch. 6).

6. Yuliya B. Kostyakova, *O tipovoy i vidovoy prinadlezhnosti pressy i eye materialov*, Dokument. Arkhiv. Istoriya. Sovremennost: materialy V Mezhdunarodnoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii. (Yekaterinburg: Izdatel'stvo Ural'skogo universiteta, 2014), pp. 247, 250.

7. “Tolkachi” – in Russian is a plural from the noun “tolkach.”

8. Avgust A. Mishin, *Gosudarstvennoye pravo SShA* (Moscow: Nauka, 1976); Nikolay G. Zyablyuk, *SShA: lobbizm i politika* (Moscow: Mysl', 1976); Aleksey P. Lyubimov, *Lobbizm v Rossii* (Moscow: Izdaniye Gosudarstvennoy Dumy, 2005), p. 19.

9. See: The Constitution of Georgia (1877), Art. 1, § 2.5; Acts and Resolves Passed by the General Court of Massachusetts (1890), Ch. 456.

10. Avgust A. Mishin, Op. cit., p. 57.

11. Ostrogorsky, Moisei Yakovlevich (1854–1921) – Russian lawyer, historian and political scientist, was one of the founders of political sociology. Deputy of the First State Duma (1906). After the revolution of 1917, he taught in Petrograd. For more information, see: V.G. Grafsky, *OSTROGORSKY, The Great Russian Encyclopedia*. Electronic version (2016); <https://bigenc.ru/law/text/2682462> Date of application: 11.12.2022.



in French (1898)<sup>12</sup> and English (1902)<sup>13</sup> languages. The first volume “England” was translated into Russian in 1927, and the second one “The United States of America” appeared in 1930.<sup>14</sup>

Ostrogorsky stated that “corruption” was widespread in United States politics – he included party bossism, election fraud, and lobbying in this concept. The author mainly concentrated on the negative aspects of lobbying,<sup>15</sup> describing it as one of the tools of the ruling minority to achieve its goals.

At the same time, in the late 1920s–1930s, the pioneer articles describing American lobbyists appeared in the central Soviet newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestia*.<sup>16</sup> Let us turn to the first of them – an article written by Mikhail Tanin<sup>17</sup> and published in *Pravda* on January 6, 1928. The journalist writes: “The opening of a new session of the American Congress (parliament) served as a signal to mobilize all the forces of big capital in order to push through all the necessary bills in the “people’s representative body.” The latest American newspapers report that “lobbyists” or “talkachi” have gathered in Washington, representing the interests

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12. Regarding that edition of Ostrogorsky’s monograph, see: Andrey N. Medushevsky, *Problemy sovremennoy demokratiï*, n: Moisei Ya. Ostrogorsky, *Demokratiya i politicheskiye partii* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1997), pp. 9, 39.

13. Moisei Iakovlevich Ostrogorskii, *Democracy and the organization of political parties*, Vol. 1–2 (New York, London: Macmillan, 1902).

14. As the author of the preface to the Soviet edition E.B. Pashukanis put it, Ostrogorsky’s monograph “reveals the real mechanism of the parliamentary state” (See: Moisei Ya. Ostrogorsky, *Demokratiya i politicheskiye partii* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Kommunisticheskoy akademii, 1927), vol. 1, p. 3). It was published under the stamp of the Communist Academy (Section of Law and State) and was admitted to as a textbook for higher educational institutions by the Scientific and Political Section of the State Academic Council. Translated from the French edition of 1912: *La Démocratie et les partis politiques*, par M. Ostrogorski. *Nouvelle édition, refondue*. The chronological framework of the second volume includes the period of U.S. history from the 18th century to 1911.

15. In the Russian translation of 1927–1930 for the terms “lobby” and “lobbyist” was chosen the Latin (in the first case) and double spelling (in the second): “lobby” and “lobby’сты” (See: Moisei Ya. Ostrogorsky, *Demokratiya i politicheskiye partii* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Kommunisticheskoy akademii, 1930), vol. 2, pp. 66, 67, 245, etc.), which indicates that these terms have not yet been assimilated by the Russian language.

16. Mikhail Tanin, *Nastuplenie amerikanskoï burzhuazii na vnurenem fronte*, *Pravda*, 1928, № 5, p. 1; I. Trainin, *Izbitatel'naya korruptsiya – sostavnaya chast kapitalisticheskoy politiki*, *Izvestia*, 1937, No. 245, p. 3. The title of the 1937 article is especially interesting (in English it sounds like: *Electoral corruption is an integral part of capitalist politics*), since it directly echoes Ostrogorsky’s monograph.

17. Tanin (Tanin–Tsurikov) Mikhail Alexandrovich (1897–1937). Soviet journalist, head of the press Department of the Moscow Committee of VKP (b) (See: State Archive of the Russian Federation – hereinafter GARF, fund 10035, inventory 1, case P–65185, p. 6), Deputy executive editor of the newspaper “Za kolektivizatsiy” (See: *Vsya Moskva. Adresnaya i spravochnaya kniga s prilozheniyem novogo plana g. Moskvy*. Moscow: Izdatelstvo Mosoblispolkoma, 1931. p. 207), author of several monographs: *Amerika na mirovoy arene*. (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoye izdatelstvo, 1927); *10 let vneshney politiki SSSR (1917–1927)* (Moscow–Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoye izdatelstvo, 1927), etc. He was published in the magazine *Bolshevik*, *Pravda* and other central periodicals. Tanin was executed in 1937 (GARF, fund 10035, inventory 1, case P–65185, p. 95). Rehabilitated in 1956 (GARF, fund 10035, inventory 1, case P–65185, p. 158–159).

of various business groups for the appropriate molding of the “people’s tribunes,” and that a dense network of various powerful influences is woven in the back rooms.”<sup>18</sup> Such an accusatory and slightly ironic tone will be characteristic of most of *Pravda*’s materials dealing with the problem of lobbying in US political life.

The terminology used by Soviet journalists to describe the phenomenon of lobbying is very indicative. As can be seen from Tanin’s article, the term “*tolkach*” was used as a synonym for “lobbyist.” In Ozhegov’s dictionary of the Russian language, we find the following definition: “*tolkach*” in a figurative meaning – a person who is tasked with pushing, speeding up the business needed at the moment (colloquial disapproving).<sup>19</sup> Soviet international journalists chose the term “*tolkach*” (as an equivalent, not a translation) because it was widely used in the USSR in relation to the actual Soviet realities. “*Tolkach*” was used as the closest analogue that could be found in Soviet realities for American “lobbyist.”

Interestingly, Soviet newspapers could call a party member, a deputy, and even a worker or collective farmer a “*tolkach*” in a certain situation. But the same word was also used to brand corrupt suppliers:

In 1919 *Pravda* under the heading “*Party life*” wrote: “The only way to work in the countryside is to use Soviet institutions. It is wrong to say that we (the Department of Rural Affairs of the Central Committee of the RCP (b) – *F. S., I. V.*) are trying to subordinate Soviet institutions to the party organization. County and city organizers cannot do Soviet work for the Soviets. Their duty is to be the *tolkachi* and supervisors of these institutions.”<sup>20</sup>

*Pravda* (1921) in the editorial: “To oblige all bodies to provide transport and means for emergency transportation, to allocate for this a special cadre of workers’ commissars to monitor the progress of work and to assist as a ‘*tolkach*’.”<sup>21</sup>

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18. Mikhail Tanin, *Nastuplenie amerikanskoj burzhuzii...*

19. *Slovar russkogo yazyka* / Sost. Sergei I. Ozhegov (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoye izdatelstvo inostrannykh i natsionalnykh slovarey, 1949). Work on the dictionary began in the 1930s, so the meaning of the term we are interested in can be considered a reference for the first half of the 20th century. Cf.: *Tolkovyj slovar russkogo yazyka*. Pod red. D.N. Ushakova (Moscow, Gosudarstvennoye izdatelstvo inostrannykh i natsionalnykh slovarey, 1940), vol. 4: “*Tolkach* ... 4. in the figurative meaning a person pushing forward some business, contributing to its promotion, development (rhetor.). A village teacher is a *tolkach* of education in the village. || The person who is assigned to take care of speeding up the solution of some business, question (colloquial).” We should also note that in the dictionary by V.I. Dal there is no similar figurative meaning of the word “*tolkach*” (See: *Tolkoviy slovar zhivogo velikoruskogo yazyka Vladimira Dalya* (St. Petersburg–Moscow: Izdaniy T-va M.O. Volf, 1909), vol. 4.

20. *Vserossiyskoye soveshchaniye po rabote v derevne. Zasedaniye tretye. Rech Tovarishcha Nevskogo (Prodolzheniye)*, *Pravda*, 1919, № 266, p. 2.

21. Iosif Vareykis, *Chto mogut sdelat mesta v organizatsii pomoshchi krestianam. postradavshim ot neurozhaya*, *Pravda*, 1921, № 167, p. 1.

Feuilleton,<sup>22</sup> published in *Pravda* in 1949: “And in general Andrey Fomich was an outstanding “talkach.” He really loved his “profession,” and being an inventive person, he elevated talkachestvo to a multi-complex skill... And not out of malice, but solely out of his ignorance, wandering around the country, he broke sales schedules as much as he could, drove casting cars, parts and machines intended for other factories to his factory... And how the other talkachi envied him, how they tried to adopt his sophisticated skill!... Engineer of the non-ferrous rolled products plant... delivered us a list of wives and daughters-in-law who are already talkachi. The head of the sales department K.M. Sibiryakov has a charming daughter-in-law, E.I. Makarova. The qualities of non-ferrous metals, the rolling technique and even the rules for loading factory products are as dark to her as Sanskrit writings. However, the shipbuilding industry enterprises authorized her to “conduct technical acceptance of non-ferrous rolled products and control the shipment of products.” E.I. Makarova has 800 rubles a month for her invisible labors.”<sup>23</sup>

*Izvestia* (1967) under the heading “*Letters of deputies*”: “I remember an employee S.A. Jacobi addressed me. She said that she had repeatedly asked to renovate her apartment... Then I came to the city administration myself, told them what conditions S.A. Jacobi lives in. They promised to deliver iron and beams. For more than a month I kept this case under surveillance: I called on the phone, inquired about business in the office. Eventually the apartment was renovated. I was pleased, but at the same time I wondered if I was doing the right thing by becoming a “talkach,” sometimes replacing employees who, according to their position, should do this or that job?”<sup>24</sup>

Based on newspaper publications, Soviet “talkachi” could be divided into two groups: talkach – “a good organizer, controller,” and talkach – “corrupted person.”

In the post-Soviet period, many studies based on Soviet material have appeared on formal and informal institutions for coordinating interests. Scientific papers

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22. A few words need to be said about this type of newspaper publication. In the second half of the 20th century the feuilleton genre became an important part of the Soviet media and good feuilletonists were in great demand. The main task of such a publication is to reflect in a satirical form negative facts, phenomena, and processes of public life. Here is what Sergey Dovlatov, ingenious author of the Soviet era, writes about his work in the newspaper “*Sovetskaya Estoniya*” in the 1970s: “The editor had said to me as early as April, “If you write satirical sketches, we’ll give you an apartment”. It’s not easy to do. Every fact has to be carefully checked. The targets of critical attack dodge and take cover. Our city is small, people are in the public eye. To make it short, there were two attempts to beat me up. Once it was the teamsters of a freight station (successful). The second time a currency speculator named Chigir hit me with a borsalino hat and promptly received a knock-out punch in return. My articles always provoked numerous responses from readers. Sometimes in threatening form. This even pleased me – hate signifies that the newspaper is still capable of exciting passions”. (See: Sergei Dovlatov, *The Compromise* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1983), p. 12.)

23. Aleksey Kolosov, *Tolkachi*, Pravda, 1949, № 221, p. 2.

24. V. Trukhanov, deputat Vasileostrovskogo rayonnogo Soveta *Avtorit et Soveta*, *Izvestiya*, 1967, № 13, p. 3.

devoted to political, departmental, sectoral, and regional lobbying in the USSR<sup>25</sup> have been published and are being published. In our opinion, *tolkachestvo* as a type of lobbying at the local level is an interesting and little-studied phenomenon. On the one hand, it was an informal, but definitely effective and widespread way of fighting for resources, on the other – a phenomenon widely discussed in the central Soviet press in a negative way: in editorial materials<sup>26</sup>, in speeches and articles by top Soviet leaders (for example, Yuri Andropov,<sup>27</sup> Nikolai Bulganin,<sup>28</sup> Dmitry Polyanskiy<sup>29</sup>), as well as letters from newspaper readers,<sup>30</sup> in which the *tolkachi* were accused of bribery, labor disorganization, and parasitism. The objects of pressure for Soviet *tolkachi* were e.g. executive branch authorities of various levels (executive committees, regional committees, even *glavki* and People's commissariats/ministries).<sup>31</sup> Legally, the concept of “*tolkach*” was not fixed, nevertheless, this institution continued to exist throughout the history of the USSR. Soviet foreign affairs columnists used the analogy of “*lobbyist – tolkach*,” making the phenomenon of lobbying more accessible to the reader.

In the final sense, the goal of lobbying is the destruction of a competitor. A game without rules leads exactly to this. In the USSR, such a phenomenon was prosecuted by the court<sup>32</sup> and condemned at the official level as corruption. The United States went the other way: in 1946, the federal law “On the Regulation

25. Vladimir A. Lepekhin, *Obshchestvenno-politicheskiye protsessy v srede predprinimateley* (Moscow: Akademicheskii Tsentr “Rossiyskiye issledovaniya”, 1994); Sergey P. Peregodov, Nataliya Yu. Lapina, Irina S. Semenenko, *Gruppy interesov i Rossiyskoye gosudarstvo* (Moscow: Editorial URSS, 1999), part II; Vladimir A. Lepekhin, *Lobbizm v Rossii i problemy ego pravovogo regulirovaniya*, in *Transformatsiya rossiyskikh regionalnykh elit v sravnitel'noy perspektive: Materialy mezhdunarodnogo seminaru* (Tver, 20–22 fevralya 1998 g.) (Moscow: Izdatelskiy tsentr nauchnykh i uchebnykh programm 1999), ed. by Andrey Melvil, p. 57–85; Aleksey V. Zakharchenko, *Ekonomicheskaya deyatel'nost' NKVD–MVD SSSR v Povolzh'ye v 1937–1953 gg.: istoricheskoye issledovaniye: Dis. ... dokt. ist. Nauk* (Moscow, 2014); Idem, *Vedomstvennyy “lobbizm” v sovetskoy ekonomike: ministerstva – pravitel'stvo – Gosplan. 1945–1953 gg. (na primere MVD SSSR)*, *Izvestiya Samarskogo nauchnogo tsentra Rossiyskoy akademii nauk*, vol. 18, № 6, 2016, p. 83–87, etc.

26. According to our calculations, in 1917–1990 *Pravda* has published about 500 such materials, e.g.: “*Tolkachi*” *dezorganizuyut rabotu*, *Pravda*, 1940, № 65, p. 2; N. Vorobyev, V. Zhuravskiy, *Felyeton: Treugolka i shlyapy*, *Pravda*, 1963, № 136, p. 4; Yu. Apenchenko, *Zlo vzyatki*, *Pravda*, 1971, № 29, p. 6; *Interesy gosudarstva – prevyshe vsego*, *Pravda*, 1974, № 240, p. 1

27. Yuri Andropov, *O partiynom kontrole na proizvodstve*, *Pravda*, 1951, № 102, p. 2

28. *Prodolzheniye doklada tovarishcha N.A. Bulganina*, *Pravda*, 1955, № 198, p. 4.

29. *Rech tovarishcha D.S. Polyanskogo (Predsedatel Soveta Ministrov RSFSR)*, *Pravda*, 1961, № 298, p. 2.

30. *Pravda*, 1948, № 109, p. 3; *Pravda*, 1951, № 30, p. 1, 2; *Pravda*, 1958, № 261, p. 6; *Pravda*, 1972, № 56, p. 3, etc.

31. A. Sharov, *Snova tolkachi*, *Pravda*, 1938, № 338, p. 3; V. Parfenov, N. Mitrofanov, *Glavk i zavody*, *Pravda*, 1969, № 358, p. 2; Idem, *Rychagi upravleniya*, *Pravda*, 1969, № 359, p. 2, etc.

32. “*Tolkachi*”, *Pravda*, 1939, № 86, p. 6; L. Ognev, “*Zagotovitel*”, *Pravda*, 1941, № 134, p. 6; Vorobyev, Zhuravskiy, *Op. cit.*

of Lobbying<sup>33</sup> was adopted, which differentiated (at least on paper) the concepts of “lobbying” and “corruption” and gave a legal definition of lobbying activity.<sup>34</sup> Excluded from the scope of the law were any persons who appeared before congressional committees in order to simply speak (without payment) in support of or against any law; any officials performing their duties; any media owners covering the current work of Congress. In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court significantly narrowed the scope of application of the 1946 law: the circle of persons falling under the jurisdiction of the law now included only persons engaged in fund-raising in order to exert pressure on legislators.<sup>35</sup> In 1995, State regulation was extended to contacts of pressure groups with executive officers, determining the presence of such contacts even with the President and vice-president of the country.<sup>36</sup>

But back to the Soviet press. Gradually, the lexical vagueness was overcome: since the 1950s, following the special and scientific literature,<sup>37</sup> the broad press has adopted the term “lobbyist” in relation to special interest agents acting in the US Congress.<sup>38</sup> From 1917 to the end of 1990 in the newspaper *Pravda* the terms “lobbyist” and “tolkach” (meaning “agent of special interests”) are found about 170 times in publications of various genres: informational (notes, reports); analytical (articles, reviews, comments); literary (feuilletons, humorous stories, poems). In itself, the problem of lobbying in these texts has almost never been the main one. Mentions of lobbying activities were more often an illustration, an additional touch to the main topics, whether it was the actions of the United States on the world stage, the presidential election campaign or the anti-labor policy of the fresh US administration.

The statements of *Pravda* journalists about lobbyists were based on various sources: materials from the American media, official documents, interviews with trade unionists, mainstream, and non-mainstream US politicians, personal observations. As a result, a fairly-detailed picture of lobbying was created.

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33. Prior to that, a number of federal laws restricted the activities of only a few pressure groups: in 1935, the Public Utility Holding Company Act was adopted, which included a clause on the registration of lobbyists of all electric companies; in 1936, Congress adopted U.S. Maritime Commission General Order No. 9, which contained a rule on the registration of lobbyists of shipbuilding and shipping companies; In 1938, the Foreign Agents Registration Act was adopted.

34. *Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946. Title III – Regulation of Lobbying Act. Sec. 307 (a, b)*, Public Law 601–79th Congress chapter 753–2d sess. Washington, 1946.

35. *United States vs. Harris*, 347 U.S. 612 (1954).

36. *Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995* (P.L. 104–65).

37. The terms “lobby” and “lobbyist” have been used in Soviet dictionaries of foreign words since at least 1949. (See: *Slovar inostrannykh slov*. Ed. by Ivan V. Lekhin and prof. Fedor I. Petrov, (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoye izdatel'stvo inostrannykh i natsional'nykh slovarey, 1949) 3rd revised and expanded edition, p. 374). See also: Avgust A. Mishin, *Tsentralnyye organy vlasti SShA – orudiye diktatury monopolisticheskogo kapitala* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo yuridicheskoy literatury, 1954), pp. 155–156.

38. But still in 1960s as well as in the 1970s there “relapses” occurred. See: Sergei Vishnevskiy, *Zdravyy smysl dolzhen vzyat verkh*, *Pravda*, 1963, № 232, p. 4; Nikolay Kurdyumov, “*Tolkachi*” v kuluarakh OON, *Pravda*, 1969, № 24, p. 5; Viktor Perlo *Gonka vooruzheniy i ekonomika SShA*, *Pravda*, 1979, № 270, p. 4, etc.

From the newspaper, Soviet readers could find out what lobbying is as a phenomenon in general (there were brief, rarely detailed explanations of the term in the articles);<sup>39</sup> about lobbying in the USA, Germany and a number of other countries of the “capitalist camp”;<sup>39,40</sup> about the existence in the USA of ethical rules and federal laws regulating lobbying activities;<sup>41</sup> about the methods of lobbyists;<sup>42</sup> about specific lobbying campaigns;<sup>43</sup> about the types of lobbying (military–industrial,<sup>44</sup> clerical,<sup>45</sup> aviation,<sup>46</sup> oil,<sup>47</sup> automotive,<sup>48</sup> ethnic<sup>49</sup>); on lobbying activities on the world stage and in international organizations (in particular in the UN<sup>50</sup>). Sometimes journalists even gave specific names of lobbyists and information about their fees.<sup>51</sup>

The topic of lobbying helped to clearly reveal the well-known concept of

39. For example: “... “lobbyists” – from the word “lobby”, which means back rooms. We are talking about agents of monopolies, whose specialty is finding ways of influencing senators and congressmen on the sidelines of the House of Representatives and the Senate.” (K. Demidov, *Razlozheniye burzhuzaznoy demokratii v SShA (o knige G. Grekhema “Moral v amerikanskoy politike”)*, Pravda, 1954, № 103, p. 3); “The so-called “lobbies” are agents and talkachi of large monopolies...” (I. Grigoryev, *Moral' dollara*, Pravda, 1950, № 47, p. 4).

40. *Rumynskiyeh general' na sodержanii u Shkody*, Pravda, 1933, № 93, p. 4; *Deklaratsiya pravitelstva Khayasi*, Pravda, 1937, № 101, p. 5; V. Mikhaylov, *Koroli v bundestage*, Pravda, 1966, № 163, p. 5; Yevgeniy Grigoryev, *Registr makhinatorov*, Pravda, 1974, № 84, p. 3; Tomas Kolesnichenko, *Po kom zvonit kolokol “Lloyda”?* *Lobbisty za rabotoy*, Pravda, 1989, № 345, p. 7; A. Ivkin, *Proyekty veka: Megapolis v Avstralii*, Pravda, 1989, № 338, p. 6, etc.

41. *Opyat' skandal.* – Pravda, 1980, № 199, p. 5; *24 chasa planety: SShA.* – Pravda, 1988, № 21, p. 5 etc.

42. I. Grigoryev, *Moral' dollara*, Pravda, 1950, № 47, p. 4; Tomas Kolesnichenko, *Demokratiya i “zhirnyye koty”*, Pravda, 1971, № 316, p. 4; Sergei Vishnevskiy, *Vrashchayushchiesya dveri*, Pravda, 1980, № 245, p. 6, etc.

43. Nikolay Kurdyumov, *Lobbisty Pentagona v kongresse*, Pravda, 1976, № 29, p. 5; A. Tolkunov, *Vynuzhdeny uyti*, Pravda, 1976, № 48, p. 5, etc.

44. Viktor Perlo, *Amerikanskiye finansovyye magnaty i vneshnyaya politika SShA*, Pravda, 1957, № 325, p. 5; B. Orekhov, *Nyu-York: Protivoborstvo*, Pravda, 1969, № 209, p. 5; *Tolstosumy speshat*, Pravda, 1969, № 78, p. 5, etc.

45. *Sluzhanka monopolii: “Neyshnl gardian” o nravakh amerikanskoy pressy*, Pravda, 1960, № 243, p. 3; A. Tolkunov, *Prepodobnyy antikommunist*, Pravda, 1974, № 285, p. 5, etc.

46. *Na sluzhbu k kontsernam*, Pravda, 1971, № 245, p. 5; *Kto poletit na “Konkorde”?*, Pravda, 1975, № 229, p. 5, etc.

47. Tomas Kolesnichenko, *Neft. gaz i tseny*, Pravda, 1977, № 299, p. 5; *Vynuzhdeny opravdyvatsya*, Pravda, 1980, № 220, p. 5, etc.

48. V. Sukhoy, *Razvenchannyye simvoly*, Pravda, 1980, № 197, p. 5; E. Rusakov, *“Novyy god” po-Nyuyorskki*, Pravda, 1975, № 280, p. 4, etc.

49. *Statia Bivena v “Tribyun”*, Pravda, 1955, № 232, p. 4; Tomas Kolesnichenko, *Kolonka kommentatora: Retsidiv “kholodnoy voyny”*, Pravda, 1973, № 251, p. 5; Victor Linnik, *Antiyaponskaya kampaniya v Soyedinennykh Shtatakh*, Pravda, 1990, № 49, p. 4, etc.

50. Nikolay Kurdyumov, *“talkachi” v kuluarakh OON*, Pravda, 1969, № 24, p. 5; *Blizhniy Vostok: otpor avanturam Tel-Aviva*, Pravda, 1970, № 43, p. 5; Tomas Kolesnichenko, *Agressory i ikh posobniki*, Pravda, 1972, № 257, p. 5, etc.

51. *Vashington podbirayet marionetku*, Pravda, 1965, № 162, p. 1; G. Vasilyev, *“Rytzar” bez dospekhov*, 1966, № 145, p. 5; *Tak osushchestvlyayetsya podkup v politike*, Pravda, № 211, p. 5, etc.

“merging of the state and monopolies” and at the same time interest the reader with an intriguing narrative about the political underhand struggle in bourgeois democracies (including in the USA). Actualization of facts about the activities of lobbyists in the field of domestic and foreign policy of capitalist countries was achieved by linking this information to such important issues as the arms race, unfair wars, nationalism, violation of workers’ rights, corruption, etc.<sup>52</sup>

The most talented and popular international journalists of the USSR – Thomas Kolesnichenko, Evgeny Grigoriev, Yuri (Georgy) Zhukov, Malor Sturua, etc. – paid attention to the role of lobbying in the political life of Western societies. Victor Perlo, the “American economist” as was usually indicated in his author’s signature to newspaper and magazine materials, stood apart among these authors. Perlo became an exclusive, valuable “acquisition” of the *Pravda’s* international information department.

Victor Perlo was born in New York in 1912. His parents, who most likely came from the Privislinsky region of the Russian Empire, emigrated to the United States long before his birth.<sup>53</sup> He received an economics degree at Columbia University (in 1931), after which he entered the civil service.

Perlo was an ordinary new dealer – in 1933–1937 he was engaged in economic and statistical research for the National Recovery Administration. During the Second World War he worked in the Commerce Department (1939–1941), Office of Price Administration (1941–1943), War Production Board (1943–1945), and later – in the Treasury Department (1945–1947). As he himself believed, he managed to make a feasible contribution to the prosperity of his country during the administration of President Franklin Roosevelt.<sup>54</sup>

After the war, when American elites began to purge new dealers from their ranks, Victor Perlo appeared before a US congressional commission investigating anti-American activities. They tried to incriminate him with espionage in favor of the USSR and membership in the Communist Party of the United States,<sup>55</sup> but no

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52. See: Yuriy Zhukov, *Vzglyad iz Moskvy: Chto delat s raketami maloy dalnosti?*, Pravda, 1989, № 44, p. 6; Oleg Ignatyev, *Kolonka kommentatora: Provokatsii dalnego pritsela*, Pravda, 1967, № 143, p. 5; *Milliony amerikantsev ne imeyut raboty: Chto pokazala konferentsiya po bezrabotitse v Vashingtone*, Pravda, 1959, № 105, p. 5; I. Belyayev, *V plenu samoobmana: kto zatyagivayet blizhevostochnyy krizis?*, Pravda, 1968, № 33, p. 4; Tomas Kolesnichenko, *Skandal razrastayetsya*, Pravda, 1980, № 42, p. 5, etc.

53. We have gathered biographical data from several sources: from *Bolshaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo “Sovetskaya entsiklopediya”, 1975), vol. 19, p. 422–423; in the article: Vladimir G. Sarychev, “Perlo (Perlo) Victor” in *Ekonomicheskaya entsiklopediya* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo “Sovetskaya entsiklopediya”, 1979), vol. 3, p. 230; from V. Perlo personal file held in the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (hereinafter – *RSACH*) Fund 5. *Apparat TsK KPSS (1949–1991 gg.)*, as well as his own testimony given under oath during the hearings of the Commission to Investigate Anti-American Activities (See: US Congress. Hearings in the Committee on Un-American Activities. The House of Representatives. 80th Congress, 2nd session. Washington, 1948. pp. 675–701).

54. US Congress. Hearings before the Committee on Un-American activities, p. 680.

55. At the time of the interrogation (July – August 1948), Victor Perlo had already left the civil service. The investigation found him in the position of an economic consultant for the Progressive Party (See: *Ibid.*, p. 678).

trial ensued.<sup>56</sup>

We do not know when Victor Perlo joined the Communist Party of the USA. Documents from his personal file, kept in the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History, only allow us to say that his active participation in the life of the party began in the 1960s.<sup>57</sup> The International Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU oversaw the gradual rise of Perlo in the party hierarchy,<sup>58</sup> as evidenced by the reports of employees of the international department.<sup>59</sup> The subject of their close attention were also the publications of Perlo, published both in the USSR and in the USA.

Due to his background, Victor Perlo was undoubtedly a very well-informed economist. In the 1970s, the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* and the *Economic Encyclopedia* on their pages devoted space to his person, and his scientific and journalistic works, in which Perlo considered the financial, socio-economic, racial, and cultural problems of American society. Many of these works were translated into Russian.<sup>60</sup> Undoubtedly, his comparative studies of two economic systems also deserve attention.

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56. The CIAAA (Commission to Investigate Anti-American Activities) was established back in 1938 and has existed for more than thirty years. In 1948, it was headed by J. Parnell Thomas. During this period, the Commission consisted of ardent opponents of the New Deal, the “big government”, labor unions and communists. One of its members was Congressman Richard Nixon (the future US president), who actively participated in the interrogations, including Victor Perlo. But Perlo was lucky, and he did not become the main aim, because the attention of the CIAAA was drawn to the figures of more significant newdealers – Harry Dexter White and Alger Hiss. Interestingly, Martin Dies, the initiator of the creation of the CIAAA and its first chairman (1938–1944), believed that the anti-communist activities of the Commission did not bring political dividends to any of its members, with the exception of one person – Richard Nixon, who “backed away from it”. (See: Goodman, Walter, *The Committee: The Extraordinary Career of the House Committee on Un-American Activities*. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1968), p. 271.) However, according to the American researcher Walter Goodman, in 1948 Nixon gained some popularity thanks to the “Hiss Case”. (Ibid.)

57. RSACH, fund 5, inventory 109, case 10466, p. 26.

58. In 1959 Perlo became a delegate from the New York Party Organization at the XVII Congress of the CP USA. In April 1969 he was elected as a member of the National Committee of the CP USA. Since January 1984 he was a member of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CP USA. Also, since 1977 Perlo headed the Economic Commission of the CP of the USA. (See: RSACH, fund 5, inventory 109, case 10466, p. 93). According to an obituary published in the New York Times, Perlo retained positions in the party until his death in 1999 (See: *Victor Perlo, 87, economist of the Communist Party of the USA*, New York Times. December 10, 1999, p. 19).

59. RSACH. fund 5. inventory 109. case 10466. pp. 26. 69. 72. 84. 93. 123.

60. Victor Perlo, *Amerikanskiy imperializm* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo inostrannoy literatury, 1951); Idem, *Negry v selskom khozyaystve yuga SShA*. (Moscow: Izdatelstvo inostrannoy literatury, 1954; Idem, *Imperiya finansovykh magnatov* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo inostrannoy literatury, 1958); Idem *Ekonomicheskoye sorevnovaniye SSSR i SShA*. (Moscow: Izdatelstvo inostrannoy literatury, 1960); Victor Perlo. Karl Marzani, *Dollary i problema razoruzheniya* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo inostrannoy literatury, 1961); Victor Perlo, *Neustoychivaya ekonomika*. (Moscow: Progress, 1975) etc.



Perlo knew Soviet realities well: he visited the USSR twice (1960 and 1977),<sup>61</sup> visited the countries of the “Soviet bloc,”<sup>62</sup> was familiar with the works of Soviet economists. He carefully studied the theory and practice of Soviet planning and highly appreciated the achievements of the “five-year plans.” On his first visit to the Soviet Union, Perlo was honored to meet personally with Anastas Mikoyan. The result of their almost three-hour conversation was the book *How the Soviet Economy Works: an Interview with A.I. Mikoyan, First Deputy Minister of the USSR* (New York: International Publisher, 1961).

After the investigation in 1948, Victor Perlo continued publishing articles in scientific American journals devoted to economics and statistics. However, after his open affiliation with the Communist Party of the USA, this opportunity obviously disappeared, although his journalistic works still appeared in American communist press, e.g. in *The Daily World*, *The Daily Worker* and *Political Affairs Magazine*.

In the USSR, after the beginning of the “Thaw,” Perlo got the opportunity not only to be published in Soviet scientific journals, but also to address the Soviet readership from the pages of the general press. In total, from 1957 to 1989 he had published about 90 articles in Russian, including 10 (huge texts by newspaper standards) in *Pravda*.<sup>63</sup> Perlo’s articles combined an analysis of current American politics with a deep knowledge of the economic processes taking place in the United States. Perlo paid considerable attention to the influence of economic pressure groups on the formation of the internal and international agenda of the United States, criticized the cronyism that existed, from his point of view, in the American financial sector. He subjected the US military-industrial lobby to the greatest criticism.

### Press and Propaganda

When assessing Soviet journalism, it is necessary to show the ideological framework in which it was forced to exist. The system of party management of the press included propaganda and censorship bodies. Journalistic and propaganda

61. Russian State Archive of Contemporary History, fund 5, inventory 109, case 10466, p. 13, 74. In 1960, in addition to the RSFSR, he also visited the Uzbek SSR and the Kazakh SSR. (See: *Viktor Perlo otvechayet na nashi voprosy*, *Novoye Vremya*, No. 28, 1960, p. 13).

62. Victor Perlo, *Chto ya videl v Rumynii i Chekhoslovakii*, *Novoye Vremya*, 1961, № 4, p. 25–27.

63. Victor Perlo, *Amerikanskiye finansovyye magnaty i vneshnyaya politika SShA*, *Pravda*, 1957, № 324, p. 5–6; Idem, *Amerikanskiye finansovyye magnaty i vneshnyaya politika SShA (okonchaniye)*, *Pravda*, 1957, № 325, p. 5–6; Idem, *Gonka vooruzheniy – «zolotoye dno» dlya monopoliy*, *Pravda*, 1959, № 72, p. 5; Idem *Amerikanskaya ekonomika na poroge 1961 goda*, *Pravda*, 1960, № 340, p. 3–4; Idem, *Amerikanskaya ekonomika na poroge 1961 goda (okonchaniye)*, *Pravda*, 1960, № 344, p. 3; Idem, *SShA: ekonomika i krizis*, *Pravda*, 1970, № 251, p. 4; Idem, *SShA: ekonomika i krizis (okonchaniye)*, *Pravda*, 1970, № 252, p. 4; Idem, *Geroi – lyudi truda. Amerikanskiy ekonomist o Sovetskom Soyuze*, *Pravda*, 1977, № 212, p. 4; Idem, *Gonka vooruzheniy i ekonomika SShA*, *Pravda*, 1979, № 270, p. 4; Idem, *Krichashcheye protivorechiye. Sotsialnyye posledstviya nauchno-tekhnicheskoy revolyutsii na Zapade*, *Pravda*, 1986, № 51, p. 4.

activities in the USSR were one of the main instruments of control over the “masses.” The propaganda’s goal was to form a consciousness in society as close as possible to the “official” one<sup>64</sup>, which implied loyalty to the state and ideology, readiness for creative work, participation in the defense of the country, etc.

In the Soviet state the propaganda system was managed by structures created within the governing bodies of the Communist Party (Propaganda and Agitation Departments, Press Departments, Ideological Commissions), as well as similar bodies within the executive branch, which, however, fully obeyed the instructions of party ideologists.

The renowned statement that journalism is always closely connected with propaganda and somehow broadcasts certain political attitudes has received a vivid practical embodiment in the Soviet state. Vladimir Lenin – a lawyer by education and a journalist by profession<sup>65</sup> – as early as in 1905, in his article “Party Organization and Party Literature,” persistently pursued the idea that “freedom of speech and the press” should be limited to the interests of the party,<sup>66</sup> and in 1918 declared that “the press should serve as an instrument of socialist construction.”<sup>67</sup>

The Soviet propaganda system reached its peak with the beginning of the “information era.” In 1970, the one-time circulation of newspapers amounted to 139.7 million copies (1.16 times more than in 1967), in 1977 – 7985 newspapers were published with a one-time circulation of almost 170 million copies.<sup>68</sup>

The trend was to strengthen the role of all-union newspapers – if in 1955 their annual circulation was about a third of the total circulation of newspaper publications, then in 1972 it was more than half.<sup>69</sup> This manifested the desire to strengthen control over the sphere of propaganda, so that as much information as possible came from the “center.”

In the USSR press bureaus (structures that were engaged in the dissemination of news information) were created at the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union,<sup>70</sup> the Novosti Press Agency,<sup>71</sup> the *Pravda*, *Krasnaya Zvezda* and *Komsomolskaya*

64. Boris Grushin, *Chetyre zhizni Rossii v zerkale oprosov obshchestvennogo mneniya. Ocherki massovogo soznaniya rossiyan vremen Hrushcheva, Brezhneva, Gorbacheva i El'cina v 4-h knigah. Kniga 2-ya: Epoha Brezhneva (chast' 2)*. (Moscow: Progress–Traditsiya, 2006), p. 496.

65. In this article, we consider it very appropriate to mention that Lenin belonged to the Professional Union of Journalists (Vladimir Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1970), Vol 43, p. 415), and for personal questionnaires as his ‘profession’ usually indicated ‘journalist’ or ‘writer’ (Viktoria Uchenova, *Besedy o zhurnalistike* (Moscow: Molodaya Gvardiya, 1985), Chapter 6; Vladimir Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1970), Vol 41, p. 465; *Ibid.*, Vol. 44, p. 511).

66. Vladimir Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1947), Vol. 12, p. 99–105.

67. *Pravda*, 1918, 28 April.

68. Sergey Tsukasov, *Sovetskaya pechat' – puti povysheniya effektivnosti i kachestva*, Kommunist, 1977, No. 7, p. 11.

69. *Zhurnalistika v politicheskoy strukture obshchestva: nekotorye problemy politicheskoy organizatsii sistemy sredstv massovoy informatsii i propagandy* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo Universiteta, 1975), p. 11.

70. Was established in 1925.

71. Was established in 1961.

*Pravda* newspapers.<sup>72</sup> In addition, new technologies were introduced – in 1977, central newspapers were transmitted by phototelegraph to 25 cities of the country out of 44 where they were printed (it was believed that the Soviet phototelegraph network was “the most extensive in the world”). An experiment was also launched to transmit newspaper strips using a communication satellite.<sup>73</sup>

The strongest growth since the period of Nikita Khrushchev’s rule has occurred in the field of broadcast media, which corresponded to global trends. If in 1955 there were 9 television studios in the USSR, then in 1965 – 121, in 1970 – 126, in 1975 – 131 studios. The growth rate of television was higher than that of radio broadcasting: from 1955 to 1973, the average daily volume of radio broadcasting in the country increased from 492 to 1050 hours, and television over the years increased its volume of broadcasting from 15 to 1889 hours.<sup>74</sup> The percentage of time allocated for “ideological” information on central television was about 25% of the airtime.<sup>75</sup>

The vast majority of the population of the USSR was a regular consumer of print and broadcast media. Thus, according to a survey conducted in Taganrog in 1968–1970, more than 80% of the information people received from newspapers, radio, and television.<sup>76</sup> Many citizens used all the main types of media – in 1977, the editorial board of the newspaper *Pravda* found out through a survey of its readers that 75% of them read two or four newspapers, 92% watched TV, and 87% listened to the radio.<sup>77</sup> In 1975, 74.9% of respondents read newspapers daily in Leningrad. The newspaper *Pravda* was subscribed to by 36.9%, bought by 15.7%, *Leningradskaya Pravda* – by 29.4% and 20.6% of respondents, respectively.<sup>78</sup> In 1977, there were more than four periodicals for every family in the USSR.<sup>79</sup>

Quantitative indicators of the expansion of propaganda systems and “political education,”<sup>80</sup> were very significant, which should have guaranteed the success of the transmission of ideological attitudes.

The leaders of the USSR believed that Soviet propaganda and the system of “political education” were very effective. Ideologists emphasized the superiority of Soviet propaganda over Western propaganda. In 1969 Georgy Smirnov, Deputy head of the Propaganda Department of the CPSU Central Committee, put forward the concept that the second one is built “by analogy with commercial

72. *Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RSACH)*, fund 5, inventory 33, case 220, p. 86.

73. Tsukasov, *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

74. *Zhurnalistsika v politicheskoy strukture obshchestva*, p. 96–97.

75. *RSACH*, fund 5, inventory 59, case 28, p. 82–83; *Journalism in the Political Structure of Society*, p. 99–100.

76. *Zhurnalistsika v politicheskoy strukture obshchestva*, p. 95.

77. Tsukasov, *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

78. Boris Firsov, Kuanyshbek Muzdybaev, *K postroeniyu sistemy pokazatelya ispol'zovaniya sredstv massovoy kommunikacii*, *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, 1975, No. 1, p. 115, 117.

79. Sergey Tsukasov, *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

80. A system of lectures and other information and training events in the field of ideology and current political events aimed at general public.

advertising,” and it is based on “lies” (as in advertising), whereas “the Marxist–Leninist understanding of the purpose of propaganda is to develop the political and moral consciousness of the masses, to increase their knowledge in order to make them aware of their position and their revolutionary tasks.” In January 1971, Leonid Brezhnev, in a circle of confidants, declared that party workers know how to “work with the masses,” and as a result, “the masses are with them,” i.e. that the Soviet people are loyal to the party and ideology. The secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, Pyotr Demichev, expressed confidence that there is nothing “more authoritative, more meaningful than our newspapers, our television.”<sup>81</sup>

However, despite the impressive quantitative, “technical” indicators, in the midst of the “information revolution” of the 1960s–1970s, Soviet propaganda ceased to comply with the dictates of the time. Its main features were formalism, “contrivance” and “bulkiess,” the pursuit of the number of events,<sup>82</sup> which was the main criterion for reporting. Information and propaganda events have turned into a fiction, the participation of citizens in them was often involuntary.

The level of content and design of propaganda was low. It was dominated by the obsessive repetition of the same appeals and slogans, as well as clichés that even the propagandists themselves were tired of (for example, in 1965 they proposed “not to call, as it was before, any Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU historical, and any party event, large or small, Leninist”). Visual agitation acquired only a “decorative character” – many people did not even know the content of the slogans and posters that hung directly above their workplaces.<sup>83</sup>

An absurd circumstance was the combination of the delay and concealment of current news in the Soviet media<sup>84</sup> with the overall huge amount of information that was published in them: all these volumes were characterized, as noted by Russian sociologist Boris Grushin, “extreme content incompleteness, not to say striking limitations, exorbitant poverty.”<sup>85</sup>

Direct, undisguised propaganda, for which “it is characteristic to monstrously simplify the surrounding reality, reduce all the diversity of the surrounding world to a set of stamps,”<sup>86</sup> could indeed have been effective before the onset of the “information era” in the 1960s. However, when “uncontrolled” information from

81. *RSACH*, fund 104, inventory 1, case 35, p. 21; *Ibid.*, case 41, p. 8, 18.

82. *RSACH*, fund 5, inventory 60, case 23, p. 23–24; *Ibid.*, fund 104, inventory 1, case 35, p. 5.

83. *RSACH*, fund 5, inventory 33, case 216, p. 124; *Ibid.*, case 220, p. 86, 93; *Ibid.*, case 229, p. 7; *Ibid.*, case 241, p. 19–20; *Ibid.*, inventory 59, case 24, p. 67; *Ibid.*, case 30, p. 64; *Ob ideologicheskoy rabote KPSS: Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1983), p. 242; *Kommunisticheskaya partiya Sovetskogo Soyuza v rezolyuciyah i resheniyah v rezolyuciyah i resheniyah s'ezdov, konferenciy i plenumov CK*, Vol. 11 (Moscow: Politizdat, 1986), p. 146.

84. It was accepted as a rule that for the sake of ‘the common good’ information in certain cases ‘cannot be given in an open form’, and also that ‘sometimes silence is more useful’ than words. – See: *Central State Archive of Moscow*, fund II–4, inventory 158, case 44, p. 60.

85. Boris Grushin, *Op. cit.*, p. 492, 498.

86. Vladimir Batyuk, Dmitry Evstafyev, *Pervye zamorozki: Sovetsko-amerikanskie otnosheniya v 1945–1950 gg.* (Moscow: Russian University Publishing House, 1995), p. 4.

all over the globe began to actively enter the country, ideologists scored alarm<sup>87</sup> and began to incline the leadership of the USSR to revise the policy in the field of propaganda. The situation was aggravated by the clearly revealed changes in the state of Soviet society, including the intensification of its deideologization and “Westernization.”

Ideologists put forward proposals for a radical restructuring of propaganda. Thus, the author of an article found in the archive of Georgy Smirnov and dated 1967 (most likely, it was Smirnov himself), pointing to the scarcity of information and the “varnishing” of realities in the Soviet media, proposed to ensure the “truthfulness” of propaganda as “a necessary condition for the activity and consciousness of the masses, their ability to mobilize efforts to overcome difficulties.” In fact, this meant the end of censorship of news information. The article also proposed to stop the informational “isolation” of the Soviet population from the West. The author did not see any sense in it, because, in his opinion, cultural, economic, and other contacts with captives did not necessarily cause damage to Soviet ideology, but the “isolationist position” just led “to the delay of our technical and scientific progress”<sup>88</sup> (indeed, the USSR was in dire need of cooperation with the West). As a result, additional measures were implemented to improve the system of propaganda and “political education” – for example, in the late 1970s, the differentiation of the presentation of information for different target groups was strengthened in the Soviet media.<sup>89</sup>

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Central Committee of the CPSU adopted several formal resolutions to improve propaganda,<sup>90</sup> which remained “on paper.” Literally a few years later, Perestroika was launched in the USSR, as a result of which censorship was gradually abolished, party propaganda finally faded and disappeared, and in the early 1990s a completely new media system was formed.

With all the strict ideological and censorship restrictions, the Soviet school of journalism was able to create a product that attracted readers. Studies of the readership of the newspaper *Pravda*, conducted by sociologists in 1968–1969 and 1976, revealed a huge interest of Soviet citizens in publications on international topics.<sup>91</sup> Some modern researchers explain this fact by the lack of information

87. *RSACH*, fund 104, inventory 1, case 28, p. 6, 8–9.

88. *RSACH*, fund 104, inventory 1, case 28, p. 4–6.

89. Hoffmann, Eric P., Laird, Robbin F. *Technocratic Socialism: The Soviet Union in the Advanced Industrial Era* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985), p. 129, 136.

90. *Ob ideologicheskoy rabote KPSS*, p. 352, 354–356; *Kommunisticheskaya partiya Sovetskogo Soyuza v rezolyuciyah...*, Vol. 13 (Moscow: Politizdat, 1987), p. 337.

91. During a poll conducted in 1968–1969, 86% of readers answered the question about which sections (topics) they were particularly interested in in *Pravda*: ‘International information’. (See: “*Pravda*” i ee chitateli: nauchnyj otchet ob itogah sociologicheskogo obsledovaniya / Scientific Supervisor – Doctor of Economics Vladimir Shlyapentokh (Moscow, 1969), p. 22–23.). In 1976, the international theme was again in the first place (See: “*Pravda*” i ee chitateli: sopolstavlenie rezul’tatov dvuh sociologicheskikh issledovaniy (Moscow, 1977), p. 26, 32).

about life abroad in the conditions of the Cold War.<sup>92</sup> However, this does not exclude the presence of other factors, e.g. a high level of Soviet journalists and high culture of the average Soviet reader.

## Conclusion

The Soviet mass media have always paid considerable attention to international topics. The share of information about the foreign policy and domestic life of the United States in the Soviet central media increased as the political weight of this country on the world arena increased.<sup>93</sup> The Soviet press discovered the topic of lobbying in the late 1920s. The publication of Ostrogorsky's monograph in the USSR played a role in this. Before the Great Patriotic War there were only 4 publications in *Pravda* that mentioned lobbyists/tolkachi. After the war, the number of such materials began to grow: in the 1950s 5 articles appeared and in the 1960s, an average of two per year were already published, in the 1970s – 4 publications per year. The largest number of texts dealing with the issue of lobbying – about 8 per year – was published in the 1980s, that is, after the end of the era of *Détente*.<sup>94</sup>

Lobbying, the reverse side of which is corruption, was very suitable as an argument in the ideological confrontation with Western quasi-liberalism.<sup>95</sup> The attempt made in the USA in 1946 to distinguish between lobbying and corruption caused rejection among Soviet theorists which in accordance with the “principle of party literature,” was reflected in the publications of the newspaper *Pravda*.

And yet the attention to the problem of lobbying was not limited to the needs of propaganda. Obviously, there was a desire to comprehend the peculiarities of the enemy's political system, the American culture of political bargaining. Most likely there was also a practical goal – to find among the numerous US interest groups those that were determined to cooperate with the USSR.

It is necessary to note the inaccuracies and gaps that existed in the publications of Soviet authors. For example, journalists sometimes interpreted the concept of “lobbying” too broadly. The confusion was caused by the fact that in American political science literature and mass media, in the statements of politicians, there were (and still are) both broad and narrow interpretation of lobbying: in a broad sense, such activities are understood not only as pressure on the authorities from individuals and organizations, but also as the actions of parliamentarians and executive officers (including the US president); in the narrow – direct contact of a private lobbyist with a legislator or official. Therefore, on the pages of the Soviet press, including *Pravda*, one could find reports about “presidential lobbying” or

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92. Ekaterina Kamenskaya, *Konflikty v mirovoy sisteme socializma: obrazy v sovetskikh gazetah (vtoraya polovina 1960-h – nachalo 1980-h gg.)*: PhD Dissertation (Yekaterinburg, 2015), chapter 2, paragraph 1.2.

93. It is possible that the growth of US hegemonism was one of the factors that influenced the dynamics of the appearance of articles about lobbying in the Soviet press.

94. Our calculation – *F. S., I. V.*

95. Many other examples of the ideological “battles” between the USSR and the USA in the media space during the Cold War one can find in Dina Fainberg's study *Cold War Correspondents* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020).

“lobbying of the US State Department.”<sup>96</sup> In addition, for ideological reasons, newspapers of the USSR preferred not to write about the lobbying activities of American labor unions. Very little was reported about the fight against illegal lobbying, about the investigations of lobbying activities conducted in the US Congress. Despite these shortcomings, Soviet journalists showed the readership a complex mosaic of the representation of interest groups in the United States politics. Their materials reflected the activities of lobbyists at the level of individual states,<sup>97</sup> at the federal level, and also drew attention to the struggle of interest groups in the international arena, including in international organizations.

Counter-propaganda is often much more difficult to conduct than propaganda itself. And Soviet journalists as a whole successfully coped with this task. Focusing readers' attention on such a phenomenon as lobbying, they showed what is behind these or other events in the field of domestic and foreign policy of the United States and other countries. The high level of publications, the variety of genres attracted readers and strengthened the authority of the Soviet press.

In conclusion, it should also be noted that Soviet journalists were freer and bolder in their statements than scientists, and therefore they could afford to openly draw parallels between lobbyists and *tolkachi*, which, in our opinion, was quite logical. At the same time, critical articles about Soviet *tolkachi* were evidence of recognition of the shortcomings of the socio-economic system of the USSR. Showing these problems, the journalists called on the authorities to find solutions to the problems of supplying industrial enterprises and the trading system. Thus, the feedback of society with the authorities was carried out, which is one of the main functions of the press.

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96. *Na povodu u militaristov*, Pravda, 1983, № 146, p. 5; Vitaliy Gan, *Kachnulsya li mayatnik? Kongress SShA i voyennyy biznes*, Pravda, 1986, № 218, p. 4; *Reshitelnyy protest*, Pravda, 1980, № 210, p. 5, etc.

97. *Tak osushchestvlyayetsya podkup v politike*, Pravda, 1960, № 211, p. 5; Sergei Vishnevskiy, *V vashingtonskom Kapitoli: "Muchitel'naya pereotsenka"*, Pravda, 1974, № 12, p. 4; E. Rusakov, *"Ma Bell" i antitrustovskiy zakon*, Pravda, 1975, № 46, p. 4, etc.

## Book Reviews

Michael Holzman. *Spies and Traitors: Kim Philby, James Angleton, and the Friendship and Betrayal that Would Shape MI6, the CIA, and the Cold War*. New York and London: Pegasus Books, 2021. 278 pp. Index. \$27.95, Hardcover.

Anyone interested in world of spy craft and espionage is at least vaguely familiar with the story of the British/Soviet intelligence agent, Kim Philby, and the failure of the intelligence community to recognize his traitorous activities for over two decades. Philby began working for British intelligence services during World War Two, in 1940, and held a number of key and significant posts that put him at the center of intelligence gathering networks and facilitated his friendship with James Jesus Angleton, a central figure in the American counterpart, the Central Intelligence Agency. It was only in 1963 that he was identified as a member of a spy ring, eventually known as the Cambridge Five, that had been sharing British secrets with the Soviet Union during the war and into the emerging Cold War.

Holzman is no stranger to this topic, having authored several other books on individuals involved in espionage, including James Angleton. This book is best defined as a dual biography of two men who were friends and colleagues for six years, but during the entire time the one (Philby) was exploiting the other (Angleton). Holzman believes that despite the work already done on these two individually, the best way to understand the men, their motivations, and their impact on both their own organizations and the Cold War more generally, is to examine them through this lens of parallel and, simultaneously, intertwined lives. The result is a dense text, with sometimes shared chapters, sometimes alternating chapters, and an enormous number of acronyms. There is a great deal of information here from the men's families and childhoods to their lives as young men searching for meaning and purpose. While Philby was drawn to communism and began to work for the NKVD as early as 1934, Angleton wrote poetry, joined the army, and entered Harvard Law School. By the time Angleton was asked to join the OSS in 1943, Philby was already an important figure in Britain's MI6. There were several instances when Philby might, and perhaps should, have been discovered as a Soviet double agent, but various circumstances worked to his advantage and he continued to be trusted. When he was finally exposed, the damage he had done to the British and American intelligence networks was



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enormous, as was the human cost of his actions. General Douglas MacArthur, for example, would later assess that Philby's betrayal had caused the injury, capture, or death of as many as 30,000 soldiers.

Holzman's book is not an easy, fluid read, even for those interested in the history of intelligence work and spies. Holzman's research relies on American and British archives, and a few translated Russian sources. It is rich with detail, and that may appeal to those already deeply steeped in this history, but an average, interested reader will likely find the book off-putting. On occasion, Holzman delves deeply into particular sources or parts of the overall story so deeply that the thread of his narrative becomes lost. It relies on the assumption that one is already well-versed in the acronyms and genealogy of the various organizations at the center of this episode.

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Victoria I. Zhuravleva, *The Common Past of Russians and Americans: Lecture Course*, Translated into English by Jean MacKenzie, Moscow: Russian State University for the Humanities, 2021, 618 pp. paper.

A lecture course entitled *The Common Past of Russians and Americans* by Victoria Ivanovna Zhuravleva was published just a few short months before the onset of the tragedy of war unfolded in Eastern Europe. Had this review been written prior to the 24th of February 2022, it would have most likely been a more resounding accolade for the author's intention of emphasizing the multidimensional centuries-long partnership between Russia and the United States that had evolved in spite of differences in their political systems, withstanding ample ideological disagreements. (331)

Although ultimately predictable, events of the past year once seemed inconceivable even for scholars of the history of Russian-American relations. Revisiting narratives of common heritage, however nuanced, perplexed, and at times distorted, were persistently deemed a means of averting the escalation of brewing discord with its irreversible catastrophic outcome. The presupposition that a mutual support at critical moments of national and international history, often reinforced with interpersonal encounters and individual inclinations, may help to preserve "the cooperation potential" in multiple spheres, as well as educational or cultural exchanges (331), has now been challenged with the precarious prevalence of "value judgements" over economic rationality and geopolitical pragmatism. (616) Due to an increasingly alarming lack of good will from the leaders and their inexcusable acts aimed at alienating the citizens of both countries, there has been no reciprocated "reset" of images and representations, and as such of bilateral relations. (616-617) Fueled by unfathomable shortsightedness and the unwillingness of all parties involved to mediate, the simmering crisis of the last

decade has transformed into a calamity dubbed by Hal Brands as “one of the most ruthlessly effectively proxy wars in modern history.”<sup>1</sup>

The primary purpose of the lectures may not be to reflect upon the reasons for such a failure, yet the volume offers insights into causes contributing to the current standoff lamentably worsening despite the two nations’ common legacy as ‘distant friends,’ allies in the world wars, and front-runners in the exploration of humanity’s last frontier in space.<sup>2</sup> The analysis culminates in the last three chapters, in which the author examines the formation of collective and personified images of the other nation that proved to be resilient in the backdrop of a changing political and socio-economic climate. (572) Although widely held Russian-American myths have never been completely detached from reality, they reflect it only selectively, to the extent that would correlate with each country’s own development agenda and ideological pursuits. (572) Instead of recognizing “the right of the opposing side to its differences” and “taking into account the other side’s mentality and culture of perception,” mutual representations have often waged a “war of images,” aimed at meeting domestic and political needs, which inevitably revealed internal problems of their respective societies. (572, 596). Creating “conditions for applied anti-Americanism in Russia and Russophobia in the U.S.” (616), this “war of images,” in Zhuravleva’s words, “was and still is one of the main characteristics of the crisis in bilateral relations.”<sup>3</sup>

Rather than being structured chronologically, the course is thematically organized around well-defined cycles of rapprochement between the two countries alternating with deep crises in their relations. In the United States, those periods of hope for a modernizing and rapidly westernizing Russia, accompanied with romantic imagery, gave way to disappointment and Russophobic pessimism (602) over the intrinsic “metamorphosis of American experience” conditioned by Russian reality (565), resulting in a demonic representation (596) of the vast Eurasian outsider. On the other hand, the notion of the ‘American Other,’ central to the formation of Russian own identity, has attained an unprecedented degree of pure abstraction, encompassing numerous tall tales, dreams, and fears that aroused a plethora of feelings, from adoration, to jealousy, to indignation, to bitter resentment.

In addition to traditionally used archival material, the common past of Russia and the United States has been well documented in a panoply of verbal and visual texts, including literary works, journalistic accounts, paintings, cartoons, posters,

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1. Hal Brands, “Russia Is Right: The U.S. Is Waging a Proxy War in Ukraine,” *Washington Post*, 10 May 2022. Available at ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/russia-is-right-the-us-is-waging-a-proxy-war-in-ukraine/2022/05/10/2c8058a4-d051-11ec-886b-df76183d233f\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/russia-is-right-the-us-is-waging-a-proxy-war-in-ukraine/2022/05/10/2c8058a4-d051-11ec-886b-df76183d233f_story.html))

2. As of October 22, Russian-American cooperation in space continues. See Jeffrey Kluger, “The U.S. and Russia Signal Continued Cooperation – In Space, At Least,” *Time*, 7 October, 2022. Available at <https://time.com/6220640/us-russian-space-station-collaboration/>

3. Victoria Ivanovna Zhuravleva, “How Putin’s Russia Perceives the United States: From Obama to Trump,” *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* vol. 4, no. 1 (2018): 146. This article is listed for further reading at the end of chapter 12. (595)

and films, that Zhuravleva has scrutinized to ascertain her argument. She has also traced the trajectories of sensational productions and musical performances, manifesting the role of soft power, cultural cross-fertilization, and influences in the evolution of public opinion, and in shaping mutual perceptions and preferences. A widely recognized authority in the field, the author elaborates upon an array of historical, cultural, technological, and socio-economic events that both countries have been involved in at some point within their tercentenary shared experience. These and a stunning constellation of stellar Russians<sup>4</sup> and Americans destined to contribute to the fate of both nations serve as a core holding the series together.

Although thoroughly compiled, the list of facts, names, and encounters may seem overly familiar to experts and peers. Since the course is designed for diverse and broad audiences, it is only occasionally interspersed with episodes that until recently have remained under-the-radar in similar attempts to explore multiple variables of changing attitudes towards one another on both sides of the Atlantic (or the Pacific for that matter!).<sup>5</sup> Thus, in Lecture 9, dedicated to cultural exchanges, Zhuravleva pulls her narrative off a beaten path, discussing the legacy of black female performers who introduced African American cultural idioms in Russia on the cusp of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The story of Coretté Arle-Titz, a spirituals and jazz singer and dancer, who transcended physical and porous cultural boundaries studying classical music in Russia, is remarkable. While back in the United States, in an atmosphere of “rapidly accelerating cultural hierarchy,” various genres were regrettably labeled as “lowbrow” and “highbrow,”<sup>6</sup> in her adoptive land, she managed to make transitions from one artistic milieu to another, looking for harmony and dismissing such a division as ephemeral. Indeed, transfigured by modernity, ancient polyrhythmic and acoustic traditions of African Americans became notably present in the music of Russian composers, such as Stravinsky. (425)

Jazz music held a prominent place as a character in its own right, being featured throughout several lectures to unveil the humanistic element of historical accounts. Thus, it appears in the chapter dedicated to the Russian-American military alliance during WWII (Lecture 7). As an important part of the war-time music front, jazz cultivated strong interpersonal ties between Soviet and

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4. By ‘Russians’ we mean those who hail from the Russian empire, the Soviet Union, post-Soviet Russia, and the former Soviet Republics. The term does not refer to Russian ethnicity, however. For the purpose of this review, it also implies people of other backgrounds, such as Ukrainians, Georgians, those from Baltic States, etc.

5. Two volumes are especially worth mentioning. One is Alexander Etkind’s *The Interpretation of Journeys: Russia and America in Travelogues and Intertexts* (2001), in which the author exposed intertextual manifestations of the Russian American experience. The other is a more recent work by Ivan Kurilla, entitled *Frenemies: A History of Opinions, Fantasies, Contacts, and Mutual (Mis)understanding between Russia and the U.S.A.*, 2018, in which he also followed fateful journeys of notable Russians in the United States and Americans in Russia, many of whom are mentioned in Zhuravleva’s volume.

6. See Lawrence W. Levin, “Jazz and American Culture,” *Journal of American Folklore* 102, no. 403 (January-March, 1989): 6-22.

American servicemen, who brimmed with the “feeling of unity” at the sound of the Glenn Miller’s orchestra, along with Russian songs sung by Lidiya Ruslanova and Leonid Utesov.

During the Cold War, jazz was considered “the State Department’s ideological weapon,” that was supposed “to shatter ideas of racial discrimination in the U.S.” and bring listeners in the Middle East, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, and Latin America “a message of freedom, at once artistic and political.” (521) On the other hand, for the Soviet people it remained “a window into America,” (567) an irresistible source of inspiration for those in search of inner-directedness and privacy apart from pervasive Soviet collectivism. Powered with emotional charge, jazz was identified with an imaginary West, juxtaposing it with the drabness of Soviet experience (566) and officially propagated art forms.

Every lecture is provided with an extensive list for further reading, as well as with references for videos, websites and podcasts that are expected to be posted on the website of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey. Throughout the course the materials have been incidentally suggested for interactive learning.

This survey of the common heritage of two nations conjures nostalgia for the times when people of both countries were drawn closer together by genuine curiosity and “the desire to understand and learn about [and from] each other” (331). It once was rewarding and enjoyable to mine for daring personal stories of Russians in America and Americans in Russia, proving that even in the most difficult times, relations between these two countries transcended public diplomacy, remaining more extensive and congenial than the legacy of periodic crises otherwise suggests. The situation has changed, however. Russian infatuation with America faded over the last decades, while “the Russian Self–American Other opposition has retained its constitutive role in the interplay of meanings that defines Russian nationalism.”<sup>7</sup> Russians *en masse* blame the United States for misguided economic leadership, and even explicit policies designed to weaken their country, including the calamitous NATO extension eastward, that has been cited as one of the pretexts for the invasion of Ukraine. In its turn, in the West, Russia has been regarded as a pariah, the nation that turned inwards to its ignoble imperialistic demons, traumatizing the world with impunity ensured by its strategic nuclear arsenal. Even cultural achievements in music, literature, and the performing arts, which had previously worked as mediators, have lost their potency, trapped in controversy, and overtly rejected as a symbolic reincarnation of an enemy. It might be challenging to position the course about the common past between Russia and the U.S. within the radically transformed academic environments, where, on the one hand, materials are being developed to indoctrinate youth, and on the other, the focus of scholarly pursuits is being relentlessly shifted from Russia to other nations from the former Soviet space, including Ukraine, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. Unlike the Cold War era, when the popularity of the Russian language was on the rise, since the beginning of the

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7. Zhuravleva, “How Putin’s Russia Perceives the United States. (145)

war in Ukraine, the enrollments have hit historic lows. “Americans are responding to conflict by closing [themselves] off from an adversary,” wrote Caroline Tracey from *Los Angeles Times*.<sup>8</sup> Students have reportedly sought “to distance themselves from anything Russia related.”<sup>9</sup> The war that is raging in Ukraine has become a dreadful shared present for two geopolitical giants, this time fighting on different sides of the barricades. Unfortunately, as during previous periods of ravelment, “the usual hierarchy of images” results in a one-dimensional perception of the devastating developments. Yet, like in the past, the danger of their simplistic interpretation is acknowledged by those scholars who, like Zhuravleva does in her project, push for “a recognition of [their] multi-faceted nature.” (597) Without it, the cyclical pattern of Russian-American relations may cease to exist, giving way to an enduring rivalry with an ever-looming threat of nuclear disaster. Their voices may be barely heard, (597) but they are out there, as evidenced by the design and publication of this course.

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Mark LaVoie, *Reagan's Soviet Rhetoric: Telling the Soviet Redemption Story*, Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2022, 133pp. Index.

For anyone who lived through the 1980s in the United States, a fair reading of *Reagan's Soviet Rhetoric* requires suspending memory of partisan politics and polemics. Ronald Reagan was one of the most profoundly controversial and provocative presidents, at least until recently, and above all this was true on foreign policy. His presidency brought the most tendentious and dangerous years of the Cold War, and it also coincided with the end of that superpower standoff. LaVoie uses content analysis of a selection of Reagan's speeches, from various periods of his life, to explore how his rhetoric evolved from inflammatory, uncompromising, and hawkish cold warrior to sympathetic negotiator with a new friend.

This political scientist found disorienting the book's lack of an introduction detailing its purpose, and more important what is *not* that purpose. “Reagan's changing Soviet rhetoric [is] the focus of this book....[It] is interested in how Reagan ... created a narrative in which the once irredeemable Soviet Union was redeemed.” (pg. 2). Reagan was a controversial figure and the end of the Cold War was a monumental historical moment. Content analysis may be used to explain political outcomes, but this book makes no effort to do so, and the author would have done well to make this clear. He merely seeks to reveal that Reagan's

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8. Caroline Tracey, “Why ‘canceling’ the Russian language isn’t the way to support Ukraine,” *Los Angeles Times*, 15 January 2023. Available at <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2023-01-15/russia-ukraine-foreign-language-study>

9. *Survey of Enrollment in Russian Language Classes, 2022*. Available at <https://sras.org/educators/survey/2022-college-survey-of-enrollments-in-russian-language-classes/>

rhetoric changed, at times speculating on why, but without exploring the impact on or significance for world events.

For the most part, that effort is clear and convincing. And, if one can escape the reasonable “why is this important?” question, it presents a fair chronicle of changing rhetoric from President Reagan. There can be no doubt that with the rise of the last Soviet general secretary, Mikhail S. Gorbachev, to power, Reagan’s rhetoric changed in line with the new opportunity to shift the superpower relationship.

Chapter Two details Reagan’s red-baiting period, the virulent anti-communism of the early Cold War period. Reagan portrayed the Soviets as “evil” as early as the mid-1950s (pg. 24), and communism was an “existential threat” to America and to democracy. Of course, Reagan was hardly the originator of such ideas and was far from alone in articulating them. There is no mention of President Kennedy’s anti-communism, or Goldwater’s, or Nixon’s. Because of this, the book might, for some, grossly exaggerate Reagan’s importance in the Cold War superpower relationship in the 1960s and 1970s, when one might reasonably argue that he was a minor player at best.

The lack of context might also lead a reader to miss the critical fact for understanding the Cold War - the Soviet rhetoric mirrored that of American anti-communists. Democracy was a sham, capitalism exploitative, and the people living in capitalist systems suffered untold inequality and oppression. While the US saw the Soviets as “a threat to peace and freedom,” (pg. 62), the Soviets saw us in the same way. The clash of two universalistic, incompatible systems defined the world, and Reagan’s rhetoric was hardly remarkable or unique, except in its consistent virulence.

Most troubling is when the author accepts the rhetoric as fact and, perhaps unconsciously, renders untenable political judgements. This does not happen consistently, but is frequent enough to raise eyebrows. Quoting Reagan in 1979 blasting what he called a massive Soviet military buildup and acquiring overwhelming military superiority, LaVoie comments, “in the face of such Soviet danger...” (pg. 42.) He seems to lose sight of the difference between campaign rhetoric of a politician and facts on the ground. John Kennedy campaigned on a “missile gap” in 1960, arguing that President Eisenhower had allowed the US to become weak. There was indeed a gap, a wide one in the favor of the United States, as Kennedy well knew.

Similarly, “Reagan made it clear that the Soviets were untrustworthy,” LaVoie writes (pg. 43). In fact, the USSR was a remarkably trustworthy negotiating partner and adhered to its treaty commitments. Perhaps he grew tired of the qualifier, “Reagan’s oratory,” and the like, in front of such statements. But the frequency with which he omits such qualifiers renders quite untenable assertions, particularly when not backed by any evidence whatsoever. They appear on and off throughout the last several chapters.

Chapter 4 details changes in Reagan’s rhetoric with the ascendance of Gorbachev. While LaVoie acknowledges that the emergence of a new, young

leader with vibrance and energy “offered a new opportunity,” (74), much of the remainder of the chapter seems to lose sight of this as the reason for Reagan’s shift. While reading how Gorbachev and the Soviet Union became “popular” in America and the West, I could not help but reflect on how susceptible we in democracies are to propaganda - no less so than are citizens living under dictatorship. After all, within a single ten-year span Stalin went from brutal dictator, to “Uncle Joe”, to brutal dictator. The perusal of Reagan’s rhetorical shift and of public opinion with it, with no exploration of where those directional arrows lie, leave this chapter rather flat.

But I return to my first point. This review is by a political scientist. The book on its own terms certainly chronicles well what was, in fact, a rapid and dramatic change in how Ronald Reagan spoke about the Soviet Union. That change did happen, and the sharpness and dramatic nature of that change is worth noting, and the critique here should be taken in that light.

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Lee A. Farrow, *The Catacazy Affair and the Uneasy Path of Russian-American Relations*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022, ix. 202pp. Index. \$115.00, Hardcover.

In her latest book, Dr. Lee Farrow continues to explore key moments in the history of Russian-American relations in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Here, Farrow turns to Constantin Gavrilovich Catacazy’s brief, yet significant, tenure as Russian Ambassador to the United States. Simply put, Catacazy was a disaster who managed in only a few months to alienate both President Ulysses Grant and Secretary of State Hamilton Fish; to break with existing conventions concerning the behavior of diplomats in their host countries; and to usher in a chill in diplomatic relations between the US and Russia. In other words, as this well-written book reveals, the Catacazy Affair was far from a minor episode in American history.

The book opens with an overview of Russian-American relations prior to 1869. Farrow notes that the relationship between the two countries was often influenced by how each felt at particular moments about Britain, meaning there was always a wider context to their interactions. The two countries had increasing contacts as the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed with the establishment of formal diplomatic relations in 1809 and the signing of an official commercial treaty in 1832. A notable closeness developed in the 1860s as Russia emancipated its serfs and the US freed its slaves, and a particular sign of that friendship came in the form of an official visit by ships from the Russian Baltic fleet in 1863. Four years later, the sale of Alaska was negotiated, and the Russian-American relationship seemed

to be on firm footing. The only fly in the ointment, so to speak, was the pesky lingering issue of the Perkins claim – a subject that Catacazy soon found himself embroiled in, much to the detriment of his career.

In chapter two, Farrow informs readers about the early life and career of Catacazy, as well what kinds of duties he was expected to perform while serving as a foreign ambassador. What stands out from this wealth of information is Catacazy's marriage to Olga Fitz-James since that relationship was partly to blame for his social difficulties when he was posted to Washington. An outstanding beauty, Olga Catacazy had a questionable marital past which meant that she was unable to help him smooth over his many faux-pas.

Catacazy arrived in Washington in September 1869 and, as Chapter three reveals, immediately began to ruffle feathers as he delved into the Perkins claim, the question of whether the US would support Russia in its desire to overturn parts of the treaty that ended the Crimean War (the so-called Black Sea Question), and the lingering issue of whether Britain owed the US any compensation for damage done by vessels it had sold to the Confederacy during the Civil War. As these episodes progressed one after another, "Catacazy's reputation as meddlesome became well known in public, as well as in private circles." (p. 49) Part of the problem was the that he had no qualms about leaking information to the newspapers – something that diplomats were most definitely not supposed to do – and then lying about it to both irate US government officials and his superiors back in Russia. This question about Catacazy's use of the press was, in fact, so serious that Farrow devotes a whole chapter to it. She notes that the Secretary of State was sufficiently angered that he had the Secret Service investigate the matter and, once Fish had information about Catacazy's connections with journalists as well as damning details about his private life, he felt he could no longer trust anything that the Russian Ambassador said. Meanwhile, rather than acknowledge or change his behavior, Catacazy instead shifted blame to people associated with the Perkins claim, whom he said were trying to discredit him. The tension between the two men escalated to the point that Fish became determined to have his nemesis recalled.

In chapter five, Farrow demonstrates how these events in the political realm were compounded by the social difficulties Catacazy and his wife had in Washington. Owing to rumors about her past, Olga Catacazy was ostracized by the wives of important American officials including Julia Kean Fish, the wife of the Secretary of State. These women clearly understood the power of their actions, as Farrow explains with reference to an earlier incident involving Margaret Eaton (the wife of Andrew Jackson's secretary of war) which led to the resignation of almost the entire US cabinet. The chapter overall is an intriguing analysis of how women wielded sufficient power to affect American political life at a time when they could not yet vote, and the refusal to socialize with Catacazy's wife almost certainly contributed to the decision to ask for his recall.

As the next chapters show, in this era it was surprisingly difficult to recall an ambassador, despite the existence of a number of precedents. The situation with Catacazy was complicated by the fact that planning for an official visit by



the Russian Emperor's son, Grand Duke Alexis, was going on at the same time as US leaders were trying to get rid of Catacazy. Ultimately, American officials were forced to accept that the disgraced Russian could not be replaced prior to Alexis' arrival, so they had to make the best of a bad situation for a few more months. On the other hand, Catacazy did nothing to improve matters. His attempts to influence the Grand Duke's itinerary were resented and his speeches at several events during the tour were clumsy or inappropriate. Once he left US soil in January 1872, he continued to make a nuisance of himself by ignoring the demands of his superiors that he stay quiet about the affair. Instead, he almost immediately published a lengthy defense of his actions and continued to press for an inquiry for more than a decade.

In the end, this fascinating short work shows how important personal relationships are to the conduct of diplomacy, particularly between the United States and Russia.

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James Lloydovich Patterson, *Chronicle of the Left Hand: An American Black Family's Story from Slavery to Russia's Hollywood*, Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, 2022. 178pp.

This is a fascinating book that deserves to be read by a large audience. Its origin, though, is a story all to itself. So, bear with me while I explain the origins of the book. James Lloydovich Patterson is the son of Lloyd Patterson who was one of the members of the Black and White film project that traveled to the Soviet Union in 1932 to make a film about race. The film was not made and most members of the group returned to the US. Lloyd stayed, married a Soviet woman, and had children. Lloyd invited his mother, Margaret, to come to the Soviet Union not long afterward, stayed for a couple of years, but returned to the U.S. This book is her story of her life in Jim Crow America that was published twice in Russian in the Soviet Union in the 1930s and 1960s. James appeared as a child in the movie *Circus* in 1936 and that set him up for a life of celebrity in the Soviet Union. Lloyd died in 1942 from the complication of a concussion during a bombing. Lloyd's widow and sons lived on in the Soviet Union as semi-celebrities. James joined the Soviet Navy and then became a well-known poet and writer. In the 1990s, he and his mother moved to the United States in order to find better income sources for her paintings and his poetry leaving behind the uncertain times of the post-Soviet 1990s.

The book was used by Soviet authorities as a way to further expose the horror of American slavery and Jim Crow America where discrimination and worse continued for decades. It is worth noting that a team of people in the last few years helped bring this book into its first English translation. Amy Ballard

spearheaded the project along with translator Jennifer E. Sunseri and editor Cheryl Ross. This edition is supplemented with insightful essays by Rimgaila Salys about the Patterson family and a Foreword by Allison Blakely. The end of the book provides the reader with a glimpse into the life and times of the Patterson family through photographs from the 1930s to 2020.

The story of African-Americans in the Russian and Soviet world is a fascinating topic with many unexplored areas. The story of the Patterson family is a rich one. The fact that many African-Americans sought more equality and a better life in the Soviet Union exposed the reality in Jim Crow America where they were considered second-class citizens. The book traces the life of James' grandmother as she made her way around many parts of the United States as a young girl and into adulthood. She faced many hardships because of her race and gender and was often in peril. She was often under physical and sexual threat from strangers and employers alike. She was paid less because she was African-American and because she was a woman. She was often not paid at all despite the promise of payment. A few kind people helped her when she needed it, but for the most part she forged ahead alone (and then later with her son, Lloyd) despite having nearly no family or societal support. It should be no surprise that her son, Lloyd, ascribed to radical views as he grew up. The systemic inequality helped him gravitate to socialism, especially as the Great Depression began. His mother, Margaret, also gravitated to this ideology seeking more equality and a brighter future.

In the end, this is a wonderful historical resource produced for the first time in English. Everyone interested in the complicated lives of African-Americans, and the Pattersons in particular, in the Soviet Union should read this new work. It is a great addition to the developing literature on the subject.

William B. Whisenhunt  
College of DuPage

## Field Notes

### 1. Путешественники Великобритании и США в Российской империи в 1850-е-1913 гг.

Грант РФФ № 23-28-01108

«Сибирь в англо-американских травелогах: формирование современных образов края во второй половине XIX - первой четверти XX в.»

Мегагрант «Человек в меняющемся пространстве Урала и Сибири»

**“Siberia in Anglo-American travelogues: making contemporary images of the country in the second half of the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century”**

For historians who have been researching medieval and early modern Russia, the notes of foreign travelers are an extremely important source to clarify multiple aspects of that time. As the quantity of source for Russian history expands toward the XIX century, the importance of foreign travelogue declines. From the XVIIIth century and onwards, they are often regarded by historians as external sources on the perception of Russia in an international context, being less associated with Russian history. The rapid growth of published travelogues in the second half of the XIXth century, when the field of travel had evolved into a separate leisure activity, turns them into an entirely separate category of sources, which associated not so much with the history of the country traveled through as with imagology, that is a history of the formation of images of the «other» from the outside point of view. Anglo-American travelogues on Siberia in the second half of the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century have not yet been studied in their entirety as a cultural phenomenon that reflects two important international trends. On the one hand, it is the rise of interest in remote and exotic regions all over the world, and on the other hand, the expansion of international (American) capital onto undeveloped territories around the world.

The project aims to investigate the formation of images of Siberia in the travelogues on the background of socio-economic development of the land, as well as a significant rise of international tourism, which led to a high demand in the UK and the USA for travelogues and articles about strange and distant countries. This project analyzes travelogues, taking an inventory of books available in central libraries and on the Internet in order to summarize an annotated list of Anglo-American travelogues, which were published from 1850 to 1927. The analysis

of travelogues will examine a) the images of Siberia, b) the description of travel routes in Siberia, c) the international context of travel, since some travelogues were written either by professional travelers, or by the missionaries. Most researchers underestimate foreigners' perceptions of Siberia in the late nineteenth and first quarter of the twentieth century as one of the most promising regions of the earth, increasingly connected to global routes. This project intends to show how Anglo-American travelogues influenced the formation of modern perceptions of Siberia.

## **2. Bread + Medicine: American Famine Relief in Soviet Russia, 1921–1923**

Recounts how medical intervention, including a large-scale vaccination drive, by the American Relief Administration saved millions of lives in Soviet Russia during the famine of 1921–23. By Bertrand Patenaude and Joan Nabseth Stevenson

<https://www.hoover.org/research/bread-medicine-american-famine-relief-soviet-russia-1921-1923>

## **3. Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES) 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention, Philadelphia, 2023!**

Check back here in June 2023 for the program to find many sessions related to Russian-American relations!

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