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Abstract

A Visit to the Exhibition of All Nations: The Chicago World's Fair and the United States in Vasily Sidorov's Travel Writing

Author: Maksim Pelmegov

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Abstract
The Chicago World's Fair represented a continuity of the World's Fairs as key international events of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which were widely covered, including in travelogues for home readership. The Russian Empire showed considerable interest in participating, especially after Americans organized a relief campaign during its famine a year ago. While the Russian government supervised the exhibits and sent specialists to study the American economy and society, many Russians visited the Fair individually, and some published travel accounts. This article explores the account titled *America. Travel Notes and Impressions* (1895) written by novelist and botanist Vasily Sidorov. Traveling with a group of European tourists, he admires American nature and praises American technological progress, mobility, and freedoms that could be potentially borrowed but shows uncertainty about major cities and excesses of industrialization and technological development, to a degree repeating what was pointed out by earlier Russian visitors. He evaluated the Fair and most of what he saw through the image of Europe which was also employed to emphasize his sense of cultural superiority.

Keywords: Chicago World's Fair, travel writing, Russian Empire, the United States, Vasily Sidorov

A Visit to the Exhibition of All Nations: The Chicago World's Fair and the United States in Vasily Sidorov's Travel Writing

Maksim Pelmegov

Introduction: Russian Travelers in the U.S.

The decades following the Civil War saw an increasing number of Russians visiting America. The 1860s and the 1870s were particularly important since this period saw plenty of travel accounts on the U.S., thanks both to improvements in transportation and tourist infrastructure and a mounting interest in America among Russian intellectuals and readership alike, whether because of friendly relations and general notions of similarity between the two countries in terms of youth, resources, and potential, or due to America growing as a major alternative in development to Western Europe. Despite that major accounts of the time were written to a limited, albeit increasing, literate readership at home by primarily educated upper-class Russians or intellectuals who had money and the opportunity to cross the ocean, their travelogues covered major American cities and regions, described landscapes and gave a broad picture of social and cultural life in the U.S., evaluating the living conditions of diverse social groups including immigrants, women, Native, and African Americans, as well as urban and economic developments, education, and politics.[1] These early accounts provided what Greenblatt calls "mimetic capital," the images which were continuously reproduced in late imperial Russia and, to a degree, even during the early Soviet period and laid the ground for the Russian vision of America, influencing preconceptions of future travelers.[2] The image of the U.S. was already complex by the 1890s, combining positive and negative notions of American life with a cumulative effect. Some Russians, whether travelers or specialists sent on the government's behalf, emphasized American practicality, efficiency, rapid technological development, industrial might, inventiveness, high standard of living, and social mobility. According to Rogger, these notions gradually developed in what he calls "Amerikanizm" as an alluring "industrial

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[1] Norman Saul, *Concord and Conflict: The United States and Russia, 1867–1914* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 203–7.

[2] Margarita Marinova, *Transnational Russian-American Travel Writing*, Routledge Research in Travel Writing 5 (New York: Routledge, 2011), 16.

ideology" and an example for Russians in their development.[3] However, visitors simultaneously underlined faults in the U.S., whether in terms of politics, culture, growing materialism and excesses of urbanization, the treatment of African or Native Americans, and other features of the American lifestyle.[4]

Aside from more general travels to the U.S. in the decades from the 1860s until the First World War, Russians interacted with America on the grounds of World's Fairs held there. While there were only a couple of visitors who published travelogues about the Centennial Exhibition and while Russian presence at the 1904 Fair in St. Louis was meager due to the Russo-Japanese War, Chicago World's Fair served as a major occasion for a considerable number of Russians to visit the U.S. and to participate in the discourse about America.

The Russian Empire and the World's Columbian Exposition

The Chicago World's Fair, officially called the World's Columbian Exposition, held in Jackson Park and adjacent areas from 1 May to 30 October 1893, offered items presented by over 65,000 exhibitors from more than fifty countries and colonies as well as the majority of the U.S. states and territories. A key part of the fairgrounds was the White City, which included fourteen major Exhibit Halls, built mostly in a neoclassical and Renaissance style from temporary materials, incorporating Venice-like streams, rich greenery, and showcasing all kinds of articles from machinery and the latest advances in electricity to arts and anthropological exhibits. In contrast, the mile-long Midway Plaisance offered diverse entertainment, exotic pleasures, and ethnic performances, the most notorious being the Ferris Wheel and Cairo Street. Apart from exhibits and popular amusements of the Midway, foreign, and U.S. state buildings, the Fair included over 1200 sessions of the World Congresses, with the most prominent being the World's Congress of Representative Women and the World's Parliament of Religions. Around 27.5 million visitors (around 21.5 of them paid) visited the fairgrounds, a colossal number compared to the Centennial Exhibition, but still less than the previous World's Fair in Paris in 1889.[5] On the positive side, the revenues managed to cover immense expenditures of around twenty-eight million dollars and leave a small profit.[6]

The Fairs held before the First World War represented a complex and diverse combination of exhibits, participants, interactions, and conflicting messages, adjusting themselves to the latest technological developments and putting emphasis on different social, economic, and cultural questions throughout the decades. The visitors' age, social status, available free time, and goals of the visit significantly complicate the image that one might have gotten from the Fair. Many

[3] Hans Rogger, "Amerikanizm and the Economic Development of Russia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23 no. 3 (1981): 407, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500013426.

[4] Marinova, *Transnational Russian-American Travel Writing*, 111–12.

[5] Harlow Higinbotham, *Report of the President to the Board of Directors of the World's Columbian Exposition. Chicago, 1892–1893* (Chicago: Rand, McNally, 1898), 409.

[6] Higinbotham, 349.

of the studies emphasize the impact of Fairs on introducing new ideas and values to the public that suggested a constructed and ordered vision of the present as well as an idealized future based on primarily Western values.[7] Others point out the influence of Fairs on the rise of modern tourism, consumerism, nation-states, and the public acceptance of urban planning.[8] While some underline the positive economic and cultural impact of international exhibitions, there also exists a substantial criticism of the Fairs of that period based on the promotion of Western and elite vision of the past, present, and future as a response to rapid changes caused by industrialization, urbanization, and the growth of popular culture.[9] Others underline the connection between displays and racial hierarchies, justification of imperialism, and misrepresentation or exclusion of certain ethnicities, cultures, or challenges of the industrial age.[10]

The arguments for organizing a third major Fair in the United States were also diverse: the desire to show America's coming of age and its equality with Western Europe, to boost national unity, to address different domestic problems and rapid changes in the age of urbanization, industrialization, and massive immigration, to increase its prestige worldwide, and to promote diplomatic, scientific, and economic cooperation.[11] While there are debates similar to those presented above, scholars also explore the resistance of African and Native Americans to their misrepresentation as well as the new level of influence that women have acquired

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[7] Burton Benedict, *The Anthropology of World's Fairs: San Franscisco's Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915* (Berkeley, CA: Lowie Museum of Anthropology, 1983), 2–5; Maurice Roche, *Mega-Events and Modernity: Olympics and Expos in the Growth of Global Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000), 45–46; Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions, and World's Fairs, 1851–1939*, Studies in Imperialism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 27.

[8] Roche, *Mega-Events and Modernity*, 70–71; Reid Badger, *The Great American Fair: The World's Columbian Expedition & American Culture* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1979), 10–11; Rebecca Graff, "Being Toured While Digging Tourism: Excavating the Familiar at Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 15, no. 2 (2011): 224, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10761-011-0138-x; Joep Leerssen, "Trademarking the Nation: World Fairs, Spectacles, and the Banalization of Nationalism," in *World Fairs and the Global Moulding of National Identities: International Exhibitions as Cultural Platforms, 1851–1958*, ed. Joep Leerssen and Eric Storm, National Cultivation of Culture 27 (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 49.

[9] Roche, *Mega-Events and Modernity*, 59; David Fisher, "Exhibiting Russia at the World's Fairs, 1851–1900" (PhD Dissertation, Indiana University, 2003), 5.

[10] Raymond Corbey, "Ethnographic Showcases, 1870-1930," *Cultural Anthropology* 8, no. 3 (1993): 359–60, https://doi.org/10.1525/can.1993.8.3.02a00040; Jayne Luscombe, "World Expos and Global Power Relations," in *Power, Politics and International Events: Socio-Cultural Analyses of Festivals and Spectacles*, ed. Udo Merkel, Routledge Advances in Event Research Series (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 69–72.

[11] Badger, *The Great American Fair*, 21; Chaim Rosenberg, *America at the Fair: Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2008), ix.

during the Fair.[12] There are also studies establishing the connection between the Fair and the idea of empire in the U.S.[13] Others explore the significance of the Fair for American architecture, urban development, and specifically Chicago. Finally, some scholars link the Fair with the contrasts of American culture (for example, comparing the cultural message of the White City and the popular culture of the Midway Plaisance and more broadly Chicago) and try to evaluate the response of Americans to the Fair as a nation, contrasting its optimism and belief in progress with insecurities.[14]

Equally important was the self-representation of foreign nations on the fairgrounds and their competition in terms of presenting accomplishments in economic, social, military, and cultural development. The Fairs contributed substantially to the formation of national identity, stimulating national or imperial pride and simultaneously movements for cultural or national autonomy within empires.[15] This was also the case for the Russian Empire which participated in most of the Fairs until the First World War on an official, government-sponsored level. Russia sought to present itself as a modern and great European power while also aiming to establish its distinct cultural identity through arts and architecture (for instance, Russia constantly constructed nationally distinguishing *style russe* pavilions based on medieval Russian architecture).[16] There are varying opinions

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[12] Dennis Downey, "Rite of Passage: The World's Columbian Exposition and American Life" (PhD Dissertation, Marquette University, 1981), 271–72, Rite of Passage; Anna Paddon and Sally Turner, "African Americans and the World's Columbian Exposition," *Illinois Historical Journal* 88, no. 1 (1995): 34; Melissa Rinehart, "To Hell with the Wigs! Native American Representation and Resistance at the World's Columbian Exposition," *American Indian Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (2012): 404, https://doi.org/10.5250/amerindiquar.36.4.0403.

[13] Robert Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 4; Mona Domosh, "A 'Civilized' Commerce: Gender, 'Race', and Empire at the 1893 Chicago Exposition," *Cultural Geographies* 9, no. 2 (2002): 181–83, https://doi.org/10.1191/1474474002eu242oa.

[14] David McDaniel, "A Century of Progress? Cultural Change and the Rise of Modern Chicago, 1893–1933" (PhD Dissertation, The University of Wisconsin, 1999), 376; James Gilbert, *Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 125; Daniel Miller, "The Columbian Exposition of 1893 and the American National Character," *Journal of American Culture* 10, no. 2 (1987): 17, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1542-734X.1987.1002_17.x; Camilla Fojas, "American Cosmopolis: The World's Columbian Exposition and Chicago Across the Americas," *Comparative Literature Studies* 42, no. 2 (2005): 266, https://doi.org/10.2307/40247477.

[15] Leerssen, "Trademarking the Nation," 48–49; Eric Storm, "The Transnational Construction of National Identities: A Classification of National Pavilions at World Fairs," in *World Fairs and the Global Moulding of National Identities: International Exhibitions as Cultural Platforms, 1851–1958*, ed. Joep Leerssen and Eric Storm, National Cultivation of Culture 27 (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 56; Bart Pushaw, "'Our Country Has Never Been as Popular as It Is Now!': Finland at the 1900 Exposition Universelle," in *Expanding Nationalisms at World's Fairs: Identity, Diversity, and Exchange, 1851–1915*, ed. David Raizman and Ethan Robey, Routledge Research in Art History (New York: Routledge, 2018).

16 Yury Nikitin et al., "Russian Sections at World and International Fairs," *Advanced Materials Research* 1065–1069 (2014): 2680, https://doi.org/10.4028/www.scientific.net/AMR.1065-1069.2674.

on the achievement of these goals. Some argue that Russia showcased more raw resources and handicrafts, but fewer industrial products that emphasized successful modernization. Even though Russian arts and architecture highlighted unique national style and identity, they still did not suit the picture of the modern country, and instead, the Fairs in general contributed to the image of Russia as rather exotic or backward.[17] Others object and argue that while at first major exhibitions Russia did not present much regarding industries, rapid industrialization in the 1890s allowed Russia to successfully showcase its industrial progress (including its exhibition of the development of the Trans-Siberian Railway, the construction of which began in 1891, in Chicago and later in Paris in 1900) and combine symbols of modernity with a memorable and unique national style.[18]

Russian participation in the World's Columbian Exposition was confirmed on 31 May 1891, and it was based on the government collecting and sponsoring the transportation of exhibits presented by government ministries, state institutions, and private exhibitors. While most of the work regarding organization was concentrated in the special committee led by Vladimir Kovalevsky, the director of the Department of Commerce and Industry of the Ministry of Finance, women's exhibits in the Women's Building of the Fair were under the authority of the Ladies Committee organized under the supervision of the Empress Maria Feodorovna. Artistic items were prepared by the Imperial Academy of Arts. Russia did not erect its separate building on the fairgrounds, instead constructing a series of pavilions in the White City's Exhibit Halls and auxiliary buildings. Russia was present in sixteen departments with articles by around 1000 exhibitors (1033 according to the index of the Russian pavilion; 1094 according to the General Commissioner of the Russian pavilion Pavel Glukhovskoy).[19] The biggest number of Russian exhibits were presented in the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building and the Agricultural Building. However, the items in the latter did not become prominent, and it seems that the most attention by fairgoers was given to presented furs, furniture, leather, silk, cotton, pianos, educational materials, gold and silver embroidery, horses, a compilation of products from Central Asia,

[17] Fisher, "Exhibiting Russia at the World's Fairs," 341; Alexandr Sokolov, "Rossiya na vsemirnoy vystavke v SShA v 1893 godu [Russia at the American World's Fair in 1893]," *Scientific Letters of Russian Customs Academy the St. Petersburg Branch Named After Vladimir Bobkov*, no. 2 (1997): 214.

[18] Anthony Swift, "Russian National Identity at World Fairs, 1851–1900," in *World Fairs and the Global Moulding of National Identities: International Exhibitions as Cultural Platforms, 1851–1958*, ed. Joep Leerssen and Eric Storm, National Cultivation of Culture 27 (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 136–37.

[19] Pavel Glukhovskoy, *Otchet general'nogo komissara Russkogo otdela Vsemirnoy Kolumbovoy vystavki v Chikago kamergera vys. dvora P.I. Glukhovskogo g. ministru finansov S.Yu. Vitte. [Report of the Commissar-General of the Russian pavilion of the World's Columbian Exposition P. Glukhovskoy to the Minister of Finance S. Witte]* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiya V. Kirshbauma, 1895), 1; Imperial Russian Commission, Ministry of Finance, *World's Columbian Exposition 1893, Chicago. Catalogue of the Russian Section* (St. Petersburg: Imperial Russian Commission for the participation of Russia at the Worlds Columbian Exposition 1893, Chicago, 1893), 480.

and a sizable collection of oil paintings in the Palace of Fine Arts.[20] Russia also sent navy ships to take part in the festivities led by Admiral Nikolay Kaznakov, and three of them – the *Dmitry Donskoy,* the *Rynda,* and the *General-Admiral* – participated in the international naval review in New York several days before the opening of the Fair. On board was also Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich who made official visits to the President and major U.S. institutions and attended the Fair incognito.[21]

Russian participation in the Chicago World's Fair was aimed at sustaining diplomatic relations and its image as a great power as well as showcasing its economic development. To prove the latter, Russia presented a series of volumes edited and translated to English by American Consul-General to Russia John Crawford titled *The Industries of Russia*, covering light and heavy manufacturing, agriculture, trade, forestry, and mining with an extra book overviewing the early stage of the Trans-Siberian Railway (an additional volume was prepared in Russian regarding the general development of railroads and water communications, but it was not translated). The main idea behind this series was that Russia was about to make a breakthrough in industrial development, and the latter could ensure world peace, friendly relations between Russia and America, as well as "brotherly communion, the happiness of the masses, and a bloodless victory over nature" according to "the Christian order of things."[22]

However, apart from economic or diplomatic goals, Russia also wished to thank the U.S. for the relief campaign organized by individual Americans during the famine in Russia in 1891–1892, and this objective is stated in the official

[20] Moses Handy, ed., *The Official Directory of the World's Columbian Exposition, May 1st to October 30th, 1893. a Reference Book of Exhibitors and Exhibits; of the Officers and Members of the World's Columbian Commission, the World's Columbian Exposition and the Board of Lady Managers; a Complete History of the Exposition. Together with Accurate Descriptions of All State, Territorial, Foreign, Departmental and Other Buildings and Exhibits, and General Information Concerning the Fair* (Chicago: W.B. Conkey, 1893), 138–39.

[21] Nadezhda Belinskaya, "Morskoye vedomstvo Rossiyskoy imperii na vsemirnoy Kolumbiyskoy vystavke v Chikago v 1893 godu: reprezentatsiya istoricheskoy druzhby [The Navy Ministry of the Russian Empire at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893: The representation of historical friendship]," in *Voyenno-istoricheskiye chteniya: Materialy X Vserossiyskoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii s mezhdunarodnym uchastiyem, Kerch', 01–04 marta 2022 goda* (Voyenno-istoricheskiye chteniya, Simferopol: Biznes-Inform, 2022), 154.

[22] Department of Trade and Manufactures, Ministry of Finance, *The Industries of Russia*, ed. and trans. John Crawford, vol. 1, Manufactures and Trade, with a General Industrial Map (St. Petersburg: Trenke & Fusnot, 1893), liv.

report of the exposition prepared by Glukhovskoy.[23] Another important goal seemed to be to tackle negative images about Russia following George Kennan's publications on the Siberian exile system since Russian commissioners made a separate penitentiary pavilion displaying articles from Russian prisons. The concern over the impact of Kennan can be observed since Glukhovskoy states that this pavilion clearly debunks his claims.[24]

Compared to the Centennial Exhibition and the 1904 World's Fair the World's Columbian Exposition received extensive coverage in Russia, especially after the famine relief campaign that gave extra momentum to the already existing interest in America. Along with exhibits came many Russian specialists whose task was to report on certain aspects of American industries or social development for the government or scientific institutions. At the same time, a record number of Russians (at least three hundred according to Saul) used this occasion to visit the United States, and some of them published travel accounts that combined impressions from the Fair and its host country and were intended, like photo albums, press articles, and other printed materials, for many of their compatriots who did not have a chance to visit the Fair but were curious about America.

The Biography of Vasily Sidorov and Initial Remarks

I will focus on the travel account titled *America. Travel Notes and Impressions* (1895) which was published by a botanist, novelist, and travel writer Vasily Sidorov (after 1858–1903). The author was born in the family of Mikhail Sidorov (1823–1887), a prospector and later a prominent explorer, philanthropist, and administrator who carried out expeditions and contributed to the development and scientific research of Siberia and the Russian North.[25] Mikhail Sidorov married the daughter of another prominent merchant of the Russian North Vasily Latkin and

[23] Glukhovskoy, *Otchet general'nogo komissara*, 148. For information about the famine and American relief to Russia see Saul, *Concord and Conflict*, 335–64; James Simms, "The Impact of the Russian Famine of 1891–92: A New Perspective" (PhD Dissertation, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, 1976); Richard Robbins, *Famine in Russia, 1891–1892: The Imperial Government Responds to a Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975); Viktoriya Zhuravleva, *Ponimaniye Rossii v SShA: obrazy i mify, 1881–1914 [Understanding Russia in the United States: Images and myths, 1881–1914]* (Moscow: Rossiyskiy gosudarstvennyy gumanitarnyy universitet, 2012), chap. 3.

[24] Glukhovskoy, *Otchet general'nogo komissara*, 83; Sokolov, "Rossiya na vsemirnoy vystavke v SShA v 1893 godu," 212. George Kennan's trip to Russia in 1885–1886 to explore its exile system and his consequent articles in the *Century* later turned into a two-volume *Siberia and the Exile System* (1891) which is widely considered to have a significant influence on the American, and, more broadly, Western perception of Russia, making it stand as a despotic absolute monarchy which sends its educated intellectuals and capable individuals without trial for their opposing views on the future of the country. According to Saul, after his works "almost everyone traveling in or writing about Russia had to measure their perceptions against Kennan's," *Concord and Conflict*, 289.

[25] See Tat'yana Sanakina, "Materialy k rodoslovnoy M.K. Sidorova i ego sem'i: po dokumentam Gosudarstvennogo arkhiva Arkhangel'skoy oblasti [Materials for the lineage of M.K. Sidorov and his family: On the documents from the State Archive of the Arkhangelsk region]," *Historical Courier*, no. 6 (2023): 13–25, https://doi.org/10.31518/2618-9100-2023-6-1.

actively cooperated with him. In his prime years, he became rich as well as sent raw materials and other articles to the World's Fairs of the 1860s and 1870s. His son Vasily studied botany at St. Petersburg University, and he kept an interest in this field since he seemed to actively participate in the so-called "Little Botanists" club, formed by recently graduated students of natural sciences. Sidorov took part in its semi-informal meetings and delivered speeches as well as scientific reports at least from 1886 to the mid-1890s.[26] Many of the participants of this club would later become prominent scientists specializing not only in botany but also in forestry, biology, and other natural sciences. While Sidorov did not become a scholar, instead he dedicated himself to writing poetry and dramas, publishing multiple volumes of his writings in the 1890s under the pseudonym *Vasily Otradin*. However, his works did not receive any noticeable recognition during his lifetime or later, though Sidorov was interacting with some of the prominent literary critics and artists of the time. He traveled extensively, having visited most European countries before his trip to America and having lived a considerable period of time in Germany. He eventually turned his writing skills into travel writing. Before the Chicago World's Fair, he published a volume describing his trip from Riga through western regions of the empire and Crimea to Constantinople as well as a travel account on Spain. After the Fair, he would additionally publish travel accounts on his trips across Russia, more particularly on the Volga and across the Caucasus, in which he not only wrote of his impressions but included a helpful list of sites and bits of advice for potential tourists. However, Sidorov became a tourist himself while visiting the Fair with a group of travelers from Austria-Hungary as part of a broader trip across the U.S. and Canada organized by the famous company, *Thomas Cook & Son*.

With the assistance of Muller, a Cook company's agent in Europe who accompanied the author until departure to the U.S., Sidorov and two of his fellow travelers set off from Vienna to Antwerp, meeting several other tourists upon arrival. From there they embarked on a steamer to New York. The group of ten tourists in total assembled in New York and, together with another Cook company's agent Zopernheim, throughout the summer of 1893 visited Philadelphia, Washington D.C., and the Fair itself before continuing to Toronto and Montreal. On their way from Canada to New York the group also visited Boston, and upon return to New York, the group voyaged back to Antwerp. In all American and Canadian towns, they stayed in pre-arranged hotels and enjoyed excursions organized by the company, while at times they also explored them on their own. Sidorov remarks that while before he conducted most of his travels independently and despite certain complaints he heard about tourism in organized groups, in the case of a trip to the Fair he decided to take Cook's services to "get

[26] Yakov Rikhter, Mikhail Glebov, and Tat'yana Rikhter, "Doroga v budushcheye: K istorii kruzhka «Malen'kikh botanikov» [A road to the future: The history of the 'Little botanists' club]," *Studies in the History of Biology* 10, no. 4 (2018): 34, https://doi.org/10.24411/2076-8176-2018-11975.

rid of thousands of small troubles which often considerably spoil the journey."[27] It is worth mentioning that while Sidorov knew German and likely used it when interacting with his companions from Austria-Hungary, he did not know English, making his understanding of the country limited. On the other hand, unlike some of the Russian travel accounts on America at the time, his book does not bear the mark of approval by censorship, meaning that the censors who read his book after printing but before its circulation and sales did not raise objections on the basis to the 1865 Statute.[28] Apparently, he simply did not touch any potentially sensitive domestic topics, and the rules of the Statute seemed to allow him a fair degree of liberty in speaking his mind about America as the "Other." Even so, the post-writing supervision by censors, the government's regulation of publishers' activities, and the inevitable editing or correcting of the account by the publishing company still indicate that the author's writing was modified, let alone that he published his account only two years after the Fair, unavoidably reconstructing his experience. Nevertheless, Sidorov's account, overlooked by travel writing researchers, can give an insight into the vision and understanding of America by Russians during a major World's Fair and is of importance if one considers interest in America following the recent famine relief and demand for news and impressions from the Fair among Russian readership at the time.

Travel Conditions

According to Cook company's package tour, Sidorov and his nine companions got first-class tickets on all railways and steamers throughout the trip, a ticket to

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[27] Vasily Sidorov, *Amerika. Putevyye zametki i vpechatleniya [America. Travel notes and impressions]* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiya A. Katanskogo, 1895), 2. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Russian to English are my own.

[28] The 1865 Temporary Statute on Publishing marked a considerable change in the existing regulations for all printed materials. Instead of the fully preliminary censorship, now in Moscow and St. Petersburg, the two cities where a considerable part of publishers was concentrated, periodicals that got the approval of the Ministry of the Interior and paid a deposit, books with more than ten printed (160) pages, and translations over twenty printed (320) pages were not subject to preliminary censorship anymore. Now their publishers had to send copies of their already printed materials to the individual censors or censorship committees either two (monthly journals), three (books) days before or concurrently (periodicals) with the beginning of their sales/circulation. The censors could still initiate an independent judicial prosecution against authors or publishers violating the Statute rules and cancel the incoming or already existing circulation in case of finding something objectionable in the content of materials. That included derogatory comments about the Christian faith and the Orthodox Church in particular, any estate of the country, or the government on the whole, harassment or groundless insults against any person or their property, calls for sedition against the autocracy and the Imperial Family, as well as rude remarks about foreign monarchs or governments or propaganda of socialism. Sidorov's book, which has over 400 pages and was published in St. Petersburg, apparently did not raise any of these concerns. On the Russian censorship, see: Charles Ruud, *Fighting Words: Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press, 1804–1906* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), chaps. 9, 12; Natal'ya Patrusheva, *Tsenzurnoye vedomstvo v gosudarstvennoy sisteme Rossiyskoy imperii vo vtoroy polovine XIX – nachale XX veka [The censorship department in the state system of the Russian Empire in the second half of the nineteenth – early twentieth centuries]* (St. Petersburg: Severnaya Zvezda, 2013), 129–43, 334–35.

the Fair, and Zopernheim acting as a guide while in America and Canada. In the very beginning, the author immediately states that it is a pity that Russia is one of few countries in Europe that is out of "the Cook's web" since this world-known company can organize tours to almost any location in the world and facilitates traveling, but, in his view, Russian hotels and travel organizations do not wish to make any concessions out of fear of losing profits.[29] The group was given places on the steamer *Friesland* of the Red Star Line, a joint American-Belgian company. Sidorov sees it as a "giant floating hotel" with three classes of comfort, the third one taken mostly by immigrants. While he made more general remarks about life during the voyage (enjoying the sunsets, describing passengers suffering from seasickness, and participating in a small ball organized on board with the cacophony of music and dances), he and his fellow travelers stayed dissatisfied with the provided food based on the American cuisine. Some of it proved to be stale from the start of the trip, and Sidorov believed the claims from other passengers that the food given by rival French or German steamer companies was much better, from the start comparing Europe and America.[30]

The tourist group convened together in New York. Sidorov considered the people traveling with him as an important factor in the overall pleasure during the trip as comfort. While still in Europe he agreed with Muller's statement that, at least, there were to be no British tourists who were infamous for misbehavior. Among his companions, there was an only woman from Vienna Ida Zelenweich who at first made Sidorov concerned about potential discomfort for both sexes, but in the end, he got friendly with her and cited many of her thoughts or remarks during the trip. There also was physician Nyulig from Hungary who often made sarcastic comments about the danger of crossing the ocean and later America overall. Other companions were officers from the Plzen 35th Regiment of the Austo-Hungarian Army, including its colonel Bohdan Rassl, its captain, and two lieutenants as well as landowner Lotsh, all from the present-day Czech Republic. Sidorov showed sympathy to all of the aforementioned companions, including to Czechs due to also being Slavs. In contrast, he reports that this assembled group of eight did not like the other two merchant tourists from Vienna with whom they met in New York. In addition, Sidorov and, according to him, the other seven tourists were irritated with Zopernheim due to his incompetence, arrogance, reluctance to show cultural institutions in cities, and, for Sidorov personally, being a Jew.

Nevertheless, in the New World Sidorov was impressed with all the hotels that he stayed in. Giving the most detailed description of the Central Broadway Hotel in New York, the author praises the level of comfort in the rooms – huge beds, a convenient washbasin, and electricity everywhere. In addition, the hotel provided a huge number of services to its visitors, such as a barbershop, a bookstore, a drugstore, as well as operating telegraph and telephone, while some of the rooms were so adorned that they looked like European palaces. He gives the biggest praise to what he called the "bar-room," combining a restaurant for hotel visitors, a meeting place, and a cheap dining option for poor outsiders. Despite the hotel's

[29] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 8–9.

[30] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 52–54.

food not completely suiting what he dubbed "our European stomachs," the hotel overall reminded him of a dream palace from *One Thousand and One Nights*.[31] The author similarly commended the comfort of American domestic steamers that the group used during their travels. For instance, he notes the following about the *New York* on the Hudson River, again focusing on services and rich furnishings:

> American steamers are rightfully called floating mansions. This is a multi-store house with wonderful verandas, hanging balconies, sparkling lounges that are especially well-decorated, with separate cabins for those interested, with huge canteens, a bar-room, a barbershop, a bathroom, with the sale of books, sweets, and other things, and with the orchestra playing all along. ... The lounges covered with expensive velvet carpets, set with wonderful furniture with bouquets of roses on the tables, luxurious lamps, and marble statues in the corners made us forget that we were on a steamer.[32]

The impression of European tourists regarding American railways was more mixed. The group experienced riding in a Pullman car, but in a parlor instead of a sleeping car – the one consisting of two rows of chairs that could spin around their axis. Despite rich decor and the availability of toilets, smoking, and dining rooms, and despite admitting the overall good experience, the group found this car too narrow and the car's plan not suitable neither for night trips nor for excessive luggage. Sidorov denied the popular claim that American trains only had one class for everyone, distinguishing between Pullman and the rest of the wagons, and to him, the interior of regular cars looked even less appealing. The train in addition sometimes went too fast, even though installed Westinghouse breaks and signalization ensured the safety of travel. Sidorov noted that there were no warning signs of the train leaving the station and that no conductor would ask the passenger to board, and he connects it to Americans from an early age getting used to thinking for themselves during their travels. In the end, the author, by citing the complaints of his companions, indicates the preference for European train travel.[33] Overall, it seems that the two major features of American travel as experienced by Sidorov, who paid for high-class accommodation and travel options, were the level of comfort and diverse services backed by technology, and both evoked constant comparison with Europe. In a way, this was an important part of "Amerikanizm" of Russian travelers both at the time and even later.[34]

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[31] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 117.

[32] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 204–5.

[33] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 224.

[34] For example, the description of a hotel in New York in the prominent travelogue *One-Story America* (1937) by Ilya Ilf and Yevgeny Petrov contains almost identical wonder about the level of comfort and technological advances, see: Lisa Kirschenbaum, *Soviet Adventures in the Land of the Capitalists: Ilf and Petrov's American Road Trip* (Cambridge University Press, 2024), 50.

The Description of Nature

Sidorov included detailed and lyrical impressions of the landscapes, likely due to his interest in botany and experience as a writer. In the very beginning he marks the words of Muller who escorted them within Europe that while the New World is indeed grandiose and fascinating, one will not see true beauty there. Before the trip across the Atlantic Sidorov briefly praised the romantic Rhine, in the area of which he had lived for some time, and the greenery in Belgium. On board the steamer, despite all the discomforts, he was amazed by the endless ocean, the clear nights, and even the power of the ocean storm, while also describing the passengers' encounters with jellyfish and even dolphins on the way. He regularly uses poetic literary language when describing the sights and when sharing his impressions about cities and the Fair later. For instance, he depicts the beautiful view one could see while on board during the sunset:

> The day looked as if it was melting in the ocean, and the waters carried away its shining coloration while burning with the gilding of the sun, the purple of the dawn, and the silver of the rising moon. … The moon nights on the ocean are full of untold beauty, the melancholic thoughtfulness that the monotonous gliding of the waves give to them in this water desert, and this marvelous mystery that inspires our fantasies. The *Friesland*, painted with the silver of the moon, was dashing through the silvery waves like a giant bird. … These fairy-like pictures, passing by like sweet dreams, couldn't be forgotten.[35]

The first major description of American nature comes during the trip on the Hudson River to West Point on the steamer *New York* mentioned previously. While the author compared it with the Volga, his companions paralleled it with the Rhine. The conclusion written down by Sidorov was that while Hudson was wilder and more grandiose than the Rhine, it lacked romance since the latter had the relics of ancient and medieval architecture seen everywhere on its shores.[36] On the other hand, he gives a several-page description of the flora of the region, especially trees, which he humanizes and even includes their scientific names in Latin in footnotes. He recognized some of the trees as similar to those in Europe but still admitted that the herbs, the bushes, and the trees seemed both "like and unlike" compared to what he knew and probably studied as a botanist in St. Petersburg. This notion of the distinctiveness of American scenery only incited his interest and contradicted Muller's remark in the very beginning:

> I gazed with pleasure at the greenery of forests, the velvet of grass, these tiny white asters that set up their umbrellas, the dusty plantain, yellow wood sorrels, and chamomiles around the roads and ditches. After crossing the ocean, the vegetation impressed the eye, and I was

[35] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 74–75.
[36] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 208.

> completely glued to the peculiar flora of the New World, with its unknown children. I greeted my old acquaintances, the seeds of which were transported by wind, sea, or humans, while eagerly looking at the unknown natives.[37]

He further extends the notion of similarity and simultaneous uniqueness when exploring the Philadelphia Zoo. Despite noticing the lack of organization regarding the exhibited animals, seeing unique South and North American species like buffaloes, grizzlies, and maikongs made him feel that the New World was truly different and independent from the Old not only in terms of flora and fauna but people as well. Later he revealed his passion for capturing and studying butterflies, as in Washington D.C. he spent a couple of evenings exploring and trying to capture some of them with one of his Czech companions and an American amateur butterfly hunter. Humanizing their appearance and behavior, he expresses wonder when he managed to catch one of the American moon moths that he could not get anywhere else. He confesses that if it was not for the tour, he would immediately buy a butterfly net and would stay in Washington exploring this "wondrous and amazingly colorful world of night fairies."[38] Overall, he praised all the landscapes that he saw during his trip in both the U.S. and Canada. He and the group remained particularly amazed by Niagara Falls, where they decided to stay an extra day despite the time limit. Visiting the American and the Canadian Falls, Goat Island, the Three Sisters Islands, the Dufferin Islands, and the Burning Springs, the author denounced rumors about rip-offs as well as ubiquitous and annoying souvenir traders on the site. Instead, he and his group conveyed their fascination during their stay, and Sidorov again depicts American nature as unique and impressive even compared to European:

> It is hard to say where the views of the waterfalls were the best. … One couldn't take his eyes away and felt sorry for every minute spent on anything else. There was something appealing, powerful, unconquerable in this falling mass of water, something so captivating that anyone gets the urge to jump into these hitting waves, these roaring streams, these bubbling currents. … The whole New World sees it as a duty to marvel at this wonder of nature, compared to which all well-known waterfalls in Europe are nothing but puny and powerless trickles.[39]

American Cities

Sidorov and his companions went mostly through major eastern cities, and he depicted New York most extensively. He describes it as something exotic and alien even before landing:

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[37] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 215.
[38] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 261.
[39] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 341.

> The whole of New York is a literal sea of huge, clumsy, and business-like houses that press each other and force some of the buildings to rise as towers to the sky. Some golden dome, a gothic bell tower, and a thick four-cornered tower stood above the condensed chaos of unattractive but impressive houses. And I looked and admired. Admired as if it was a rhino, a hippopotamus, or an elephant, marveling at its structure, its size, and its deformity.[40]

Though its customs were deemed as irritating and primitive, New York was nonetheless perceived as the greatest city in America and of the grandest in the world, with colossal trade influence, a dozen major avenues, and hundreds of streets. Noise and hustle were the constantly mentioned feature of every area, whether it was Broadway with its rows of colossal buildings and an incredible number of stores that made it look like one huge market, or Brooklyn and its famous bridge where hundreds of steamers were constantly in motion, bringing heat, smoke, and soot, while the houses and endless factories looked like "formless stone masses."[41] The transport system, including elevated railways, further contributed to constant noise and movement of the mass of people while also degrading the appearance of the streets. In contrast to these two major city areas, Queens made the author think about a separate "cheerful and constantly hustling" city, containing all kinds of entertainment facilities from beaches and cafes to shooting ranges and what he called "Russian sleds," in fact being a rollercoaster. While Sidorov and the group enjoyed themselves in this borough, the author disapproved of his experience in New York's department store, "a gigantic bazaar" that was so noisy that it made one go crazy despite having all kinds of goods within it. He thought similarly of his visit to the stock exchange, where excited people seemed to behave almost like wild animals. This stock exchange, located on Wall Street, reinforced his apparently prior existing preconception of Americans as desperate for money-making:

> The Americans bluntly call it *[Wall Street – author's remark]* "the street" for its power and wealth. … The one who at least once was tempted and tried his luck on this fatal street will leave it only when, dead, carried away from here forever. One who lost his fortune aims to get it back, the winner tries to double it, and all of them shout and dash like crazy in chasing the mighty dollar, and Wall Street has heard many groans, curses, screams of joy and thrill, but it is numb and cold, just like its marble columns and the fountains of its wonderful palaces.[42]

Suffering from heat and hearing rumors about great parks in New York, the author visited Central Park, and while admitting its grand design and availability of

[40] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 107.
[41] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 144–46.
[42] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 137.

many activities for athletes and youngsters, including baseball, he found it more business-like and less graceful and romantic than European major parks.

New York, nevertheless, was still more impressive than Philadelphia, where the author noticed a disarray of factories, telegraph lines, muddy streets with low-quality pavement that looked as bad as in distant localities in Russia, and many unattractive shacks. Despite praising its institutions like the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and the philanthropic activities of the town, his impression remained unfavorable:

> While several central streets near the City Hall, like Chestnut Street with its wonderful buildings and Broad Street with its pavement, are the exception, in the end, Philadelphia gave us the impression of a sweltering, dirty, undeveloped, and very unattractive town.[43]

The first two cities presented a striking contrast with Washington D.C., where the group appreciated the absence of hustle and factories, lots of vegetation, broad streets, and charming buildings. These impressions also differed from Pittsburgh which the group passed on the way. Sidorov describes it as the "grandest factory center" covered with thousands of production plants, a mist of smoke, and a volcano-like stream of sparks that also has such a level of noise that it feels like "a seething hell."[44]

On the way back Sidorov and the company also visited Boston which he dubbed "American Athens" for its intellectual life. He connected many of the town's educational and medical facilities as well as different kinds of social clubs and associations with the Puritan influence. He also noticed that Boston had many factories and docks that produced noise along with the constant movement of people and carriages on its streets. Unlike Philadelphia, however, this impression was smoothed by the central residential areas of the city which were reasonably quiet, and by visits to the City Hall (Old City Hall today), Faneuil Hall, Harvard, and the Boston Common, all of which got positive remarks. The view from the top of the City Hall, a picturesque seaside with connections between the peninsulas on which the city is located, and the balance between the greenery and the noisy business areas of Boston made altogether a pleasing picture.[45]

Impressions of Chicago

Chicago, according to urban researchers, by the 1890s exemplified the growth and the contradictions of urbanization in America in general. By the time of the Fair, two decades after the 1871 fire, Chicago reaffirmed its status as the major logistical hub of the country as well as the center of lumber, grain, and meat packing while also developing the production of industrial products like steel and railways. Its cosmopolitan character due to immigration and newcomers from the countryside, the contrast between rising developed urban districts, concentrated

[43] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 232.
[44] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 277.
[45] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 383.

fabrics, and many transitory areas or outright slums, and that between riches and vices produced a variety of impressions from Americans and foreigners alike.[46]

Sidorov, seeing at first many poor hovels, unattractive ditches, and a web of telegraph cables on the city's outskirts, did not even think that the train already entered Chicago. After Zopernheim said that they were already in the city, Sidorov reports how the entire group almost simultaneously exclaimed: "That is Chicago? It's gross!"[47] Nevertheless, Sidorov still called Chicago the "phoenix-city" that, following the major fire, as if by magic turned into a global center of meat and grain trade, while its gardens and brilliance similarly added to its status as the second city in the entire U.S. With thousands of people from all over the world arriving to see the Fair, Sidorov felt like Chicago turned into a real Babel. Colossal skyscrapers further strengthened this impression. The group got on top of the recently built Masonic Temple, the highest building in the town at the time, and Sidorov describes the opening panorama:

> It's an immeasurable sea of houses pierced by the Chicago River, railways, and narrow streets, decorated by multiple green patches of gardens, parks, and squares, and limited by the blue Michigan filled by steamers, boats, and barges. It is hard to imagine a similar view. Thousands of fabric pipes rise up with their smoked obelisks, challenging the churches' belltowers, while the insanely tall buildings stand with their amazingly bold roofs along the stone chaos. I knew that America is a country of wonders and that here one has to stop all the time because of the fascination, but Chicago surpassed everything, and to be fair, this town is considered the greatest wonder here in the New World too.[48]

The city was indeed huge and filled with endless activity. The group rode around its districts, often stopping to enjoy the local parks, especially Lincoln Park. However, the author heard from other fairgoers and overall confirmed in his mind that Chicago did not have any noteworthy cultural institutions like museums, monuments, or galleries. And while the city itself could be called a wonder, Sidorov was concurrently appalled by seeing much dirt, slums, and abandoned areas. He concludes that Chicago, despite all its grandeur and chic of the major streets like Madison Street and Michigan Avenue, feels more like a "half-western, half-eastern city," marking the East as inferior in his imagination of West/East dichotomy.[49]

Sidorov and his companions also visited the infamous Union Stock Yards, a major meatpacking facility that ensured the role of Chicago as the center of cattle trade and already was an object of visit of foreign travelers, including Russians.

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[46] David Burg, *Chicago's White City of 1893* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1976), 45–46; Gilbert, *Perfect Cities*, 23–26.

[47] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 281.

[48] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 285–86.

[49] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 287–88.

As if confirming his negative preconceptions against it, he left disgusted by the automatic and almost virtuoso order in which cows, sheep, and other animals were transferred and butchered by thousands per day and quickly prepared into different kinds of food even when their bodies were still trembling, and the blood flowing from their insides. Such a picture "paralyzed the brain, the heart, and the nerves," implying the vision of American civilization as based on machinery at the cost of humanity.[50] Still, Sidorov's impressions were somewhat softened after the visit to Pullman town next to Chicago. Though seeing it as lacking creativity, he still admired the grandeur of the undertaking (noting that grandeur seems to be a major feature for much in the New World) as well as the living conditions of the workers, admitting that what he saw was superior to worker's life in Europe.

Overall, Sidorov makes varying remarks about American cities, but it is visible that they often represent something hard to comprehend from his constructed point of view as a European tourist, and things like noise, factory concentration, or skyscrapers are the object of mixed reaction of wonder and disapproval connected with concerns related to urban development lagging behind rapid industrialization and development of technologies and the effect of the latter on the mindset and lifestyle of city dwellers.[51] These contradictory notions emerge especially clearly in Chicago, evoking both Sidorov's awe and rejection by indicating it as non-western and thus inferior. It is notable that after he left Chicago for Toronto and found the latter city's center filled with ads like in America, he nonetheless appreciated the absence of "seething life," hustle, and the tranquility of its streets filled with wonderful greenery.[52]

The Evaluation of the Fair

Sidorov and the group had in total of eight days according to Cook's program to explore the fairgrounds. They decided to split and see the Fair separately, meeting together only in the Lexington Hotel or in the restaurant of the Old Vienna on the Midway Plaisance to rest and exchange their impressions. He describes the White City as a wonder and a "gleaming phantasmagoria" of statues, lakes, gondolas, and shops, noting huge crowds rushing to see the Fair that at first made it hard to orientate and get one's act together:

> Enormous waves of people come from all sides to all the entrances, to this colossal, diverse, universal town, to this mosaic market of all nations, "World-Fair" as Americans call it, to this distinctive masquerade of people and buildings, to these astonishing crowds, to this collection of wonders and curiosities of the whole modern world.[53]

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[50] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 298.

[51] See Milla Fedorova, *Yankees in Petrograd, Bolsheviks in New York: America and Americans in Russian Literary Perception* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2013), 128–32. for an insight into Russian travelers' perception of American technologies both at the turn of the century and in the 1920s-1930s.

[52] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 356.

[53] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 315.

The author briefly writes about the Great Exhibit Halls, praising the exhibits of the Fisheries and the Horticultural buildings, but pointing out his slight disappointment with the Electricity Building with not much new inside. For him, the major feature of all visited buildings seemed to be grandeur and splendor, especially in the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, a "colossus" with an immeasurable number of items inside. While he did not write much about foreign exhibits except applauding the French elegance compared to the bulky and rather distasteful German pavilion in the Liberal Arts Building and briefly commending the Russian pavilion there, he visited some U.S. state buildings, praising them for allowing to get a glimpse on history and life in these regions when there was no time to visit them all. Sidorov paid considerable attention to the Midway Plaisance, describing it as a long international street filled with all types of attractions, cafes, and theaters, with never-ending music and dances of the people of the East and natives and an "indescribable diversity of costumes and types of people." He visited the Lapland Village, the Chinese Theater, and Carl Hagenbeck's animal circus, while also witnessing "typical and unattractive" belly dances in the Algerian and Tunisian villages. However, he was fascinated with what he believed to be the "original Eastern life" of Cairo Street, the ride on the Ferris Wheel, as well as the World's Congress of Beauty that attracted all fairgoers. He also managed to visit the La Robida on the last day of his stay. Though he did not evaluate what he saw on the Midway on the whole, he still underlined its cosmopolitan character and diversity.

In contrast, he was absorbed by the items in the Fine Arts Building. Noting the popularity of Russian paintings, he at first was attracted to European works, but in the end admitted that the most interesting section was that of the host nation, noting the enormous number of interesting items, many of them looking different compared to "our Europe." Nevertheless, he was in particular impressed by works of marine painter Thomas Alexander Harrison, as well as individual paintings like those of Irish-American artist Thomas Hovenden (Breaking Home Ties) and Charles Stanley Reinhart (Awaiting the Absent and Washed Ashore).

While praising the grandeur of much of what he saw, Sidorov compared his experience with the 1889 Paris Fair that he also visited, again contrasting America and Western Europe in his mind and giving the preference for the latter:

> However grand and splendid everything was, it still lacked the charm and coquetry that the French Fair was full of, making one forget that it was all temporary. While strolling around Japanese, Javanese, Indian, and Eskimo villages with all their decor, inhabitants, and home life I didn't separate from the Fair's surroundings and didn't travel back to the homeland of these natives like in Paris.[54]

He admitted that the Fair looked like a fantasy come true and a mix between a fairy tale and reality that compared the past with the present and with the probable future. The exhibits, the fairgoers, and the atmosphere made him feel like "one

[54] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 318.

of the pawns complementing this worldwide bazaar."[55] Nevertheless, when it was time to leave (exactly on 4 July), Sidorov was glad to do it due to exhaustion, endless crowds, and hustle. The salute in honor of Independence Day that the group saw before leaving Chicago marked a proper end for their visit which was evaluated by the author both as a "dream-like phantasmagoria" and as if at last being released from a "pressing and unconquerable nightmare."[56]

The Image of America

Sidorov displays his major conceptions about the U.S. upon arriving in New York and seeing the Statue of Liberty which served many Russian travelers both for outlining their prior prejudices and evaluating their own experience upon leaving the country.[57] He imagines it as a symbol of the New World's charm that following Columbus' expeditions tempted many to escape for the pursuit of happiness and away from the outdated and brutal norms of early modern Europe and the pressure of the authoritarian Vatican. These people brought with them the best from their home countries, forming the Republic. In addition, the Statue represents the improvements and reforms in American history. Now this sculpture lights the way for immigrants (many of whom were on the *Friesland*, anxious and afraid, but bracing themselves for the new life) "to the cities of freedom" of the young and great country representing a promised land, where everyone is equal, where all religions are tolerated, and where "the humanity grows hourly in its colossal creations." Sidorov completed this idealized picture by confessing that he could not believe that he finally reached the New World, combining positive notions, whether pre-conceived or acquired throughout his trip, of American values, uniqueness of its history and geography, and its technological advances:

> Yes, it was the New World that I eagerly read about in the novels of Cooper, Mayne Reid, and Gustave Aimard, the former country of red-skinned Indians where Mississippi, Colorado, and Missouri run, the country of former slavery, where stood Uncle Tom's cabin mourned by our bitter tears on the pages of Beecher Stowe's story, the country of plantations and prairies, buffaloes and wild horses, steppe dahlias and sunflowers, the birthplace of the beneficial potato, the country proud of the great names of its heroes Washington, Franklin, and Lincoln, the country that crushed and washed away slavery with the blood of compatriots, breaking its shameful chains and giving all benefits of freedom, the country of electricity, machines, and fairy-like inventions of Edison.[58]

Sidorov focuses primarily on urban residents of major cities, neglecting writing about life in villages or smaller towns, and, for the most part, his descriptions

[55] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 322.
[56] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 336–37.
[57] Fedorova, *Yankees in Petrograd, Bolsheviks in New York*, 117–18.
[58] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 94–95.

were in the chapter related to New York, implying the image of life in this city on the entire country. He describes American preferences in food (crackers, oysters, different drinks but always with ice), the importance of newspapers for the average American, the abundance of ads that are necessary for any business or artist to attract the public, Americans' love for picnics and small trips, as well as their accommodation preferences (an ideal being a cottage outside of the central city areas). He was surprised by the uniformity of clothes worn by town dwellers and mentioned the development of window shopping among ladies and the system of subscriptions or memberships for different services, as well as underlined the unceasing interest of Americans in inventions and all kinds of petty things. He praised the innovative American education system that promoted the pupils' independence and practical skills compared to that in Europe and the parenting of children who were given an independent voice in the family and learned to bear responsibility and become self-sufficient from an early age. He additionally applauded the social mobility of the American society in general. Despite criticism of certain aspects of city life mentioned previously and despite that some of his companions could not see themselves living in American metropolises, Sidorov grew rather attached to what he saw, giving a positive contrast compared to Europe, especially in terms of technology and personal initiative, with the former again gaining a positive notion like earlier in the description of travel conditions and being "Amerikanizm" worthy of imitation:

> I liked this freedom that allowed one to take risks. You want to build a twenty-story house – build it, no one will forbid it. … That's why on American soil, where the laws of the old days don't limit or disenfranchise, there are so many wonders. … That's why here giant ferries carry entire trains over rivers and waterways, that's why there are mind-boggling bridges, and the machines almost took over humans, why the transport is cheap and comfortable, why people value their time that we're wasting aimlessly and go forward, not only catching up to the Old World in a short time but often surpassing it.[59]

However, he revealed more mixed opinions when writing about American religion as well as "high" and "low" culture. Sidorov was amazed by the number of churches but wrote mockingly about most city facilities closed on Sundays, as if forcing people to pay a visit to the church. He mentions that there are countless religious sects in the country, and each strives to attract as many people as possible, bluntly promoting themselves in the press and organizing secular social events for both newcomers and established members. But he disapproved of this practice and stayed repulsed after visiting churches where he saw well-dressed people organizing secular events within their walls, making it look more like amusement rather than serious piety. In the end, calling the entire religious tradition "hypocritical" and "insincere," he gives preference to Russia and Europe

[59] Sidorov, *Amerika,* 143–44.

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> Continuously visiting churches during several boring Sundays, I got the most unfavorable impression from all these motley crowds, from this music, social tea, joint signing, pompous speeches, and all of this chatter aimed at attracting the public and getting on one's nerves.[60]

A notable feature of his account is that during his visits to art galleries and the Fine Arts Building of the Fair, he gives a detailed description of some of the works that appealed to him. He and the group visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, where, while collections of items from the pre-Columbus era were praiseworthy, the majority of paintings looked like imitations of European artists, with few memorable American works. Despite praising the American art section at the Fair, on his way back to Europe in Boston's Museum of Fine Arts the author similarly found little of interest produced by American artists. He notes that not only in terms of arts but also in general the word "European" seems to have the same importance to Americans as "American" to many Russians, underlining a presence of Russia-Europe-America triangulation in his imagination and admitting the interest of his countrymen in the New World. In terms of "high" culture, however, Sidorov aligns himself and Russia with Europe as supposedly superior:

> All these copies have little interest to us, Europeans, but are dear to America, where arts have only just awoken, and where European great examples must influence the nature of the American, practical but still lacking poetic feeling, and rouse in him the love for the beautiful.[61]

He makes a similar comment regarding American music that is filled with popular examples but lacks something more elevated. Sidorov, in a quite derogatory way, explains it by the fact that most Americans spend their days in hard work and "chasing the dollar" and at the end of the day they require something more low-brow. Such a way of life influences even children, so that they "lose the poetic streak" in their childhood, and, unlike in Europe, soon become used to trains and electricity while laughing at those who would want to tell them "tales about fairies, wizards, and ghosts," again underlining the excessive impact of technology on a human being in America.[62] However, he still envisions and hopes for the development of American "high" culture, appreciating Thomas Alexander Harrison as a recent example of a growing American painting school and naming major American literary classics. These developments make him believe that soon the U.S. will also present new famous musicians and overall get "the still missing halo of arts." In addition, despite disapproving of the influence of ads on the cultural taste of the "high" public, he found the custom of putting good art in public places worthy of imitation.

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[60] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 196.
[61] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 177.
[62] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 150.

He also visited several operettas and popular plays before the Fair. While thinking that in general America follows Europeans in theaters' repertoire and popular shows, he notes the prevalence of acrobatics, juggling, and low-brow performances compared to something more serious:

> In this love for such amusements, one can see the English origin of Americans, and even though Germans sometimes organize serious musical evenings and events which are also popular among locals, they still can't replace boxing with kangaroos, fat-legged women playing leapfrog, and athletic exercises of clowns with their verses, dances, and gymnastics.[63]

At the Fair itself, he reinforced these thoughts on American popular culture when witnessing Buffalo Bill's "Wild West Show" located next to the fairgrounds which enjoyed enormous popularity despite not being part of the Fair. Sidorov confessed that it reminded him of what he read in Cooper's and Gustave Aimard's novels and that one could not find "a performance that was more characteristic of the New World and the United States."[64] He also visited the opera "America" in the Auditorium Building. Produced by Hungary-born impresario Imre Kiralfy specifically for the Fair, it told the story of the Americas from the Columbus era to the present in live pictures and performances based on the idea of the rise of Progress, Peace, Happiness, Liberty, and other notions in American life. Sidorov was astonished at the end when the glorious culminating ceremony of all nations coming to the Fair and paying homage to the figure of America was suddenly interrupted by the performance of acrobats coupled with some popular music. He conveys his confusion:

> Acrobats were wonderful and performed well, but I couldn't reconcile with allowing them on the scene in such a solemn minute. "That's how our public loves!" – I was explained. – "That's the New World!" And even though such an extravaganza ended with an apotheosis with the appearance of all nations and allegorical figures presenting the most beautiful picture, the acrobats ruined the impression. What can one do! America![65]

Overall, Sidorov strives to present himself as a cultivated person, mocking, though without insulting, American "low" culture and envisioning himself as superior in terms of "high" culture based on his implied identity as a European

[63] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 183.

[64] Not only Sidorov but many Europeans of the time were equally impressed with the "authenticity" of the show that also toured in Europe and thought of it as an important part of American mass culture, see: Robert Rydell and Rob Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: The Americanization of the World, 1869–1922* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 116–17.

[65] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 312–13.

knowledgeable in arts, while disregarding activities among Americans that could be considered middle-class culture.[66]

The author also comments on the position of different groups in American society. While on the *Friesland*, he met with a German woman who had already settled in the country and who praised it, including for the respect that women get in American society. Sidorov did not argue against these remarks, and later also lauded the development of female education. He briefly writes about the Chinese in America, who overall live in a secluded way, thinking of the U.S. only as a place for work while also enjoying opium and spreading its sales throughout the country. He does not write about Native Americans and instead pays extra attention to African Americans while in New York. He noticed that despite often wearing the same fashionable clothes as whites and despite that some of them already turned into a “black aristocracy,” they were in general avoided by whites and took a segregated and lower position in society. Sidorov also described how in one of the popular operas a white actor with a black-painted face parodied an African American by imitating sounds of different animals and caused “an endless furor” in the public when he brought soap and washed his skin back. The author liked African American music that reminded him of the mountain men of the Caucasus. However, he makes a couple of derogatory remarks himself, stating that the disregarding of African Americans by whites comes, based on his observations, mostly because of “their unattractive looks, their unpleasant smell during the summer, and their somewhat naive and child-like character,” while later in the Philadelphia Zoo he notes the popular rumor that jaguars in the wild prefer to attack non-white people due to the odor of their skin evaporation.[67] He sums up his impressions of African Americans as a whole rather than individuals, providing a racialized image:

> I liked them, and the strange attitudes of white Americans to them puzzled me. A face black like that of a boot, curly hair, pupils that look like burning coal, unbelievably good nature, and peacefulness but also laziness, sluggishness, and stealing describe these “colored people” as they’re called in America since the title “black” is considered an insult.[68]

Despite all these impressions, Sidorov did not write anything about the domestic or economic situation in the U.S. at the time. It is worth remembering that the Fair began at a time of panic which then led to a four-year economic depression

[66] Ilf and Petrov, though with a four-decade difference, positioned themselves in a similar way and did not mention developments in “middle-brow” culture, see: Kirschenbaum, *Soviet Adventures in the Land of the Capitalists*, 121.

[67] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 155–56, 242.

[68] Sidorov, 255; Russian travelers, whether from the late imperial or early Soviet period (including Ilf and Petrov) often generalized about African Americans based on what Kirschenbaum calls “romantic racialization”, see: Marinova, *Transnational Russian-American Travel Writing*, 115; Kirschenbaum, *Soviet Adventures in the Land of the Capitalists*, 95.

and occasional surges of unrest. Chicago similarly experienced its effect, with the famous Pullman strike in 1894, but even upon publication of the book in 1895, Sidorov did not mention anything about instability in America.

Instead, Sidorov left New York on the *Westernland* of the Red Star Line to Antwerp. Apparently, despite all the criticism, he formed a positive bias on the United States:

> I was so sad to bid goodbye to the New World, I wistfully departed from these wonderful shores that are full of a different life and different views, where people's merits are acknowledged and benevolent freedom flows, and I kept looking on this disappearing land obscured by the sea.[69]

Nevertheless, he mentioned cases when his companions voiced their preference for Europe upon arriving back, something that he still retained at least partially. Sarcastic doctor Nyulig from Hungary was delighted to see Antwerp's architecture following the experience abroad and eagerly compared it as superior to that in American cities, appreciating peace and quiet in comparison to "all this frenzy" across the Atlantic. In Cologne, Sidorov applauded the local hotel facilities which seemed equal, if not superior, to those in America, while Ida Zelenweich with whom Sidorov often talked, concluded in the final conversation with him: "No, our Europe is better, much better."[70]

Photos and Mistakes

Lyrical descriptions of nature, cities, and what he saw at the Fair and in America are offset by the fact that, unfortunately, Sidorov's account does not contain a single photo or any other visual materials (he only mentioned that the tourists took a group photo before departure to America). To be fair, it was common for some Russian accounts of the Fair and many Russian travelogues of the late nineteenth century in general not to include pictorial representations, relying solely on literary descriptions that Sidorov tried to make captivating and expressive.[71] Likely it had to do with avoiding potential additional costs of publishing (Sidorov did not include any pictures in his later travelogues about Russia as well). In addition, despite the evolving mechanization of the printing industry in Russia in the last third of the century as well as gradually rising literacy, primarily among peasants and the growing urban population, it was likely that not many among the latter two groups could afford richly illustrated accounts that

[69] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 403.
[70] Sidorov, *Amerika*, 422.
[71] Saul, *Concord and Conflict*, 200.

could be several times more expensive compared to textual.[72] Therefore, another reason for not including any photos was to make the book accessible to a wider readership and the possibility of selling extra copies and increasing the potential revenue of the author.

He has also made several mistakes, most related to dates. For example, briefly describing American history, he wrote that the Emancipation Proclamation was issued on 1 September rather than 1 January 1863 and that the Fifteenth Amendment was passed in 1868 rather than 1870. In addition, while he correctly noted that by that time the U.S. comprised forty-four states and had 444 electors, he wrongly stated that such a number of the latter was based on each state having ten electors.

Conclusion

Sidorov wrote from the constructed position of a European traveler visiting the country that he had formed preconceptions about while lacking knowledge of the language. He enjoyed its nature, rode through major eastern cities, and explored the Fair with his European companions. On almost all major subjects of his travel account, Sidorov links himself and his home country with Western Europe, evaluating and interpreting what he saw through its lens and pointing out what makes America as the "Other" different or similar. However, it seems as if to a considerable degree he does not go beyond the "mimetic capital" formed by earlier Russian travelers as well as major literary works about America who often described the American lifestyle in similar terms, with both negative and positive notions, and that even later writers like Ilf and Petrov accumulated in their travelogues four decades later.

It is visible that he views America as a country of rapid technological progress and industrialization that contribute to growing urbanization and the expansion of urban culture. Approving of American technological development in general and the level of comfort and services related to travel conditions, much about American freedoms, education, women's position in society, and living and working conditions, he, like some earlier Russian visitors to the U.S., also reproduces Rogger's concept of "Americanizm" that should be worthy of attention, if not imitation at home. In addition, to a degree due to his interest in botany, Sidorov outlines the uniqueness and magnificence of American nature.

While the Fair marked for him primarily grandeur, a characteristic often used when describing America, he still showed reservations about it compared to recent Fairs in Europe. In addition, he reproduces more ambivalent features of America which were also previously described by Russian travelers before him such as unfamiliar metropolises that evoke wonder, but due to the problems of the rising cities like noise, dirt, and concentration of factories – alienation and even

[72] Irina Frolova, ed., *Kniga v Rossii, 1881–1895 [The book in Russia, 1881–1895]* (St. Petersburg: Rossiyskaya natsional'naya biblioteka, 1997), 40–45, 305–8; On the particularities of book printing, see: Innes Keighren, "Books and Print Technology," in *The Routledge Research Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Alasdair Pettinger and Tim Youngs (London: Routledge, 2020), 354–64.

comparison with the East as inferior and the effect of technology and industrial work on American cultural preferences and overall humanity, the downsides of "Amerikanizm." In addition, he openly displays his sense of superiority as a European in cultural affairs. In the end, Sidorov's view of America is to a considerable degree based on what must have been his preconceptions and conclusions about America, and the Fair did not seem to have a decisive influence on the change of his notions while reinforcing others (such as general grandeur but also the peculiarity of American "low" culture). His account gives a somewhat superficial but still complicated picture of the United States (or at least a part of it) during the time of its major international exposition, with positive and negative displayed together and allowing Russian readers to make up their minds about America as the complicated "Other."

About the Author

Maksim Pelmegov is a PhD student at the North American Literature and Culture Subprogram, University of Debrecen, Hungary, with a background in Russian history. His thesis focuses on mutual images in Russian-American travel writing from the end of the nineteenth century to the First World War.

What Would Sakharov Say? The Americanization of Andrei Sakharov

Author: Paul Rubinson

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Abstract
From the late 1960s to the late 1980s, the Russian physicist Andrei Sakharov became globally admired for his advocacy of human rights. Repressed by the Soviet government for his activism, Sakharov became a figure of near-universal admiration in the United States. Despite the wide array of support for Sakharov, conservative and liberal Americans struggled to control Sakharov's image and co-opt his words to support various sides in a distinctly American political context. Efforts to claim the mantle of Sakharov have continued in the years since Sakharov's death, obscuring his Russian identity and muting his human rights legacy.

What Would Sakharov Say? The Americanization of Andrei Sakharov

Paul Rubinson

In August 2023, a Russian court ordered the dissolution of the Sakharov Center, a Moscow organization that commemorated the legacy of political dissent and independent thought during the Soviet era. According to the *Washington Post*, the Russian government had for a decade targeted the Sakharov Center because of its continued advocacy of human rights, finally forcing its closure as part of an accelerating crackdown on dissent during the war against Ukraine. The Center's name commemorates Andrei Sakharov, a revered Soviet physicist and dissident whose human rights activism the Soviet government tried—and failed—to silence; his death in 1989 did nothing to diminish his power. A mourner's sign at Sakharov's funeral captured the fear of him felt by the Soviet government, telling the deceased: "Even dead you terrify them."[1] In contrast, Sakharov always seemed to enjoy in Cold War America a unanimous esteem across the societal spectrum, from ordinary individuals to elite scientists, politicians of both parties, and government officials. Should Russia succeed in erasing Sakharov's memory, it might provide some comfort to think that, as a global human rights icon, Sakharov bequeathed a legacy of peace, justice, and social responsibility to the world at large and particularly the United States, where the scientific community adopted his causes as its own. But a closer analysis of the American embrace of Sakharov reveals a different reality: in the United States, Sakharov's profound, complex legacy has been the object of extensive political struggle.

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The Americanization of Andrei Sakharov began in the 1970s at the intersection of two mammoth shifts in global activism and geopolitics. First, the cause of human rights took hold across the Western world and particularly the United States. President Jimmy Carter's decision to enshrine human rights as the centerpiece of U.S. foreign policy and grassroots activists' mobilization

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[1] Niha Masih, "Russian court dissolves Sakharov Center, a prominent human rights group," *Washington Post*, Aug. 19, 2023, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/08/19/russia-sakharov-center-shut-down/; Andrei Sakharov, *Memoirs* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 681; Joshua Rubenstein and Alexander Gribanov, eds., *The KGB File of Andrei Sakharov* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 348.

behind the same cause exemplified this shift. Upholding the international ideals of human rights bolstered the country's pride and its international reputation, both in tatters after the perceived barbarity of the Vietnam War. Criticizing other countries for human rights violations, whether the leftist Soviet Union or far-right Latin American dictatorships, ensured a liberal-conservative consensus on human rights. In the words of the historian Barbara Keys, human rights "helped redefine America to Americans, for they were about American identity even more than they were about foreign policy."[2]

Second, the human rights revolution coincided with the détente in U.S.-Soviet relations. Between the late 1960s and the late 1970s, the superpowers reached agreement on a number of national security issues and in the process stabilized the Cold War. Détente was the purview of leaders and not activists, but human rights came to play a role, particularly after the signing of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. Signed by the United States, the Soviet Union, and almost every European country, the Final Act recognized the post-World War II borders of Eastern Europe. It also bound each signatory to protect the human rights of its citizens. Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev had long coveted the recognition of Eastern Europe's borders but he had given little thought to the human rights aspect of the agreement; activists nevertheless seized on those provisions to challenge Soviet political repression. Soviet and Eastern European dissidents became geopolitical actors by establishing citizens' groups to monitor adherence to the Final Act, most notably in Moscow where the physicist Yuri Orlov founded a branch of Helsinki Watch. In turn, western activists and policymakers, informed by groups such as Helsinki Watch, boosted dissidents' visibility and used "public embarrassment" to shame and pressure the Soviets into improving their human rights record.[3]

Orlov was the driving force behind Helsinki Watch in Moscow, but Sakharov served as a nexus for the shifts in human rights activism and geopolitics of the 1970s. American scientists in particular transformed their discipline and infused their professional identity with the values he espoused. And yet, during this age of transformation, the American movement for Sakharov fit in with a long tradition of American attempts to reform Russia and then the Soviet Union. Since the 1880s, according to historian David Foglesong, Russia existed in the American imagination as "an object of the American mission and the opposite of American virtues." Americans assumed that Russians yearned for a country based on American political freedoms and individual liberty.[4] During the 1970s, this mindset reemerged in efforts to help Soviet dissidents realize the universal human rights that Americans thought of as their own.

The tendency to Americanize dissidents fit within broader U.S.-Soviet relations and culture. During the Cold War, American journalists filtered their

[2] Barbara Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 3.

[3] Sarah Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 110.

[4] David Foglesong, *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire": The Crusade for a "Free Russia" since 1881* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1–6, 155–72.

depictions of the Soviet Union through their own American value system, reinforcing the belief that Soviets were essentially Americans-in-waiting. American journalists grew enamored with the plight of dissidents because they invoked a classic American trope: the freedom-loving underdog. They reported on dissidents' disillusionment while harboring and conveying an unexamined assumption that Soviets could eventually become more like Americans. As Dina Fainberg writes in her history of the phenomenon, "Journalists' descriptions of the dissidents obscured the distinctively *Soviet* (emphasis in original) nature of the dissident movement—the ways that the dissidents' actions and ideas about 'right' and 'good' developed in conversation with Soviet ideas and Soviet experiences and drew inspiration from the Russian and Soviet intelligentsia's preoccupation with morality and society."[5]

American scientists engaged the human rights movement because a substantial percentage of Soviet dissidents came from the sciences, and in their campaign to protect Sakharov they also Americanized Soviet dissidents. They saw dissident peers like Sakharov as misplaced Americans who shared a desire for freedom—but with an added wrinkle. To them, science was an international endeavor, a field whose values transcended the nation state and geopolitics. Ultimately, however, this dedication to internationalism thinly veiled the national aims of their own activism. When looking at Sakharov's plight in the Soviet Union, American scientists could only see science in a national context. The United States was, in their minds, the only proper place to conduct science because of its dedication to human rights. This Americanization of Sakharov, and indeed science writ large, enabled Sakharov to remain a symbol after the Cold War's end, liable to manipulation and misrepresentation by anyone.

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Born in 1921, Andrei Sakharov was a brilliant, soft-spoken Soviet physicist who designed his country's first thermonuclear weapons in the 1950s. For this and other accomplishments, Sakharov received just about every citation and privilege the state could offer, including—three times—the Hero of Socialist Labor award. But his growing unease about radioactive fallout led him to question his superiors' willingness to put civilians and soldiers at risk during nuclear tests. When these concerns drove Sakharov to confront Nikita Khrushchev directly in 1961, the mercurial Soviet leader responded "I'd be a jellyfish…if I listened to people like Sakharov." This upbraiding further inflamed Sakharov's conscience. In 1968, amid the optimism of the Prague Spring, Sakharov wrote an essay hailing intellectual freedom and arguing that a convergence of the best aspects of communism and capitalism would help end the threat of nuclear war. Smuggled to the West and widely read, "Progress, Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom" won him vast admiration from all quarters—except from Soviet authorities, who swiftly removed

[5] Dina Fainberg, *Cold War Correspondents: Soviet and American Reporters on the Ideological Frontlines* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 3, 186–88, 193, 206–07.

him from classified nuclear weapons work. The move emboldened Sakharov to broaden his activism by defending victims of state repression, challenging show trials, denouncing nuclear weapons, signing petitions, advocating for persecuted minorities, and warning of environmental degradation. If seemingly anyone in the Soviet Union needed help, he was happy to oblige. As a burgeoning dissident movement gained momentum, Communist Party authorities increasingly cracked down on his personal liberties. When Sakharov won the 1975 Nobel Peace Prize, they barred him from accepting the award in person. After he criticized the 1979 Soviet incursion into Afghanistan, the Kremlin exiled him to the closed city of Gorky, allowing him to live with his beloved wife Elena Bonner but otherwise cut off from his family, his dissident allies, and the worldwide scientific community, whom he could reach only through smuggled letters. His exile lasted until 1986 when General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev released him as part of his reform efforts. Back in Moscow, Sakharov jumped into debates over a new constitution until his death in 1989.[6]

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Sakharov's struggle for individual freedoms resonated in the United States, where scientists had linked their discipline to human rights since the country's founding.[7] In the 1970s and 1980s, Sakharov became a symbol of the unassailable ideals of free speech, free thought, and science as the way to demonstrate objective truths. Recent scholarship on U.S. efforts to aid Sakharov emphasizes a wide unanimity of admiration: Western scientists sought to emulate his bravery and boycotted scientific exchange with the Soviets in his name, in turn mobilizing a "meaningful" percentage of U.S. scientists as well as peers from France, Britain, West Germany, and Italy.[8] In addition to the boycott, Sakharov's American peers pressured Soviet officials with letters, lobbying, and statements to ameliorate their treatment of him, in particular his ability to communicate, seek medical treatment, move about freely, and see his family. Accounts of his reception in the West have suggested only mild differences—his supporters may have disagreed on tactics or held different views on scientists' role in politics, but they were all working for

[6] Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 217; on Sakharov, see Gennady Gorelik, *The World of Andrei Sakharov: A Russian Physicist's Path to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) and Jay Bergman, *Meeting the Demands of Reason: The Life and Thought of Andrei Sakharov* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009). On the origins, antecedents, and identity of Soviet dissidents, see Bergman, "Soviet Dissidents on the Russian Intelligentsia, 1956–1985: The Search for a Usable Past," *The Russian Review* 51, No. 1 (January 1992): 16–35. See also works on specific dissidents, such as Emma Gilligan, *Defending Human Rights in Russia: Sergei Kovalyov, Dissident and Human Rights Commissioner, 1969–2003* (London: Routledge, 2004).

[7] Paul Rubinson, "Mistress of the Sciences, Asylum of Liberty: Joseph Priestley, Human Rights, and Science in the Early U.S. Republic," *Isis* 112, No. 3 (September 2021): 484–506.

[8] Charles Rhéaume, "Western Scientists' Reactions to Andrei Sakharov's Human Rights Struggle in the Soviet Union, 1968–1989," *Human Rights Quarterly* 30, No. 1 (February 2008): 17–19.

Sakharov in their own particular way.[9]

While Sakharov's saga unfolded, however, some of those involved noted variances within the movement regarding activists' efforts and motives. In 1988, Sakharov's wife Bonner contrasted two camps of American advocates of Sakharov: those who genuinely worked for him on the one hand, and mere pretenders and opportunists on the other. "For one group Andrei is alive, and everything relating to him hurts them like their own pain," she wrote in her memoir; "for the others, he is a symbol, a game, politics, even personal success—a dead concept, I am afraid to say it, a dead man." Activists' true intentions, according to Bonner, could be determined by their willingness to sacrifice in Sakharov's name. For the truly committed, "Sakharov's name usually does not bring gain, success, or popularity, and often their honesty and lack of compromise actually involve them in loss—they lose an election, or do not receive an invitation, or are turned down for a visa, or are not given an honored post—but through them we live."[10]

In line with Bonner's characterizations, one scholar has demonstrated how Sakharov's would-be rescuers in the group Scientists for Sakharov, Orlov, and Shcharansky (SOS) prided themselves on "always doing something for Sakharov" and shared Bonner's disdain for part-timers, those not one-hundred percent dedicated to the cause.[11] This distinction between sacrifice and self-interest, however, is somewhat misleading; even the most dedicated Sakharov activists, it turns out, had something to gain, from bolstering an ideology, to advancing political goals, to settling scientific disputes, or even enhancing the reputations of their universities. American support for Sakharov was so universal that a scientist risked little—if anything—in advocating for him. His scientific supporters even claimed him as, in essence, a displaced American in order to signal how harmoniously American science mixed with human rights. Americans of all political persuasions admired his courage, expressing it in different ways. To some, his life inspired pursuit of social change, while others took it as confirmation of the evils of Soviet communism. More than anything, though, Sakharov's moral authority was a highly sought and politically useful prize, and during his life and after, a large and ideologically dispersed group of Americans maneuvered to claim his mantle as their own.

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One such attempt to speak for Sakharov took place on Human Rights Day, December 10, 2014, the sixty-sixth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. On that day the Hoover Institution, a think tank and archive on the

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[9] Rubinson, "'For Our Soviet Colleagues': Scientific Internationalism, Human Rights, and the Cold War," in Petra Goedde, William Hitchcock, and Akira Iriye, eds., *The Human Rights Revolution: An International History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 245–64.

[10] Elena Bonner, *Alone Together* (New York: Vintage, 1988), 128, 135.

[11] Charlotte Alston, "Scientists for Sakharov, Orlov and Shcharansky: Professional Networks, Human Rights and Dissent in the Late Cold War," *East Central Europe* 50 (2023): 126–38.

campus of Stanford University in Palo Alto, California, hosted the "Conference on Andrei Sakharov and the Conscience of Humanity," which its organizers described as an opportunity to address "humanity's present challenges in light of Sakharov's moral integrity, personal courage, scientific excellence, and devotion to human rights." To fulfill this vision, the Hoover (as it is known on Stanford's campus) drew almost exclusively from its immediate surroundings: fifteen of the nineteen participants were Hoover fellows or had other Stanford ties, including a former Secretary of State, a former Secretary of Defense, a future Secretary of Defense, a retired naval commander, a former Stanford president, and the CEO of Theranos, Elizabeth Holmes.[12]

These were heady days for the Theranos CEO: *Fortune* magazine had recently declared Holmes "out for blood" and estimated her personal worth at around $5 billion.[13] Before she entered federal prison in May 2023 in connection with her infamous and massive fraud, Holmes often spoke of health as a human right that sat at the core of her life's work. On that December day, she gave the audience her now-familiar inspiration story for Theranos: the uncle who died too early because his cancer was diagnosed too late, the absurd and unfair costs of and barriers to medical testing, and of course her fear of needles. As liberation from these systemic injustices she offered the Nanotainer and the single-drop-of-blood analysis that she was attempting to perfect. But it was Human Rights Day, and Holmes embellished her standard Theranos pitch to match the occasion. She reframed her talk around Sakharov's 1986 release from exile and credited him with inspiring "individuals like me who share in his commitment to and belief in the basic human rights defined in the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights." Near the end of her talk, she brazenly (and characteristically) appropriated Sakharov's cause. "By building on Sakharov's commitment to fighting for human rights, including the right to health care etched in the United Nations' declaration," she intoned, "we can build a world in which all people have access to the health information they need."[14]

What would Sakharov say about Holmes' posthumous endorsement? His lifelong stance on scientific integrity makes the answer fairly obvious. An early display of his bravery and integrity took place at a 1964 Soviet Academy of Sciences meeting where he openly opposed the nomination of Nikolai Nuzhdin, an acolyte of Trofim Lysenko. Lysenko created a Stalin-approved version of biology based on ideologically correct but wildly flawed pseudo-science; his critics were punished and genetic science in the Soviet Union was stunted. Sakharov shocked Nuzhdin and his allies—they expected a perfunctory approval at the meeting—by directly blaming Nuzhdin and Lysenko "for the shameful backwardness of Soviet

[12] "Conference on Andrei Sakharov and the Conscience of Humanity," Hoover Institution, https://www.hoover.org/events/conference-andrei-sakharov-and-conscience-humanity

[13] John Carreyrou, *Bad Blood: Secrets and Lies in a Silicon Valley Startup* (New York: Knopf, 2018), 208.

[14] Elizabeth Holmes, "Diagnosis, Reinvented for the Individual," in Sidney Drell and George Shultz, eds., *Andrei Sakharov: The Conscience of Humanity* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2015), 75–80.

biology and of genetics in particular, for the dissemination of pseudoscientific views, for adventurism, for the degradation of learning, and for the defamation, firing, arrest, even death, of many genuine scientists." The Academy promptly voted down Nuzhdin's nomination. Elsewhere Sakharov castigated Lysenkoism as an "unprincipled" perversion of science founded upon "scientific bankruptcy" and "economic adventurism," words that would also apply to Holmes' scheme to raise hopes and billions of dollars selling twenty-first century snake oil.[15]

What would Sakharov say? has been a difficult question to answer over the years, though many people—such as those at the Hoover—have tried. Thus, Holmes' appropriation of Sakharov could be easily dismissed but for the fact that it jibed neatly with other speakers at the conference who aligned Sakharov with a conservative, militarized, and free-market future. While Sakharov lived, it was so rare and so powerful to hear from the man himself that a 1974 collection of his interviews and speeches was titled simply *Sakharov Speaks*.[16] Soviet authorities feared his words' ability to inspire resistance. As a nuclear physicist, Sakharov enjoyed little privacy from Soviet government surveillance, but after losing his security privileges in 1968, the KGB shifted to active repression. His words—phone calls, letters, conversations, and writings—were strictly monitored, intercepted, and censored. In Gorky the KGB pilfered the only draft of his lengthy memoirs; after he painstakingly redrafted some nine hundred hand-written and five hundred typed pages from memory, the KGB stole them once again. Nonetheless, he agonizingly but defiantly rewrote them.[17] The desire to quiet him and throttle his moral authority remained strong even in 2014, when the Russian government labeled the Sakharov Center a "foreign agent" and the Hoover held its conference.

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Herbert Hoover founded his eponymous Institution in 1919, and for its first thirty-odd years it served strictly as a library for the extensive records he collected in public service. The Institution's famous tower went up in 1941—"Hoover's last erection," as Malcolm Harris calls it in his leftist history of Palo Alto—and today it continues to dominate the Stanford campus. In 1959, the now-former-President Hoover turned his library into a vehicle for anticommunism and crafted a new mission statement: "The purpose of this Institution must be, by its research and publications, to demonstrate the evils of the doctrines of Karl Marx whether Communism, Socialism, economic materialism, or atheism." In the following years, according to Harris, the Hoover "attract[ed] right-wing thinkers and donors to the university, spewing anti-collectivist theory across the nation." Implicated in the Vietnam War tragedy, the Hoover and its fellows were targets of Stanford's antiwar student riots in the 1960s, but they survived the turmoil and celebrated

[15] Quoted in B.M. Bolotovskii, "A Criminal Matter," in Sidney Drell and Sergei P. Kapitza, eds., *Sakharov Remembered: A Tribute by Friends and Colleagues* (New York: American Institute of Physics, 1991), 56; Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 234.

[16] Sakharov, *Sakharov Speaks* (New York: Knopf, 1974).

[17] Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 681.

the ascendence of an anticommunist and free market ideology during the 1970s. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn paid a visit in 1975, and Milton Friedman became a fellow two years later. Stanford faculty continued to be irked by the Hoover's conservative bent and continuously wrestled with various university presidents over its role on campus.[18]

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While Sakharov was feted in 2014 at Stanford's "beacon for right-wing thought on campus" (Harris' words again), and his step-daughter Tatiana Yankelevich provided the audience with "personal reminiscences," the conference offered pitifully little information about the man himself. The Bay Area had teemed with Sakharov supporters in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly those of SOS, but none of them were invited. While the conference organizers, former Secretary of State George Shultz and retired Stanford physicist Sidney Drell, had actually met Sakharov, two speakers candidly admitted to knowing next to nothing about him, while several others perfunctorily mentioned him before moving on to their topics of interest, which ranged from religious ethics to war, bioweapons, and technology. One presenter claimed that Sakharov had predicted the internet.[19]

Several months later, the Hoover published proceedings from the conference. Titled *Andrei Sakharov: The Conscience of Humanity* and edited by Drell and Shultz, the volume featured a photo of a worried-looking Sakharov on the cover. The attempt to conflate Sakharov's ideals with the Hoover's agenda was patently clear to reviewers. In *Physics Today*, the University of British Columbia professor Alexei Kojevnikov pointed out the conference's glaring misrepresentation of Sakharov and ridiculed the contributors' "understandings of peace and human rights" which "on some key issues run contrary to what Sakharov actually stood for." He bemoaned the attempt to co-opt Sakharov, "the ultimate among Soviet doves," by "Cold War hawks" and "neocons." The Hooverians vying for Sakharov's legacy contested this portrayal, complaining that the review was "outrageous" and full of "slurs," and that it was Kojevnikov, not the conference participants, who held a "rather dubious concept of Sakharov's value system." With the last word Kojevnikov declared Sakharov's legacy "absolutely incompatible with hawkish

[18] Malcolm Harris, *Palo Alto: A History of California, Capitalism, and the World* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2023), 350, 384, 573; Roxy Bonafont, Emily Lemmerman, and Lucas Rodriguez, "100 Years of Hoover: A History of Stanford's Decades-Long Debate over the Hoover Institution," *Stanford Politics*, May 11, 2019; Kenneth Lamot, "Right-thinking Think Tank," *New York Times*, July 23, 1978, 5.

[19] Harris, *Palo Alto*, 384; J. Bryan Hehir, "The Scientist as Prophet: Sakharov's World and Ours," William Swing, "The Soul and Sakharov," Lucy Shapiro, "Decoding the Biosphere and the Infectious Disease Threat," and Christopher Stubbs, "The Sakharov Conditions, Disruptive Technologies, and Human Rights," in Drell and Shultz, eds., *Andrei Sakharov: The Conscience of Humanity*, 21, 35, 70, 81. The internet claim was not even original—Gorelik made this argument in 2005, *The World of Andrei Sakharov*, 343.

and neoconservative agendas and must not be used for such purposes."[20]

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While Holmes' appearance stands out as the most bizarre, Drell was the most surprising participant in the Hoover's 2014 rebranding of Sakharov. Since 1956 Drell had been professor of physics at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center and its deputy director from 1969 to 1998. For just as long, Drell had advocated for nuclear arms control and advised the U.S. government on the technical aspects of arms control agreements. Upon his retirement from Stanford in 1998 he became a fellow at the Hoover.[21]

Andrei Sakharov: The Conscience of Humanity was not Drell's first collection of essays in honor of Sakharov. Almost thirty years earlier, Drell had co-edited a volume of postmortem tributes to Sakharov under the title *Sakharov Remembered*. While the Hoover's volume featured vapid banalities from strangers and coattail-grabbers, Drell's earlier collection reveled in endearing anecdotes from Sakharov's friends and colleagues from his earliest days as a physics student to his reading habits during World War II, the human rights meetings in his crowded apartment, his hunger strikes, and even the time Sakharov spent forty minutes chatting with a cab driver after reaching his destination, only to realize that the meter had continued to run the entire time. "I now understand why he showed so much interest in my theory of convergence," Sakharov later grimaced. The accounts leaned toward hagiography, with many Russian contributors hailing Sakharov as "the precursor of *perestroika* in our country," but they also exuded a genuine and widely shared love of Sakharov, and no one loved him more than Drell.[22]

Drell met Sakharov in August 1974 at a Moscow seminar on particle physics hosted by the Soviet Academy of Sciences.[23] Moved by Sakharov's personal integrity and deep concern for victims of Soviet repression, Drell anointed himself Sakharov's personal champion in the United States. For nearly two decades he communicated with Sakharov, Bonner, and their relatives in the United States. He also edited English translations of Sakharov's writings, and reminded American scientists and government officials in countless ways of Sakharov's plight. A major part of Drell's self-appointed mission was to serve as the curator of Sakharov's image in the United States—it was Drell who began referring to him as "the conscience of humanity"—and while this role grew out of his evident love for Sakharov and Bonner, it required guarding Sakharov's name from people and

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[20] Alexei Kojevnikov, "Andrei Sakharov: The Conscience of Humanity," *Physics Today*, July 2016, 61–62; Drell and Shultz; Vladimir Z. Kresin and Tatiana Yankelevich; and Kojevnikov, "Book on Sakharov raises issues," *Physics Today*, February 2017, 14–15.

[21] On Drell's life after retirement, see Philip Taubman, *The Partnership: Five Cold Warriors and Their Quest to Ban the Bomb* (New York: Harper, 2012).

[22] Vladimir Ya. Fainberg, "Precursor of *Perestroika*," and G.A. Askaryan, "Sad Humor in the Era of 'Confrontation,'" in Drell and Kapitza, eds., *Sakharov Remembered*, 15, 63.

[23] Drell, "Tribute to Andrei Sakharov," in Drell and Kapitza, eds., *Sakharov Remembered*, 84; Sakharov, *Moscow and Beyond: 1986 to 1989* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 69.

causes Drell found unworthy.

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Drell had not always been as closely aligned with the Hoover as he was by 2014—in fact, during the 1980s, Drell had vigorously opposed an early Hoover attempt to co-opt Sakharov in the name of Reagan-era anticommunism. At that time, the Hoover was riding high, frequently credited with initiating the Reaganite revolution. The Hoover "*was* Reagan," Malcolm Harris writes (emphasis in original), and a 1978 *New York Times* profile noted that "[t]hrough its ties with the right wing of the Republican Party, the Hoover Institution is exerting increasing political influence. It is the brightest star in a small constellation of conservative think tanks that serve as workshops where out-of-office intellectuals can fabricate the underpinnings of domestic- and foreign-policy positions for the Republicans." Elsewhere the *Times* counted twenty-six Hoover fellows serving in the Reagan administration.[24]

In September 1984, the Hoover hosted a conference convened by the Andrei Sakharov Institute. Formed in 1980, the Sakharov Institute promoted Sakharov's ideals in the United States by sponsoring a Sakharov Fund that raised money, a touring orchestra that performed benefit concerts, and a math and science education program. Drell belonged to the Sakharov Institute's advisory board and supported the organization's endeavors. But at the 1984 conference, the Sakharov Institute introduced a new goal: to "promote democratization in the Soviet Union."[25] Depending on who was asked, this effort could entail smuggling banned books to Soviet readers, destabilizing the Soviet government, or pursuing full-fledged regime change, but in general the rhetoric of democratization harmonized with Reagan's aggressive Cold War policy. At that time, a neoconservative ascendence in U.S. politics called for the defeat of leftist regimes around the globe, leading the Reagan administration to support anticommunist insurgents in Central America as well as nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union. After the Cold War ended, neocons broadened their enemies to include non-leftists but continued to pursue regime change and nation-building, most notably by persuading the second Bush administration to invade Iraq in 2003.

As with the 2014 Sakharov conference, the attendees of the 1984 conference were mostly affiliated with the Hoover. This time, however, Drell and several colleagues saw this as a partisan takeover of Sakharov's name. Several of Stanford's "non-Hooverites" attempted to attend the conference, but were dramatically turned away at the venue's entrance. Ronald Hilton, a retired Stanford professor of romance languages, managed to get in but found the presentations "unrealistic,"

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[24] Harris, *Palo Alto*, 398–402; Lamott, "Right-thinking Think Tank"; Douglas Martin, "W. Glenn Campbell, Shaper of Hoover Center, Dies at 77," *New York Times*, November 28, 2001, sec. D, 11.

[25] Agenda for the Andrei Sakharov Institute Conference, Folder: 5.11, Sakharov—Andrei Sakharov Institute, 1981, 1984–85, Paul J. Flory Papers, Hoover Institution, Palo Alto, CA.

objecting in particular to the Sakharov Institute's desire to seek funding from the National Endowment for Democracy, an organization that one historian has called "a neoconservative version of Amnesty International." Another Sakharov Institute board member at Stanford, the Nobel Prize-winning chemist Paul Flory, scored the conference's "[a]ppeal to rightwing hardliners."[26]

At that moment, Sakharov and Bonner endured a lonely exile in Gorky. Communicating with the outside world entailed smuggling letters, leaving them dependent on journalists, friends, and sympathizers for the proper transmission of their words. In such a context, Fainberg writes, "careful and precise rendition of the dissidents' written and oral communications were of the utmost significance."[27] All too often they could not make themselves heard or were unaware of actions taken in their names. As Sakharov put it at the time, "Even in prison, there is more possibility of communication with the outside world." The couple undertook hunger strikes as a more urgent method of communicating with Soviet authorities, though these took a drastic toll on the couple's health. One of Sakharov's hunger strikes had successfully pressured the Soviet government to let their daughter Tatiana Yankelevich emigrate to join her husband, Efrem, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. There, Efrem Yankelevich acted as Sakharov's representative in the United States and communicated frequently with Drell. Astonished at the Sakharov Institute's brazenness at the Hoover, Drell traveled to meet with the Yankeleviches in Cambridge and express in person his "grave concern" about the Hoover conference. Drell emphasized that "the very broad respect for Sakharov and the unique position he commands through the world will be diminished if his name is used not by him" but by those with a political agenda. Meanwhile Donald Kennedy, the President of Stanford and yet another member of the Sakharov Institute advisory board, drafted and signed, along with Flory and Drell, a letter to the *Stanford Daily* stating that they had not been consulted about the conference, and that "indeed, its nature and its organization…sound quite contrary to the purposes for which we agreed to support the Institute."[28]

Efrem Yankelevich, also on the Sakharov Institute board and also not consulted about the group's change in focus, had a different view. He told Drell that the actual content of the conference had been fairly tame and that the "Democratization" of the Soviet Union, "though I would prefer some other term, is a legitimate area of the Institute's activity." To be sure, he regretted "the conspiratorial character it had" and its "appearance of a partisan affair." But the larger problem for everyone involved was the question of *What would Sakharov say?* "Though we all know what Sakharov stands for," Efrem Yankelevich explained to Drell, "there seems to

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[26] Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue*, 273; Flory, handwritten notes, n.d., Folder 5.11: Sakharov—Andrei Sakharov Institute, 1981, 1984–85, Paul J. Flory Papers, Hoover Institution.

[27] Fainberg, *Cold War Correspondents*, 217.

[28] Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 674; Drell, memo to files, Nov. 5, 1984; Drell to Yankelevich, Oct. 23, 1984; and Flory, Drell, Kennedy, and Kornberg to Editor, *Stanford Daily*, October 24, 1984, Folder 5.11: Sakharov—Andrei Sakharov Institute, 1981, 1984–85, Paul J. Flory Papers, Hoover Institution.

be some confusion as to what are Sakharov's views on specific subjects."[29]

This confusion sparked a tug-of-war between the Hooverite and non-Hooverite cliques over Sakharov. Yuri Yarim-Agaev, an organizer of the 1984 conference, flatly stated that "[t]he idea of democratizing the Soviet Union is not in contradiction to Sakharov's ideas at all. I don't find any contradiction." In the *San Jose Mercury News*, Flory responded that the idea of democratization was in fact "highly political and I would think Sakharov would regard himself above politics." Elsewhere Hilton described the conference participants as "very reactionary," while Sakharov Institute director Edward Lozansky insisted that his organization only pursued "things that Dr. Sakharov would approve of." Yarim-Agaev accused Drell, Kennedy, and Flory of being afraid to provoke the Soviet government, sneering that "one cannot help those persecuted in the Soviet Union by being nice to their jailers. Any real help will always be perceived by the Kremlin as a 'hostile' or 'subversive' political activity. And those who are ready to accept such Soviet definitions should not associate themselves with the name of Sakharov." Ultimately the Sakharov Institute decided not to pursue the democratization venture under their own auspices, while Drell and Kennedy resigned from the advisory board. This outcome pleased Drell, who told Flory and Kennedy that "this style of activity was not in Sakharov's best interest, and was no way to maintain a broad coalition of liberal and conservative and humanistic support for him in the West."[30]

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While the right-leaning Hoover Institution seemed borderline obsessed with Sakharov, his supporters on the left were equally eager to keep his image in the United States aligned with their particular political views. Even when Sakharov and Bonner could and did speak for themselves, Drell sometimes felt compelled to try and change their words, lest they make some politically awkward affiliations. In 1987, out of exile and back in Moscow, Sakharov—with Bonner alongside him—sat for an interview in which he compared himself to the physicist Edward Teller. A Hoover fellow since 1975, Teller had been spurned by the American scientific community for his role in discrediting the physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer during a 1954 security clearance hearing and for his unabashed support of nuclear weapons. Reading a transcript of the interview in late August, Drell probably blushed with shame when he read Bonner's comment

[29] Yankelevich to Drell, Dec. 30, 198[4], Folder 5.11: Sakharov—Andrei Sakharov Institute, 1981, 1984–85, Paul J. Flory Papers, Hoover Institution.

[30] Diana Diamond, "Kennedy, others criticize Sakharov Institute meeting on Soviet Union," *Campus Report*, October 31, 1984; Marlene Somsak, "Plan born at Stanford meeting splits Sakharov backers," Nov. 6, 1984; Walt Gibbs, "Stanford president attacks smuggling plan," Nov. 4, 1984; Bukovsky and Yarim-Agaev, "The Wild, Wild World of Publicity," Nov. 9, 1984; Lozansky to Drell, Dec. 20, 1984; Kennedy to Lozansky, Jan. 4, 1985; Drell to Lozansky, Feb. 1, 1985; Drell, memo to file, Jan. 3, 1985, Folder 5.11: Sakharov—Andrei Sakharov Institute, 1981, 1984–85, Paul J. Flory Papers, Hoover Institution.

that, although "it's considered indecent to be nice to Teller…he is true to his position and that is like Sakharov." During his years of dissent, dozens of Soviet scientists had denounced Sakharov, and despite the very different circumstances, this allowed him to empathize with Teller as a fellow scientific outcast. Bonner concluded that both Teller and Sakharov "were very similar in the way they hold to their positions," and that Teller was "an absolutely honest man"[31]

The Cornell physicist Kurt Gottfried had also read the interview and dashed off a note pleading with Drell to "dispel this nonsense from the Sakharovs' minds." Drell shared Gottfried's sense of urgency and desperately tried to convince Sakharov and Bonner that when it came to historical parallels, they should avoid the pariah Teller, whose actions had earned him "some disdain and loss of respect and affection by many scientists. Sakharov is Sakharov," Drell wrote in a letter to the couple, "a universally admired scientist of great bravery and moral courage. They are very different." He confessed that "some of us who feel so deeply about Andrei would prefer to see him on his own achievements and not be paralleled with Teller or anyone else." But Sakharov and Bonner could not be told what to say. In 1988, Sakharov conveyed his "deepest respect" for Teller and described him as "a man who has always acted, always his whole life, in accordance with his convictions…always moved by motives of principle." Their lives, Sakharov said, ran "a parallel course," a theme he continued in his memoirs, where he wrote that Teller's colleagues had been unfair to ostracize him. In the otherwise glowing tributes in *Sakharov Remembered*, one contributor bluntly dismissed Sakharov's affinity for Teller as "embarrassing."[32]

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The noxious Teller aside, Drell cherished bipartisan support for Sakharov and was undoubtedly proud that, as Efrem Yankelevich once noted, the "Sakharov constituency" in the United States "embraces the whole political spectrum." This balance was on display at the International Conference in Honor of Andrei Sakharov, a Sakharov birthday celebration that Drell helped organize at Rockefeller University in New York in May 1981. Eminent speakers praised Sakharov's contributions to science, peace, and human rights, and the audience got to see a film of Sakharov intoning that "the defense of mankind's lasting interests are the responsibility of every scientist." George Soros, affiliated with many liberal initiatives, provided much of the funding and Drell even stayed with

[31] "An Interview with Andrei Sakharov and Elena Bonner," 6–8, Folder 2.8, Sakharov Chronological File, 1987, Papers of Sidney D. Drell, Hoover Institution.

[32] Gottfried to Drell, August 19, 1987; Drell, "Comment on Interview," July 29, 1987, 1–2, Folder 2.8: Sakharov Chronological File, 1987; "Remarks of Dr. Andrei Sakharov," Nov. 16, 1988, 3, Folder 3.1: Sakharov Chronological File, 1988 Nov. 11—Teller, Papers of Sidney D. Drell, Hoover Institution; Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 100; Susan Eisenhower and Roald Z. Sagdeev, "Sakharov in His Own Words," in *Remembering Sakharov*, 94; see also Bergman, *Meeting the Demands of Reason*, 85, and Gorelik, *The World of Andrei Sakharov*, 349. Despite Sakharov's admiration for Teller the two often disagreed on nuclear weapons and particularly the Strategic Defense Initiative.

Soros at his 101 Central Park West apartment during the conference. But Drell craved balance and sought out a message from President Reagan, a Republican, who obliged with a statement that "Sakharov is one of the true spiritual heroes of our time."[33]

In contrast to Bonner's claim that politicians could "lose an election" for supporting Sakharov, members of both parties made a habit of praising Sakharov. The Democrat Jimmy Carter became the first head of state to communicate with Sakharov when he wrote to the dissident physicist in February 1977 and after his exile to Gorky, Carter issued a statement deploring the move. The 1980 Democratic Party platform called for Sakharov's release, and four years later both the Democrats and Republicans included a Sakharov plank in their platforms. As human rights activism erupted across the world in the late 1970s, inspired to a great extent by Sakharov himself, crusaders in the United States could be found on both sides of the aisle. But what Drell saw as bipartisan support for Sakharov looks, in retrospect, more like an ideological struggle over Sakharov's words and legacy. The consensus that the Soviets should stop repressing Sakharov obscured a bifurcated view of the Cold War. One approach, favored by conservatives and many Soviet expats, emphasized hostility and nuclear deterrence, while moderates and liberals, a group that included Drell, preferred diplomatic negotiations, especially when it came to nuclear weapons. Drell, in fact, had once tried to tone down an open letter from Sakharov that seemed to endorse nuclear deterrence, a strategy that Drell deplored. All too often, Sakharov's image in the United States was employed to serve Cold War ideologies.

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While American efforts to help Sakharov encompassed an array of political affiliations, they all evinced a feeling, sometimes implied and sometimes blatantly expressed, that Sakharov was, above all, in the wrong place—that he really belonged in the United States and not the Soviet Union. This feeling at times took on an acquisitive nature. After he received his Nobel Peace Prize in 1975, his reputation as well as his suffering soared, and American universities sniffed an opportunity. Princeton, Penn, MIT, and Stanford all offered Sakharov a faculty position in the hopes of saving him from repression, to be sure, but also to boost their own prestige. Fritz Rohrlich, a Syracuse University physics professor, made this covetousness abundantly clear in 1981 when he discussed the upcoming International Conference in Honor of Andrei Sakharov with Syracuse Chancellor

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[33] Yankelevich to Drell, Dec. 30, 198[4], Folder 5.11: Sakharov—Andrei Sakharov Institute, 1981, 1984–85, Paul J. Flory Papers, Hoover Institution; "Science People," *Discover*, July 1981, 76, Folder 5.1: Sakharov Collected Materials, International Conference in Honor of Andrei Sakharov (May 1–2, 1981), 1968, 1981, Papers of Sidney D. Drell, Hoover Institution; Pagels to Drell, March 10, 1981, Folder 5.6: Sakharov Collected Materials, International Conference in Honor of Andrei Sakharov, 1981, Papers of Sidney D. Drell, Hoover Institution; "Message on the 60th Birthday of Andrei Sakharov," Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum. https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/message-60th-birthday-andrei-sakharov

Melvin Eggers. Rohrlich noted that "tremendous publicity and credit" would redound to Rockefeller University for hosting the event, and he reminded Eggers that he had once nominated Sakharov for an honorary degree. Had Syracuse approved the nomination, "we could be the first university in the United States to pay homage to him and to become visible to the world regarding the great cause for which he stands." But the nomination had gone nowhere and Syracuse had missed its chance. "How sad it is for me," Rohrlich wrote, "to see my university lose out again at a great opportunity to show that they are above mediocrity."[34]

American action on Sakharov's behalf likely helped ameliorate his plight, and yet his scientific advocates could not help but fixate on not merely freeing him from exile but permanently relocating him to the United States. Drell once told Moscow that "[i]f the Soviet system cannot tolerate a free and active Sakharov and what he stands for, then send him out to us in the West. We'll enthusiastically welcome the most courageous voice of our time." But Sakharov had no interest in leaving Russia. What Sakharov needed was always simple: to have his words heard, not erased as in Russia and not struggled over as in the United States. While he lived, Sakharov was characteristically serene about representing many things to many people. "It happens that my name does not belong only to me," he said in the 1970s, "and I must take this into account." But after Sakharov's death, S.A. Kovalev, a Russian scientist and human rights activist, felt this had gone too far. "[P]erhaps a hundred icons are being created," he stated, "and each is created for somebody's own purposes. Many people no longer care what Sakharov was actually like. He must be quickly pinned to one's own banner, so as, heaven forbid, not to be left without the benefit of his name. Everybody is now fighting for his name!"[35]

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And so in the United States the question *What would Sakharov say?*, while an interesting one, came to overshadow what Sakharov actually said, especially as he transformed from a man who lived and breathed into a malleable symbol. He dedicated his life to human rights and suffered for reminding his country that it had social obligations to uphold. He opposed war, of course, denouncing the Soviets in Afghanistan and the Americans in Vietnam. On his first appearance on the world stage in 1968, he declared the fundamental importance of intellectual freedom, encompassing as it did the "freedom to obtain and distribute information, freedom for open-minded and unfearing debate, and freedom from pressure by officialdom and prejudices." His struggles taught him that the essential human rights included

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[34] Rohrlich to Eggers, April 13, 1981, Folder 5.1: Sakharov Collected Materials, International Conference in Honor of Andrei Sakharov (May 1–2, 1981), 1968, 1981, Papers of Sidney D. Drell, Hoover Institution.

[35] Sidney Drell, "Remarks for Andrei Sakharov," Feb. 21, 1980, 9, Folder 5.9: Sakharov General, 1979–1985, 2 of 2, Paul J. Flory Papers, Hoover Institution; quoted in B.L. Altshuler, "Misunderstanding Sakharov," and I.N. Arutyunyan and G.M. L'vovskii, "On Free Thought," in *Sakharov Remembered*, 239, 290.

the “freedom of opinion; the free flow of information; control by the people over national life, including decisions affecting war and peace; freedom of religion; freedom of movement; freedom of association; and the unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience from prisons.” “These rights,” he stated, “constitute the basis for a fully human life and for international security and trust.” And despite years of repression and punishment, he retained an optimistic belief in humanity: “If mankind is the healthy organism I believe it to be, then progress, science, and the constructive application of intelligence will enable us to cope with the dangers facing us.”[36]

Sakharov, once popular enough to be portrayed in an HBO feature film, has faded in the American public memory, perhaps as a direct result of the struggles over his legacy. In his lifetime, Americans insisted on using him as ammunition in Cold War debates, which admittedly kept his memory alive but only by speaking for him, enlisting him in partisan battles and ideological crusades, and portraying him as some geographically misplaced American rather than someone whose sacrifices aimed squarely at improving Russia. His death in 1989 made it easy to consign him to the past, coinciding as it did with the end of the Cold War and the evaporation of what the historian Benjamin Nathans has called “the West’s Cold War appetite for exemplary crusaders against communism”—in essence a type of forgetting, not as nefarious as Russia’s attempts to erase him from history but with similar effects.[37] Even as the Hoover’s 2014 conference was denounced as an attempt to co-opt Sakharov, few in the United States have taken steps to remember him in the twenty-first century as his cherished principles of freedom and democracy seem to retreat across the globe.

About the Author: Paul Rubinson is Professor of History at Bridgewater State University in Massachusetts and the author of *Redefining Science: Scientists, the National Security State, and Nuclear Weapons in Cold War America* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2016) as well as *Rethinking the American Antinuclear Movement* (Routledge, 2017). He is currently writing a book about American scientists and human rights from the 1790s to the 1970s.

[36] Sakharov, *Progress, Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom* (New York: Norton, 1968), 29; Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 409, 579.

[37] Benjamin Nathans, “Talking Fish: On Soviet Dissident Memoirs,” *The Journal of Modern History* 87, No. 3 (September 2015): 614.

Book Reviews

Diana Cucuz, *Winning Women's Hearts and Minds: Selling Cold War Culture in the US and the USSR*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2023. 336pp. $85.00, cloth.

I still keep old issues of *America* magazine at my summer house – a Russian-language version from mid-1970-s to the early 1980s. They still haven't lost the glossy look. I remember vividly that for us, Moscow schoolgirls, these magazines were a window on the world beyond the Iron Curtain, a way to look in on life in a far off mystical land that we knew and loved – but only through writers like Dreiser, and Faulkner, and Doctorow. A mysterious and appealing country that seemed so much like our own – and yet, at the same time, was so very, very, different.

The skyscrapers of New York and Detroit, the lights of Los Angeles and California, incredible science advances and amazing roads – and cars, also amazing. Being girls, we were especially interested in the images of women. Always with perfect make-up, always fit, with a Hollywood smile – they lived in the incredible world of fantastic comfort and great customer service. We looked at coffee machines and kitchen appliances that helped them take care of everyday chores, at the make-up that helped them create their glamorous looks, and tried to find something even remotely similar on the black market in Moscow and Leningrad.

Many years later, in the 1990s, when I tried to explain to my American colleagues why the gender agenda was not included in the mainstream changes during Russia's period of democratization, I remembered, that neither Voice of America, nor Radio Liberty – the stations that anyone interested in alternative information sources listened to, – never spoke about women's movements or feminism in the USA. And Russian immigrants mentioned feminists only in a negative light.

And so, a colossal resource of democratic change – the women's resource – was ignored by perestroika's architects. This is a fact that we still have to rethink and redefine in the future. And the official American propaganda of the Cold War years certainly played an important role in the process.

Diana Cucuz' book supports this theory. Her detailed research of American mass media over the course of a few decades allows us to follow the development

of basic trends and gender stereotypes of opposite ideologies. But not only that. She explores an important issue – the gender aspect of cultural diplomacy, the "soft power" of the Cold War years. This is pioneering research that explores new facets of reassessing the Cold War experience and its consequences. The issues raised in the book go beyond purely historical research and give food for thought to those interested in a modern discussion on this topic.

There is no doubt that images of women have always been the most vivid means of both influencing the audience and transmitting the basic cultural code. Soviet magazines meant for both Soviet and foreign audiences (*Rabotnitsa* (*The Female Worker*), *Krestianka* (*The Female Peasant*), the main propaganda illustrated journal *Ogonyok*, *Soviet Woman* – which was aimed at foreign audiences) pushed the message of female happiness in a socialist country – a country that gives women all possible rights and opportunities. A lot has been written on this topic – and an equal lot on the hypocrisy of this approach.

Diana Cucuz' book analyzes the nature and practice of the gender component of ideological opposition and its transformation by using American magazines (first and foremost, *America*, aimed at Soviet audiences) as examples.

In the first part of the book, "Shaping Women, Gender and the Communist Threat through the Ladies' Home Journal" the author analyzes the formation and confirmation of the main gender concepts as far as they relate to how both Soviet and American women were presented. She notes that beginning in the 1920's, "reflecting that either positive or negative commentary depended on the fragile state of US-Soviet relations"(p 91) , but after World War II, the overall message became purposely detailed – and that included gender detailing.

The vital formulas used by the magazine in question after World War II are analyzed – formulas that subsequently became deeply developed within the framework of official American propaganda and published discourse up until the 1990s. These formulas include Modern woman, Happy Homemaker, Special privileges of American Women, and, of course, the female variant of the American Dream. Sustainable concepts, such as the Babushka or Special Hardships of Russian Womanhood also appeared at this time. What we have here is brilliant historical research that allows one to recreate the gender ideologeme construction step-by-step.

The analysis of how John Steinbeck's and Robert Capa's famous USSR trip in 1947 was reflected by a woman's magazine is worthy of note. The goal of that trip, undertaken by two war buddies, was to show that "Russians are people too." The magazine published a large collection of photos and texts entitled "Women and Children of the USSR," which had a huge effect on the audience. Both the authors, and subsequently, the readers were taken aback by how hard Soviet women worked, by how difficult their daily lives were. Steinbeck and Capa also wrote about how interested Russian women were in the lives of their American counterparts and how much they wished to get to know American women better. America project creators then used this idea to create one of "soft power's" most efficient constructs.

The second part of the book, Selling Women, Gender and Consimer Culture , is about the gender component of the Cold War, concept work done by the White

House and USA, and especially *America* magazine. This section immerses us into the conflicts and ideas simmering in the 1950s-1960s, reminds us of Truman's and Eisenhower's strategies, about Nikita Khrushchev's first visit to the USA, about the "kitchen debate" between Khrushchev and Nixon at the first American National Exhibition in Moscow opening in 1959, about the Caribbean Missile Crisis, and many other important events of that era.

The main ideas formulated in the first issue of *America* remained unchanged for decades – fashion and femininity, married life, motherhood and family, housekeeping, and, of course, consumerism.

The latter would become the most important element of propaganda aimed at the USSR – the basis of the American Dream which was actively pushed on the magazine's pages and became one of the symbols of "soft power" in the ideological standoff of the coming decades. The chapters about the formation and detailing of the "American Dream" concept on *America's* pages are of particular interest both for researchers and a wider audience, as they help one delve into the depths of propaganda work and discover hidden mechanisms that created the cultural image code and stable stereotypes.

Of particular interest is the chapter about attempts to include information about Civil rights and Women's Rights movements of the 1960-s and 1970s- America, USSR and a Women's Proper Place. "However, while America's editors never referred to the movement directly, its contributors did…These articles were interwoven with the stories of ordinary women experiencing its effects on their daily life."(p 198). This idea, incredibly, echoes the conclusions drawn by Dina Fainberg , the book *Cold War Correspondents* (Kembridge 2020) – She writes about how journalists in both USSR and the USA, while working within the strict propaganda confines of the Cold War, still managed to give a more detailed and multifaceted picture of the country where they worked and its people, whom they have grown to love.

Diana Cucuz talks about the development of *America* magazine in the context of the development of the Soviet-American relationship, including the on-going attempts to establish cultural and civic dialogue – including that between women. She analyzes the gender aspects of the USSR and USA standoff in mass media and culture. At the same time, the book presents a most interesting snapshot of American journalism in the 1950s-1960s, and talks about the work done by *America's* leading journalists Margaret Mead, Marion Sanders, Eli Ginsberg, and others. Summarizing *America's* experience, the author notes that for better or worse, the magazine played a vital role in establishing dialogue and prolonging openness between the two countries. It had become a part of "cultural diplomacy."

My peers, and our parents, all read *America* and from its pages learned about life in a different country that we've always found fascinating. Even if the magazine didn't cover everything about American life, it still brought us closer together, and helped build a foundation for continuing dialogue and self-analysis.

As Diana Cucuz writes, "America's early Cold War cultural activities, part of what became known as a "golden age of diplomacy" may have accomplished more towards Soviet economic reforms that political pressure or military force

ever could."(p 227). And one cannot argue with that statement. Diana Cucuz's book is a most serious contribution to research into analysis of the history of the Cold War, its culture, form-creation and stereotypes, many of which exist to this day. Liberating ourselves from stereotypes and deeply analyzing the recent past make all of us culturally richer – and freer. And Diana Cucuz's book helps us do just that.

Nadezda Azhgikhina, Ph.D.
PEN Moscow Director

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Between Two Millstones: Exile in America, 1978-1994*, Book 2, Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020, xvi. 559pp. Index. $39.00 Hardcover.

When the Soviet Union stripped Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn of his Russian citizenship and expelled him to the West, he began a twenty-year exile that merged his fight for a global political voice with unrelenting opposition to Soviet power. As cultural memory fades, it is easy to forget that this abrasive, GULAG prisoner-turned-dissident firebrand dominated world news at the height of the Cold War. Part diary, travelogue, boots-on-the-ground research process, and anti-media rant, *Between Two Millstones* is a sprawling personal epic that spans Solzhenitsyn's exile, the Soviet Union's collapse, and his blueprint for a New Russia. Today, the Nobel Prize-winning literary giant is considered one of the most influential voices of the twentieth century.

This anticipated second half of Solzhenitsyn's memoirs, translated from Russian for the first time, picks up after Solzhenitsyn's controversial Harvard Commencement Address. As uncensored as a Stalin-era joke, Solzhenitsyn's autobiography employs an episodic structure where bitter humor and flashes of folk wisdom depict his life wedged between two forces. Trapped between the KGB and a hostile press, Solzhenitsyn argued that they acted like millstones that ground his name to dust and distorted his reputation in Moscow and the West.

At his remote compound in Cavendish, Vermont, Solzhenitsyn recreated Russia with the spiritual and pastoral dimensions of a Tolstoy retreat. Here, he balanced work, family, and celebrity while dodging trespassers who stalked the woods with cameras, eager to snap a candid photograph. Shielded by space and protective villagers, he buried himself in a secluded cabin to produce creative work that gave focus and meaning to his exile. Together, Solzhenitsyn and his wife, Natalia Dmitrievna, launched a bustling publishing house in a corner of the Vermont wilderness. From this rural community, Solzhenitsyn sallied out to do battle on a world scale. A blunt, irritable teller of uncomfortable truths, he left a trail of fans and critics in his wake. For months, he pursued an elusive meeting with Ronald Reagan to discuss Cold War relations. He tilted at media windmills and quarreled with dissidents on both sides of the Iron Curtain. An old friend

from the *sharashka* camps spread vitriolic tales in Moscow, while émigré Andrei Sinyavsky labeled Solzhenitsyn a dangerous authoritarian nationalist.

Between rebuttals and press conferences, Solzhenitsyn dove deep into research for his polyphonic *Red Wheel* series. Sifting through diaries, documents, and letters at the Hoover Institution, Solzhenitsyn also contacted elderly émigrés for material to create his *magnum opus* exploring Russia's descent into revolution. In exile, Russia remained the eternal reference point. This ongoing work connects the disjointed narrative like a crimson thread.

From his writer's retreat, Solzhenitsyn kept his pen on the world's pulse. In the 1970s-1980s, he led missions to Britain, Japan, Taiwan, and the Vatican to discuss Communism. He met Billy Graham, Margaret Thatcher, and Pope John Paul II. Rambunctious, omnivorous, and talkative, Solzhenitsyn balked when media exploited his fame. He dodged police escorts. He was not politically correct. When he met Margaret Thatcher, he called the Prime Minister's "thinking processes those of a man" (Solzhenitsyn, 184). Japan brought "a sense of beauty! a sense of dignity! There's 'beauty will save the world' for you" (148). In Taiwan, he saw "far too many temples" but "no enervating daytime television" (160).

Back from his travels, Solzhenitsyn battled propaganda, his problematic portrayal in Michael Scammell's biography, and a negative media that hounded him with the diversity of opinion that he once craved. By the late 1980s, Solzhenitsyn abandoned his dream to turn America into a new cultural St. Petersburg. Instead, he leveraged his outrage at the "loony left press" (303). Sabotaged attempts to meet Reagan rankled. In 1978, he outraged his audience by declaring that the West had lost its civic courage. In 1983, he accepted the Templeton Prize with the speech, "Men Have Forgotten God." In 1985, the Senate investigated and dismissed accusations that Radio Liberty promoted anti-Semitic broadcasts by reading Solzhenitsyn's *August 1914* novel. Meanwhile, *The Gulag Archipelago*, Solzhenitsyn's colossal Stalinist exposé, remained banned in the Soviet Union despite promises of a *glasnost'* thaw.

Towards the book's end, Solzhenitsyn's tone reveals a psychological shift. He swears off politics. He is less cantankerous, more contented. After the Soviet Union's chaotic collapse, he worked towards Russian reform. Harnessing his experience of the twentieth century as a continuum of upheaval, he created a blueprint for the New Russia. This included a "continuity of state identity," divorced from Party power, and a geographically united Russia. With unsettling implications, Solzhenitsyn rejected an independent Ukraine, lamented lost *oblasti*, and called redrawn Donetsk borders a "tragedy of historic proportions" (400).

Vibrant and compelling, *Between Two Millstones* offers scholars and readers interested in Russian history, the late Soviet period, or twentieth-century literature important insight into Solzhenitsyn's turbulent career outside the Soviet Union.

As he said goodbye to the West in 1994, Solzhenitsyn remained optimistic that he still had a role to play in the history that plowed deep furrows in the Russian earth. Freed from KGB surveillance, he left convinced that he had escaped his dual millstones. Dark shadows settle over the final chapters as Solzhenitsyn anticipates that his influence might not stop Russia from falling into a "Third

Time of Troubles". Set against a tumultuous world stage, Solzhenitsyn's evolving narrative is not an American story in the end.

It is a Russian one.

Grace Ehrman
Liberty University

Natasha Lance Rogoff. *Muppets in Moscow: The Unexpected Crazy True Story of Making Sesame Street in Russia*. Rowman and Littlefield, 2022. 265 pp. Illustrations, no index. $26.95, Hardcover.

The collapse of communism in Russia in 1991 brought with it a wave of change and a tsunami of Western influences and products, including Coca Cola, McDonald's, Twix, and *Sesame Street*. The story of *Sesame Street's* introduction to Russia, and the financial and cultural obstacles that had to be overcome, is a story that deserves to be told. Rogoff studied at Leningrad State University and spent much of the 1980s learning about and telling the story of Russia's underground culture, establishing herself as a journalist and documentary maker. Several of her documentaries aired on PBS and won awards. She now works at Harvard University in their department of Art, Film, and Visual Studies. In 1993, Rogoff was approached by top officials at Sesame Workshop, the company that produces *Sesame Street*, about helping them to bring the famous children's show to Russia. What followed was a three-year saga during which Rogoff and her team, both in the United States and Russia, wondered many times if they would ever succeed.

Rogoff went to Russia on her Sesame Street mission at the same time that the country was being flooded with entrepreneurs and opportunists of every stripe and intent. Her descriptions of life and business in Moscow during this fascinating moment in history recall both the optimism and cynicism as some Westerners came to "save" Russia and others came to exploit it. The difficulties that Rogoff and her associates, both American and Russian, encounter as they attempt to secure the things they need to kick off the Sesame Street project – financial backing, broadcasters, office space – capture the chaotic "Wild West" atmosphere of the immediate post-Communist years, which included "rags to riches" transformations for some and desperate plummets into poverty for others. Rogoff describes mysterious deaths and assassinations, the Russian government's failure to pay state employees for months at a time, and a number of other problems that anyone who visited Russia during these years would readily recall. The most interesting part of Rogoff's memoir, however, relays the various conflicts that emerged between the Americans and Russians regarding the content and visual elements of the Russian Sesame Street, which would be called *Ulitsa Sezam*. These differences encompass a range of things, from fundamentally opposing worldviews and outlooks – the Russians tended to pitch more depressing story

lines - to specific details about the colors of the new Russian Muppets (light blue = homosexual in Russia), the music (Russians preferred classical pieces), and to what degree it was acceptable to include scenes involving money ("dirty mercantile activities"). Russian collaborators were horrified by the idea of children and Muppets running a lemonade stand, for example, declaring that only desperate poor people sell things on the street. Another idea rejected by the Russians involved a child in a wheelchair being invited to play with other children; the Russians were cynical about this portrayal of inclusivity and noted that wheelchairs were expensive and not everyone could afford one. In general, the Russian collaborators were concerned about presenting scenarios to children that were not authentic or representative of the world around them, the Russian world of sadness and deprivation. Rogoff's description of these culture clashes, sometimes predictable and sometimes surprising, was the most interesting part of the book. Ultimately, Rogoff and her team are able to overcome all of these obstacles and get the show done, airing its first episode in October 1996.

Although Rogoff's recounting of the birth of *Ulitsa Sezam* is definitely worth reading, it does have some significant shortcomings. Rogoff spent considerable time in Russia before embarking on the *Ulitsa Sezam* project and her leadership on this project put her in the country for long periods of time over the course of three years, yet she seems unaware or surprised by certain things that she should know. Early in the book, she refers to the white fluff that is cast off by Moscow's poplar trees each June as "poof," when it is actually "pukh." This may seem like a minor point, but anyone who has lived in Russia in the summer will immediately recognize this error, and it immediately makes one wonder how much she actually understands about the country. Rogoff also seems surprised by the overall glum worldview of her Russian associates, a reality that she should be familiar with after spending as much time in Russia and with Russians as she has. Similarly, as she describes setting up the offices for *Ulitsa Sezam* in Moscow, she is frustrated to learn that no one there really knows how to work on a computer or use Excel. Again, Rogoff should have anticipated this. (Incidentally, Excel only became popular widely used in 1992, so why she expected the Russians to be already comfortable with it makes no sense.) Her cultural sensitivity is lacking in other ways, as well. Though she calls one of her associates, Leonid, her best friend, she has no qualms about relaying his English responses with a strong Russian accent in a way that seems mocking to the reader and hardly appropriate for a book published in 2022. (She also does this occasionally for other Russians in the book.) One of the most pervasive flaws in the book, however, is Rogoff's focus on herself, a characteristic that one often finds in books written by journalists. The reader learns all about Rogoff's romantic life, from her pessimism about marriage in her future, to meeting her husband, getting married, navigating married life through her travels, and having a baby. Yes, the book is a memoir, but Rogoff's personal life is of no interest or value to the actual meat of this book and wastes pages that could better be spent on discussing the life of *Ulitsa Sezam* after its successful premiere. Instead, Rogoff, for all practical purposes, ends the story in 1996, dedicating only a few words to what has happened to the show in the last

twenty years, a very disappointing decision given the dramatic events in Russia since the rise of Vladimir Putin. Setting aside these flaws, the book is worth reading.

Lee A. Farrow
Auburn University at Montgomery

Kelly J. Evans and Jeanie M. Welch, *Witnessing Stalin's Justice*: *The United States and the Moscow Show Trials*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023, xiii. 272 pp. Index. $155.00, Cloth.

Rarely has a book been worthy of so much praise and so much criticism as this one does!

Shortly after the coming to power of the Bolsheviks in early November 1917, formal diplomatic relations with the United States ceased. A multitude of issues – the signing of a separate peace with the Central Powers at Brest-Litovsk in March 1918, the repudiation of the tsarist government's war debts, the Red Scare, the confiscation of private property, the systematic persecution of organized religion, and the stated goal of the end of capitalism and world revolution – understandably delayed their re-establishment. Only in November 1933 did President Franklin D. Roosevelt officially recognize the Soviet government – an initiative that, among other things, made possible the presence of American diplomats and journalists at the show trials of the mid/late 1930s. *Witnessing Stalin's Justice* is an honest and quite useful compilation of the latter's reactions to the drama unfolding in front of their very eyes, as well as those of liberals, intellectuals, and radicals – many of them fascinated with the world's first socialist state and therefore eager to comment on the nature, meaning, and significance of the show trials.

Following a brief preamble that introduces the previous show trials (the SRs, 1922; Shakhty, 1928; the Industrial Party, 1930; and the Metropolitan-Vickers, 1933), Kelly J. Evans and Jeanie M. Welch focus on the three Moscow Show Trials of August 1936, January 1937, and March 1938 that involved veteran Communist Party members – Grigori E. Zinoviev, Lev B. Kamenev, Georgi L. Piatakov, Karl B. Radek, Alexei I. Rykov, and Nikolai I. Bukharin, to name only Lenin's most important collaborators. To their astonishment, they were accused of a multitude of crimes: treason; plotting war against the Soviet Union in league with Japan and Germany; wrecking of the five-year plans; attempts to assassinate prominent Soviet leaders, take over the Soviet government, and cede Soviet resources and territory to the enemy; and – ultimate and fatal move on their part – collusion with Stalin's arch-enemy, Leon D. Trotsky. Vilified in the Soviet press and in public demonstrations, they all confessed their crimes and, despite the lack of physical evidence, most of them were sentenced to death. There is also a chapter on the purge of the military (army and navy), with Marshal Mikhail N. Tukhachevsky as the main defendant, who were accused of espionage for foreign

powers and of plotting a *coup d'état*. Finally, two chapters on the aftermath of the Moscow Show Trials cover the purge of Nikolai I. Ezhov, the assassination of Trotsky in Mexico, the Doctors' Plot, the death of Stalin, the fall of Lavrenti P. Beria, Nikita S. Khrushchev's Secret Speech at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in February 1956, and the beginnings of Destalinization.

As attested to by no less than 73 pages of endnotes, Evans and Welch have done an admirable job of ferreting out references to the show trials and the purges in US news media, like *The New York Times*, *The Nation*, and *The New Republic*, as well as in the many outlets sponsored by various political groups in the USA. For example, the official Communist Party of America faithfully followed the directives coming from the Comintern, while Trotsky's supporters, encouraged by the conclusions of the Dewey Commission, denounced the charges as frame-ups – a scenario that inevitably sharpened and widened the fault lines among the various factions concerning the Soviet Union. Indeed, in this battle of words, both sides marshalled an impressive arsenal – letters to the editor, name-calling, book reviews, radio and press attacks, literary feuds, and mass meetings – to prove that right was on their side and wrong on the other side.

Both authors are reference librarians at two different American universities – a professional background that has left a deep imprint on the structure and contents of this well-written monograph. The absence of a review of the literature on Stalin's purges is regrettable, as is the authors' decision to limit themselves to a simple e*xposé* of the various responses of different interested parties to the show trials. Many readers will be left wondering why the authors did not use these abundant primary sources to develop and defend an original thesis. Sadly, readers looking for the authors' personal opinions will only find a rather banal comment in the very last paragraph – "Americans were fortunate to have such well-qualified and astute observers to this great upheaval as (…) Charles E. Bohlen, Loy W. Henderson, and George F. Kennan," whose reports left "a valuable legacy which is a credit to their knowledge and professionalism and is a credit to the country they served" (183). As I was putting down this book, I was reminded of Franz Schubert's Symphony No 8 – the "Unfinished" one.

J.-Guy Lalande
St. Francis Xavier University

David W. McFadden, *Origins of People-to-People Diplomacy, U.S. and Russia, 1917-1957*. Abingdon, Oxon, England: Routledge, 2022. 86pp. Hardbound.

This is one of the shortest books I have ever read. In a mere 75 pages of text, David McFadden, a professor of History at Fairfield University, attempts to explore how "religious figures, radical activists, entrepreneurs, engineers, social workers, and others in both the United States and the Soviet Union" forged connections and promoted better understanding between their countries from the

Russian revolutions of 1917 to the official exchange agreements of the late 1950s (p. 1). The Introduction and Conclusion each consist of one paragraph. The core chapters are short, incomplete, and idiosyncratic in coverage. The book is thus much too brief to offer an original and satisfactory account.

In five pages, Chapter 1 describes "Early American Contacts with Soviet Russia." It relies almost exclusively on McFadden's first book, *Alternative Paths: Soviets and Americans, 1917-1920* (1993), and therefore offers nothing new to readers familiar with that study. Readers may be surprised, though, by the assertion that "U.S.-Bolshevik relations in the Wilson-Lenin years were marked by a considerable degree of mutual accommodation" (6). While McFadden reminds readers of how American Red Cross representatives Raymond Robins and Allen Wardwell had contacts with Bolshevik officials and how William Bullitt made a fruitless journey to Moscow in 1919, he does not mention President Woodrow Wilson's refusal to recognize the Soviet government, his authorization of military expeditions to northern Russia and Vladivostok, or his administration's other efforts to support anti-Bolshevik forces in the Russian Civil War.

Chapter 2, "Quakers and Bolsheviks, 1917-1931," consists of three pages on Quaker famine relief and reconstruction work in Soviet Russia. The chapter recycles material presented in a book that McFadden wrote with Claire Gorfinkel, *Constructive Spirit: Quakers in Revolutionary Russia* (2004). The brief discussion does not refer to any other scholarship about American relief workers in Soviet Russia, such as Bertrand Patenaude's massive and exhaustive account of the American Relief Administration.

In the longer (eleven pages) Chapter 3, "Social Gospel Origins," McFadden asserts that "The origins of what later became U.S.-Soviet people-to-people diplomacy are in the founding of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), the American Friends Service Committee, the International FOR, the International Student Christian Federation," and efforts by Quaker leaders, YMCA staffers, and Protestant evangelists (12). McFadden makes no attempt to show connections between these groups and the Christian-based citizen diplomacy work in the 1980s by Bridges for Peace and the National Council of Christian Churches. Nor does he establish any connection to the ambitious citizen exchanges organized in the 1980s, though he insists that the efforts in the 1920s "form the basis for the people to people diplomacy of the 1980s" (13). Instead of demonstrating this, McFadden offers a lengthy discussion of the ideas of theologian Walter Rauschenbusch, Quaker professor Rufus Jones, and Quaker leader Wilbur Thomas.

Chapter 4, "YMCA, Fellowship of Reconciliation, and Study Trips," relies heavily on books by Matthew Miller and Michael David-Fox, though McFadden also faults those studies for being "thin on the Y's work in Russia in the 1920s" (27) and neglecting Protestant visitors to early Soviet Russia, respectively. The chapter also reproduces extensive excerpts from the autobiography of Sherwood Eddy, which sometimes fill entire pages.

Chapter 5 reviews familiar material on "Fellow Travelers, Social Workers, Entrepreneurs, and Engineers" who went to the Soviet Union in the 1930s. Drawing on the autobiography of W.E.B. DuBois (who is repeatedly called

"Dubois"), McFadden asserts simply that "Soviet Russia was perceived by the black community in the United States as a 'red Mecca' of equality" (48), thereby disregarding the views of Black critics of the USSR. McFadden does not cite or include in his bibliography work by scholars such as Kate Baldwin and Meredith Roman that might have helped him to present a more complex and sophisticated discussion.

In Chapter 6, McFadden covers developments of the 1940s and 1950s in eleven pages. Surprisingly, he does not mention the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, a leftist group that organized many people-to-people exchanges. He discusses the influence of jazz in the USSR and the dispatch of American "jazz ambassadors" on international tours but does not refer to a book by Penny Von Eschen on that topic. The chapter leans heavily on books by Walter Hixson and Matthew Evangelista. It does not go much beyond those valuable studies.

Throughout his book, McFadden tries to emphasize the importance of the efforts he describes by asserting that they "prefigured the much more heralded 'citizen diplomacy' efforts of the 1980s, which helped end the Cold War" (1). Yet he cites none of the recent scholarship about that citizen diplomacy in the 1980s by historians such as David Foglesong, Matthias Neumann, Margaret Peacock, and Christian Peterson. Near the end of the book, McFadden writes that none of the citizen exchange activities of the 1980s "would have been possible without the strong basis laid by the agreements of 1955-1958" between Washington and Moscow (69). Yet, many of the key American citizen diplomacy groups (such as Beyond War, Bridges for Peace, the Center for US-USSR Initiatives, and Peace Links) launched their nongovernmental projects in the early 1980s, when government-sponsored US-Soviet exchanges had been suspended after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

In addition to not being well grounded in relevant scholarship, McFadden's slender book is marred by strained arguments, weak organization, excessive quotation, and numerous typographical errors. It adds little to what earlier studies of Soviet-American relations have shown and it is not a pleasure to read.

David Foglesong
Rutgers University

Dina Fainberg, *Cold War Correspondents: Soviet and American Reporters on the Ideological Frontlines*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020, 359pp. Index. $64.95, Hardcover.

In *Cold War Correspondents*, Dina Fainberg considers the relationship between journalism, ideology and foreign relations during the Cold War by analyzing the writings and working conditions of American and Soviet journalists from the end of World War II through the collapse of the USSR. While both sets of reporters argued that they presented the truth about the "Other," Fainberg's work reveals that neither side was in fact free from the influence of the ideological

positions adopted by their governments.

The material is divided into three sections of alternating chapters where Fainberg presents first the Soviet picture of journalism in a particular era, followed by a discussion of what American correspondents were experiencing at the same time. The final section consists of only one chapter, which considers the 1985 to 1991 period. These divisions make sense given that they follow the chronology of when particular Soviet leaders – who pursued dramatically different foreign policies and who imposed differing levels of censorship on the press – were in power.

Fainberg begins by showing how the Soviet government overhauled its ideological work in the late Stalin period. In February 1947 *Voice of America* introduced broadcasts in Russian and concerns over the impact of foreign propaganda suddenly made it imperative to critique American life more aggressively in the Soviet press. Information came from two sources: TASS, which had bureaus in Washington, DC and New York, and more literary feature articles by people who had visited the US. TASS's rather dry press releases served as research materials for the Soviet government, but the organization was hampered by the fact that the US government forced it to register as a Foreign Agent in 1947 – something that generated mistrust of TASS correspondents, who often lacked foreign language skills as well. The situation only improved in the early 1950s when better trained correspondents, who often graduated from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), were dispatched and when their working conditions improved via the introduction of bylines and salaries that were partially paid in hard currency.

While the Soviet government was introducing these changes, American correspondents found their working conditions in the USSR became more difficult. They were rarely allowed to travel outside of Moscow and a 1947 law on potential revelations of state secrets criminalized contacts between Soviet citizens and foreign nationals. The journalists responded by working together to evade censorship, but the shrinking size of the foreign press pool made these efforts more difficult as time passed. Editors in the US also tinkered with the content of the dispatches they received since it was assumed that Soviet censorship prohibited reporters from writing freely, and they looked for outside experts to bolster they stream of information that was coming from Moscow. In other words, to quote Fainberg, "American coverage of Soviet affairs became a collective enterprise…" (p. 57) and one that led to a convergence of journalistic and governmental opinions about Soviet affairs.

Given that the Khrushchev era was one of greater international dialogue, it is not surprising that the nature of journalism changed to meet the line established by the new Soviet leader. For example, in 1955 TASS was revamped: some of its staff members were replaced, the organization received more money, and its correspondents were encouraged to both travel in the US and write in a more lively, personalized fashion. At the same time, the largest Soviet newspapers (*Pravda*, *Izvestiia* and *Trud*) set up their own networks of foreign correspondents and devoted more column space to international affairs. Still, Cold War suspicions

ran high, so Soviet correspondents were usually under FBI surveillance, and strict parity in terms of the numbers of correspondents and how their travel was restricted was maintained by the governments of both countries.

On the American side, foreign correspondents stopped assuming that the USSR was on the verge of collapse; now their stories emphasized stability and showed the pride that ordinary Soviet citizens evinced in their country's achievements. Although they worked to reassure readers that life in the US was still superior, American reporters had to admit that "the Soviet people did not consider themselves lacking freedom, nor did they await liberation from overseas." (p. 123)

Section Three of *Cold War Correspondents* looks at the Brezhnev era – years when relations between the US and the USSR fluctuated a great deal and when it was assumed that both countries were experiencing ideological crises. In these chapters, Fainberg describes how Soviet journalists were particularly attracted to stories about the American civil rights and anti-war movements, while their counterparts in Moscow were drawn to write extensively about the dissident movement. Negative press portrayals of American consumerism and social inequality allowed the Soviet government to claim that its society – one where social welfare was guaranteed for all – was the modern ideal. On the other hand, American reporting concerning the problems of everyday life and failing Soviet institutions allowed for a counter-narrative that linked modernity with a high standard of living and greater use of technology to emerge in the US press.

Finally, Fainberg's last chapter uses several case studies to illuminate the roles played by journalists during the closing years of the Cold War. For example, she demonstrates how Nicholas Daniloff's 1986 arrest on charges of espionage raised the question of the extent of Gorbachev's reforms and whether a partnership between the US and USSR could truly be established. That is followed by an excellent discussion of how the various televised "spacebridges" played out. Unfortunately, the events did not always foster greater mutual understanding, in part because many Americans assumed that the collapse of the USSR meant that US ideology had been right all along in its assessment of the "Other."

In sum, this book is a solid piece of scholarship whose nuanced depiction of the travails experience by foreign correspondents during the Cold War reveals much about the nature of journalism, and government desires to control it, during those years.

Alison Rowley
Concordia University (Montreal)

Field Notes

репортаж в “Известиях “об открытии выставки
*“**Русский авангард в объективе американского фотографа.** К юбилею Уильяма Брумфилда”*
https://iz.ru/1731894/zoia-igumnova/kadry-reshili-vse-v-moskve-uvidiat-sovetskuiu-arkhitekturu-glazami-amerikantca

Metro: https://www.gazetametro.ru/articles/ponjat-kulturu-cherez-arhitekturu-otkrylas-vystavka-k-jubileju-uiljama-brumfilda-27-07-2024?utm_referrer=mirtesen.ru

https://24stroim.ru/interer/vystavka-rysskii-avangard-v-obektive-amerikanskogo-fotografa-v-myzee-arhitektyry

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Crafting the Ballets Russes: The Robert Owen Lehman Collection
June 28 through September 22, 2024:

https://www.themorgan.org/exhibitions/ballets-russes

The Honorable Lynne Tracy, US Ambassador to Russia, at a personal tour of the photography exhibit “Russian Avant Garde through the Lens of William Brumfield”.
Ambassador Lynn Tracy: “William Broomfield’s insightful photographic works, which capture Russian architecture, not only make a significant contribution to the documentation of Russia’s cultural heritage, but also serve as a reminder of the unbreakable bonds between the people that bind our countries for centuries.”

Key Events:

1. Author Talk: Emil Draitser - “Laughing All the Way to Freedom: Americanization of a Russian Emigre”, September 17, 2024 at Yorkville Library.
   Hunter College professor Doctor Draitser introduced his new book:

https://www.amazon.com/Laughing-All-Way-Freedom-Americanization/dp/147669298X

2. An article is published on Motherwell's prints that NYPL acquired: 'Hermitage' Artwork Highlights NYPL's Acquisition of Robert Motherwell's Prints by Dr. Bogdan Horbal.
https://www.nypl.org/blog/2024/06/24/hermitag-acquisition-robert-motherwell-prints

3. Baryshnikov's year
https://www.nypl.org/about/fellowships-institutes/lpa-dance-research-fellowship
https://www.nypl.org/about/fellowships-institutes/lpa-dance-fellowship/current-fellows

4. A series of lectures on Russian classical music
https://www.nypl.org/events/programs/2024/11/05/beneath-score-evolution-russian-music-series-lectures-anna-vilenskaya

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Association of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES) – Annual Convention, November 2024 – Boston

Key Sessions:

1. Crossing the Russian Border: Transformations of Genres
https://tinyurl.com/2358ljs4
2. Between Hope and Delusion: Émigré Perspectives on U.S. Cold War Liberationist Ideals
https://tinyurl.com/2358ljs4h
3. American in Revolutionary Russia: Three Visions of Freedom and Liberation
https://tinyurl.com/2c2dhdvx
4. Becoming and Hybridity: Language, Loss, and Liberation in the Émigré Experience
https://tinyurl.com/28wxkac
5. Academic Contributions of Russian Émigré-Scholars to American Universities in 1920-1970s
https://tinyurl.com/23445v9w
6. The Wrinkled Borders of Freedom: Russian Migration to the Americas across the 20th Century
https://tinyurl.com/22ohzk6y
7. Liberation as a State of Mind: Free Minds in a Captive World, Captive Minds in a Free World
https://tinyurl.com/29k3xv8h
8. Spaces and Imaginaries of Socialist Extractivism
https://tinyurl.com/2cpsaqa9

9. Echoes of the American Civil War in Russia: Then and Now
   https://tinyurl.com/26jf63rc
10. The Soviet Union as an Object of the U.S. Cold War Mission: Real Politics and Imaginary Reality
    https://tinyurl.com/26fwdex8
11. From Industrial Imagination to Cold War Realities: Soviet-American Encounters and Perceptions
    https://tinyurl.com/2co76mhw
12. Sounds from the West: American and European Music in Late Soviet Culture
    https://tinyurl.com/29kklf4
13. Late-Soviet International Entanglements in Medicine, Academic Institutes, and Publishing
    https://tinyurl.com/29hcltn9
14. "Winning Women's Hearts and Minds": Citizen Diplomacy as Women's Liberation during the Cold War
    https://tinyurl.com/2ayy2g2o

The Clarion Choir & The Clarion Orchestra

The Clarion Choir presents the finale of their multi-year project to perform the complete choral works of Sergei Rachmaninoff in celebration of the composer's 150th birthday. This endeavor brings to light a lesser-known but central part of Rachmaninoff's body of work.

Clarion is joined by Amor Artis Chorus, NOVUS, the orchestra in residence at Trinity Church Wall Street and Aleksey Bogdanov to mark the culmination of this project with a performance of Rachmaninoff's rarely-heard cantata Spring, and Three Folk Songs for chorus and orchestra. The concert will also feature the composer's beloved Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor featuring soloist Ilya Maximov. The program will take place in the beautiful ST. BART'S-New York City.

NOVUS
Amor Artis Chamber Choir
(Ryan Brandau, artistic director)
The Clarion Choir
Aleksey Bogdanov, baritone
Ilya Maximov, piano
Steven Fox, conductor

Wednesday, Oct 30, 2024, 7PM
St. Bartholomew's Church
325 Park Avenue, NYC

An Exhibition at de Young Herbst Exhibition Galleries in San Francisco. It's the first major museum retrospective of Tamara de Lempicka (1894-1980)in the United States. As you may know, Lempicka was raised in Poland and later relocated to St. Petersburg, where she met and married her husband, prominent Polish lawyer Tadeusz Łempicki (1888-1951), who was imprisoned for his ties with the czar after the revolution. Before they finally immigrated, she studied at the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts. After living in France for years, in 1939, as Europe was threatened by the Nazis, along with her second husband, she finally settled in the United States.

Here is the description of the exhibition of this extraordinary Polish-Russian-French-American artist: https://www.famsf.org/exhibitions/tamara-de-lempicka