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Americanization “Russian Style”: Russia’s Love–Hate Relations with America

When on February 24, 2022, the Russian Federation started the full-scale military invasion of Ukraine, openly blaming the West and especially the US for using Ukraine against Russia, it was a shock for many political observers and scholars in the West, who had formerly emphasized the Westernization and Americanization of post-Soviet Russia. Now the same observers suddenly

noted how Putin’s “Americanized” Russia imitated American political practices, such as “the US intrusion under Hilary Clinton into Russian domestic politics” or using US military contractors for foreign military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. As a result of this copycatting of American actions, Russia interfered in US politics in 2016, supporting Donald Trump, and used the Wagner private military mercenary organization in the Russian war against Ukraine in 2022–23.¹

Paradoxically, Putin’s Russia, which has become openly anti-Western and anti-American, still incorporates and utilizes the typical forms of cultural production/consumption and political practices that were traditionally seen as “American” or “Western.” The events of the Russian wars against independent Ukraine in 2014, and especially in 2022, revealed the ambivalent (‘love–hate’) attitudes towards a concept of “Westernization/Americanization” among not only the Russian political elites – especially Russian/former Soviet intelligence officers, who play an important role¹ in shaping such attitudes in Putin’s Russia – but also among ordinary Russians since at least 2001, since the rise of “the KGB oligarchy,” or the “Chekist regime” in the post-Soviet geopolitical space. Tracing those attitudes from the time of the Russian Empire, through the Soviet period, up until the Putin regime’s war against the West, this essay is an attempt to analyze the various stages of “indigenization” of American influences into Russian/Soviet politics and culture, where “mirrored” or copycat American/Western concepts have entered politics, intelligence, economy, and cultural production/consumption.

¹ E.g., see various publications of British journalist Shaun Walker about this war and a role of Wagner group in *The Guardian*: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/24/yevgeny-prigozhin-the-hotdog-seller-who-rose-to-the-top-of-putin-war-machine-wagner>

Cultural Consumption as a Major Tool of Indigenization of American Influences

The beginning of the “unusual and mass interest” in American history and culture in general, and Native Americans in particular, among the people who lived in the geopolitical space of the former Russian Empire/Soviet Union, was directly connected to their reading of the adventure novels of American writer James Fenimore Cooper (1789–1851) and British writer Thomas Mayne Reid (1818–1883), who portrayed brave Native Americans fighting the European colonizers in North America.² In 1825, with the first publication of Cooper’s novel *The Spy* in Russian translation, the Russian reading audiences began their fascination with the narrative of early American history and American characters, “presented for the first time in very good literary form in the Romantic adventure novel.”³ Having already accustomed itself to the influx of similar historical adventure novels written by Sir Walter Scott, the Russian public was now ready to offer a “welcoming reception” to Cooper’s novels featuring the same Romantic writing style. As a result, in Russia all of the major publications of Cooper’s adventure novels on early American history – *The Pioneers* (1828), *The Prairie* (1829), *The Red Rover* and *The Pilot* (1831), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1832), *The Pathfinder* (1840) and *The Deerslayer* (1848) – became very popular with their Russian readers, and especially young Russians. The stories of the white trapper Nathaniel Bumppo and his friend, the Mohican Chief Chingachgook, immediately triggered an “unexpected and surprising mass imitation” by young readers from various localities of the Russian Empire. Beginning with the 1865 edition of his “complete works,” Cooper’s novels were reprinted many times in both the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. Many Russian writers, such as Aleksandr S. Pushkin, Lev N. Tolstoy, Fedor Dostoevsky, and Anton Chekhov, came to be influenced by Cooper’s novels, and incorporated themes and images from his novels into their own writings.⁴

At this same time, the adventure novels of British writer Mayne Reid, especially his novels about Native Americans, such as *The White Chief* and *Osceola the Sem-*

2 O. Y. Danchevskaya, “Notes on Russian Indianists,” in *Native American Women in the Arts, Education, and Leadership: Proceedings of the Sixth Native American Symposium*, ed. Mark B. Spencer and Robert Tudor (Durant: Southeastern Oklahoma State University, 2005), 55–60, esp. 55–56.

3 Aleksandr N. Nikoliukin, “Fenimore Cooper i russkaia kritika,” in *Literaturnye sviazi Rossii i SShA: Stanovlenie literaturnykh kontaktov*, by Aleksandr N. Nikoliukin (Moscow: Nauka, 1981), 256–326; see esp. 256–258.

4 Aleksandr N. Nikoliukin, *Vzaimosviasi literatur Rossii i SShA: Turgenev, Tolstoi, Dostoevsky i Amerika* (Moscow: Nauka, 1987), 25, 72–74.

inole, which were translated into Russian and Ukrainian, became the source of inspiration for millions of young people in both the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, including such famous figures as Vladimir Nabokov and Vladimir Mayakovsky.⁵ The lasting influence and legacy of both Cooper's and Mayne Reid's novels became the evident with the development of a "genuine cult" of the "American Indian" among the Russian and Soviet youth. Paradoxically, youth organizations as ideologically divergent as the first Boy Scout movement in pre-revolutionary Russia and the "Leninist" Pioneer movement in the Soviet Union actively promoted the young people's interest in Native American culture, encouraging a healthy "natural lifestyle of pathfinders" among both pre-revolutionary Russian and Soviet youth. All future Soviet Americanists noted Cooper's and Mayne Reed's strong literary influence, which triggered the scholars' own interest in American civilization, especially in early American history and the history of Native Americans as well.⁶

American Civilization as a Model of Modernity for Russia/Soviet Union

Another source of interest in American civilization was directly connected to a notion of modernity, which from the nineteenth century came to be associated in the Russian imagination and scholarship with "American modernity." Maksim Kovalevsky (1851–1916), one of the pioneers of American studies in imperial Russia, visited the United States in 1882. Kovalevsky, who was born into a Ukrainian noble family near Kharkiv, studied history, law, and sociology at the University of Kharkiv and Moscow University, where he taught in the department of law. Kovalevsky was so fascinated with American legal and educational systems that he tried not only to publicize his impressions after his American visit in Russia, but also to reform these systems in the Russian empire according to American models. In his memoirs and studies, Kovalevsky especially noted the very important difference between the Russian imperial educational system and American college education. According to Kovalevsky, all academic studies in the United States were free from

5 Yulia Pushkarevskaya and Gerald David Naughton, "'Westward Went in Search of Romance': The Transnational Reception of Thomas Mayne Reid's Western Novels," *The CEA Critic* 75, no. 2 (July 2013): 142–157.

6 See also Sergei I. Zhuk, "Reading James Fenimore Cooper in the USSR: The American Western Frontier and Native Americans in Soviet Imagination and Cultural Practices," in *The Western in the Global Literary Imagination*, ed. Christopher Conway, Marek Paryż, and David Rio (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2022), 149–163.

state interference, while in Russia the whole of academia, including the study of foreign countries like the United States, had become “state business,” controlled by “imperial bureaucrats.”⁷

This fascination with America particularly influenced Marxists in the Russian/Soviet imperial space. All major leaders of the Bolshevik regime in the Soviet Union idealized the American experience as a model for Soviet socialism, from the early days of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Even socialist industrialization, “a peculiar version of the industrial revolution in the USSR,” used American industrial towns, like Gary, Indiana, as models for creating the Soviet “Magnetic Mountain” towns that would initiate the industrial modernization of the Soviet socialist landscape.⁸ Both Lenin and Stalin emphasized the significance of American models of modernity for Soviet socialism. As Stalin noted in 1924, “The combination of Russian revolutionary sweep with American efficiency is the essence of Leninism in party and state activity.”⁹

American experience (and money) was used for the construction of Dniproges, the Dnieper dam and electric power station near the city of Zaporizhia in Soviet Ukraine. As Serhii Plokhy wrote:

A number of American consultants, who lived in newly built brick cottages in an “American garden city” complete with two tennis courts and golf links, provided American expertise to the Dniproges managers and engineers. The chief American consultant was Colonel Hugh Lincoln Cooper, a civil engineer who had cut his teeth on the construction of the Toronto Power Generating Station at Niagara Falls and the Wilson Dam, which was part of the Tennessee Valley Authority [...] On May 31, 1932, after five years of construction, engineers ran the first tests on the turbines and generators produced by American companies, including the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company and General Electric. In October the brand-new plant, whose original estimated cost of \$50 million had increased eightfold by the time of completion, was officially inaugurated for operation [...] Somewhat later, Colonel Cooper and five other American consultants received the Order of the Red Banner of Labor for their contribution to the construction of communism.¹⁰

7 Maxim Kovalevsky, “American Impressions,” *Russian Review* 10, no. 3 (July 1951): 176–184, esp. 178–179; A. S. Sokolov, “Amerikanskaia tema v nauchno-literaturnom nasledii M.M. Kovalevskogo,” in *Amerikanskii ezhegodnik* [hereafter *AE*] 1989 (Moscow: Nauka, 1990), 155–173.

8 Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 42, 47, 52, 362–363; and Paul Josephson, “Industrial Deserts: Industry, Science and the Destruction of Nature in the Soviet Union,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 85, no. 2 (April 2007): 294–321.

9 This quotation is from Joseph Stalin, *The Foundations of Leninism*, section ix. Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1924/foundations-leninism/ch09.htm>.

10 Serhii Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 247–248.

All major industrial and technological projects of the Stalinist Soviet Union used the American innovations and financial investments.

The Cold War and Four Stages of “Americanization” in the Soviet Union

During World War II, despite of all ideological and political differences, the USSR and the USA became political allies, justifying to some extent the role of American civilization as a model for Soviet socialist modernity. Even during the Cold War confrontation, starting in 1945, this trend continued. The Cold War was also a process of a paradoxical imitation of capitalist America, the major geopolitical opponent of the Soviet Union, especially in the sphere of cultural production and consumption. This process led to peculiar forms of Americanization that reflected both domestic and international issues obtaining in these special chronological conditions. The first stage of this “Soviet Americanization” took place during late Stalinism (1945–1953); the second stage of Americanization was triggered by Nikita Khrushchev’s anti-Stalin reforms and the opening of Soviet society to Western influences (1953–1964); the third stage was a result of Leonid Brezhnev’s détente, a relaxation of international tensions and collaboration with the West (1968–1984); and the fourth and final stage of such Americanization was the Soviet reaction to Mikhail Gorbachev’s perestroika and the opening of politics of dialogue with the United States (1985–1991).

The first paradox of the beginning of the Cold War in the USSR between 1946 and 1953 was the coexistence of, on the one hand, very brutal and aggressive anti-American propaganda in all mass media, and on the other, an obvious predominance of US movies on Soviet screens. During the late 1940s Soviet consumers watched various “trophy films”: the movies that were brought from Germany by the Soviet administration after World War II. Many foreign films which were released in the Soviet Union after the war belonged to this category. During the years 1947 to 1949, these films reached not only the larger provincial cities but also small towns and remote villages. While most of these movies were German, there were also many from the United States. For millions of Soviet children, the most popular movies were these American films, especially Westerns (so-called “cowboy films”).¹¹ As some scholars explained, the collapse of Soviet film production during World War II led to a decline in the number of Soviet movies available for domes-

¹¹ Richard Taylor, *Film Propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 212–214.

tic consumption – eighteen films in 1949, ten in 1950, and nine in 1951. This vacuum was filled by the foreign trophy films, the so-called “cinematic spoils of war,” which included 1,531 American, 906 German, 572 French, and 183 British films.¹² The favorite movie of all Soviet children in the 1940s was an American “cowboy film” entitled *The Trip Will Be Dangerous*. Millions of Soviet children fell in love with the movie’s main character, the Ringo Kid (portrayed by John Wayne), and tried to imitate his tricks and behavior. The American Western *Stagecoach* was directed by John Ford and released in the United States in 1939. Subsequently, the screening rights for the film were purchased by German distributors and it was released in Germany with German subtitles for local audiences. After their victory over Germany in 1945, the Soviets brought this film to the USSR as a “trophy,” renamed it *The Trip Will Be Dangerous*, and released it in Moscow, describing it “as an epic about the struggle of Indians against White imperialists on the American frontier.”¹³

Two other favorite “trophy films,” *The Sea Hawk* and *Captain Blood*, were also made in America and starred another Hollywood actor, Errol Flynn. These films, translated into Russian as *Korolevskie piraty* (The royal pirates) and *Ostrov stradanii* (The island of suffering), portrayed the romantic adventures of Anglo-American pirates in the Atlantic Ocean, and once again connected attractive and dynamic characters from the screen with the enigmatic America, “whose wonderful movies were more attractive and interesting than the boring and slow Soviet ones.” Of course, Soviet authorities were aware of some of the ideological implications, but in comments delivered before screenings they stressed the “anti-capitalist message” and they censored all “controversial (from the ideological point of view) episodes.”¹⁴

American trophy films also became a venue for promoting of another popular genre – American jazz music. In the late 1940s, Soviet film goers discovered American musical film *Sun Valley Serenade*, which demonstrated that “the normal people in the capitalist West could live a stylish and attractive life.” Moreover, this movie with its very simple plot introduced American jazz to the Soviet movie screen. For the first time, Soviet film viewers had the unique opportunity to see

12 Tony Shaw and Denise Youngblood, *Cinematic Cold War: The American and Soviet Struggle for Hearts and Minds* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 40.

13 Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society Since 1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 125.

14 Sergei I. Zhuk, *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City: The West, Identity, and Ideology in Soviet Dnepropetrovsk, 1960–1985* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press; Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2010), 116. See also the recent biography of Errol Flynn: Thomas McNulty, *Errol Flynn: The Life and Career* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004), especially 29–192.

the Glenn Miller Orchestra playing live on screen. For many children in the post-war Soviet Union, this film not only served as a popular means of advertising very catchy jazz melodies such as "Chattanooga Choo-choo," but was also instrumental in popularizing English as a very attractive, modern, and "stylish" foreign language.¹⁵ Many representatives of the Soviet post-war generation decided to switch from the obligatory German – the first foreign language in the Soviet school curriculum – to English as their language of choice. As one contemporary noted later that after watching *Sun Valley Serenade* and listening to the music of the Glenn Miller Orchestra, he began to memorize some of the songs from the movie. However, he was unable to pronounce the English sounds correctly because his first foreign language in school was German. That is why he and his friends decided to learn English.¹⁶

As other contemporaries later recalled, "during the first years after the war everybody who watched American films and used food products sent by the American people understood that Americans were our allies and good friends; Soviet young people, like us, did not think at the beginning in terms of the Cold War at all."¹⁷ A graduate of the Moscow Institute of International Relations (hereafter MGIMO), recalled how strong the goodwill was toward the American people among the Soviet youth in the 1940s:

our feelings toward America were very warm. We knew that the United States was giving us substantial help with food and material [...] Wartime movies from Hollywood were often shown, many of them depicting the friendship between Americans and Russians. I felt sure we would always be friends; it was inconceivable that anything could come between the Soviet Union and the United States.¹⁸

Georgii Arbatov, the founder of the USA Institute in Moscow as well as a graduate of MGIMO, confessed in his memoirs that as early as the autumn of 1944, while being demobilized from the Soviet Army, he "decided to study English and specialize in the United States." As he explained, "The United States was our main ally. The attitude among most of my contemporaries toward America was warm and friendly. Even first-year students [at MGIMO] understood that the United States

15 Vasily Aksyonov, *In Search of Melancholy Baby* (New York: Random House, 1987). Compare with Juliane Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation: Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 232.

16 Personal correspondence with Nikolai N. Bolkhovitinov, September 12, 1993.

17 Conversation with Nikolai N. Bolkhovitinov on March 19, 1991, at the Institute of World History, Moscow.

18 Arkady Shevchenko, *Breaking With Moscow* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 56.

and the Soviet Union would play a special role in the postwar world. And the country itself was undoubtedly very interesting.”¹⁹

At the same time, this first wave of Soviet fascination with American culture led to the rise of the first Soviet youth subculture, known as *stilyagi* (‘stylish people’) during the late 1940s. These imitators of American popular culture and fashions were influenced by the mass enthusiasm for jazz music, which opened the second stage of “Soviet Americanization” in the post-Stalin era in the 1950s.²⁰ A majority of *stilyagi* came from the Soviet middle class, privileged families with relatively good financial situations who permitted their children to use expensive tape recorders and wear fashionable dress.²¹ According to one of the most prominent representatives of *stilyagi* generation, Soviet jazz musician Alexei Kozlov, a typical Moscow “stylish man” wore “narrow short pants, big shoes, long chequered jacket with bright and long ties [...] with Tarzan-like long hair combed straight back and smeared generously with briolin.”²²

Officially, this second stage of Americanization started with the opening of Soviet society to external, Western influences under the new leadership of Nikita Khrushchev, when he initiated various exchange programs with the West and invited foreigners to the World Youth Festival in Moscow in 1957. After almost three months of negotiations, which began on October 29, 1957 in Washington, D.C., William S. B. Lacy, President Eisenhower’s Special Assistant on East–West Exchanges, and Georgiy Z. Zarubin, Soviet Ambassador to the United States, signed a special document – the first US–USSR exchange agreement, in fact – entitled “Agreement between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on Exchanges in the Cultural, Technical and Educational Fields” on January 27, 1958.²³ This exchange started in 1958 with twenty Soviet students. Their travels in America were officially sponsored by the Fulbright Scholarship Program, which originated in 1946. This exchange program also opened new opportunities for the consumption of American films in the Soviet Union. According to the agreement of 1958, the main Soviet organization for the acquisition and distribution of

19 Georgii Arbatov, *The System: An Insider’s Life in Soviet Politics* (New York: Random House, 1992), 35.

20 See the first satirical description of Moscow stylish man in the humor magazine *Crocodile*: D. Belyaev, “Stilyaga,” *Krokodil*, March 10, 1949, 10.

21 Alexei Kozlov, *Dzhaz, rok i mednye truby*, (Moscow: EKSMO, 2005), 80–81, 89.

22 Artemy Troitsky, *Back in the USSR: The True Story of Rock in Russia* (London: Omnibus Press, 1987), 2–3.

23 Robert F. Byrnes, *Soviet-American Academic Exchanges, 1958–1975* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 46–47, 48 ff.; and Yale Richmond, *U.S.-Soviet Cultural Exchanges, 1958–1986* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), 2, 4 ff.

foreign films, *Soveksportfilm*, was "to enter into contract with representatives of the motion picture industry in the United States, to be approved by the Department of State [...] for the purpose of the sale and purchase of films."²⁴

As the first American reaction to this cultural agreement in 1958, the US tourist company Cosmos Travel funded the travel of seventeen Soviet film directors, cameramen, and actors to the US (including the famous film director Sergei Gerasimov and the poet Sergei Mikhalkov, who represented the Soviet intellectual elite). They visited New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Hollywood. In New York, at a reception attended by a hundred American guests, organized by US film producer Joshua Logan, who had previously visited the USSR, they met movie stars like Lillian and Dorothy Gish, Marlene Dietrich (who signed an autograph for the readers of the Soviet popular magazine *Sovetskii ekran*), and Harry Belafonte. The Soviet visitors were impressed by the film studios in Hollywood and by their visits to Disneyland. They observed how Edward Dmytryk was shooting a film, western, *Warlock*, with Henry Fonda and Dolores Michael.

Moreover, they

were very impressed by the new film [*The Defiant Ones*] by Stanley Kramer about two fugitive criminals (a white one is played by Tony Curtis and black one – played by Sydney Poitier), who were joined together by one chain, a movie, which exposed the problems of racism and social inequality in the capitalist American society [...] This movie witnessed the great possibilities of American cinema, when it worked with progressive themes in realistic spirit.²⁵

This visit created the foundations of the business relationships between Hollywood and the Soviet film establishment. An American host, Joshua Logan, was invited to serve as a member of the jury at the Second Moscow International Film Festival (hereafter MIFF) in 1961.²⁶ After this visit, the Soviet guests recommended to the Soviet administration that they acquire the recent US movies they had seen in America for Soviet domestic consumption. They especially emphasized the positive, "humanistic" role of progressive film makers such as Stanley Kramer. He was later officially invited to serve as a member of the jury at the Third MIFF in 1963. On his second trip to Moscow in 1965 for the Fourth MIFF, "Kramer brought along *Judgment at Nuremberg*, *On the Beach*, *The Defiant Ones* and *West Side Story* (a non-Kramer film) to give the Russians an idea of America's freedom for self-criticism."²⁷

²⁴ Quoted by Yale Richmond, *U.S.-Soviet Cultural Exchanges*, 64.

²⁵ Vladimir Shneiderov, "Vostochno-zapadnoe putesthestvie," *Sovetskii ekran* 3 (1959): 8.

²⁶ Leonid Mlechin, *Furtseva* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardia, 2011), 349.

²⁷ Vernon Scott, "Kramer Lured Back to Films," *Sun Sentinel*, June 7, 1987.

Soviet politicians also supported the film exchanges through their official visits to Hollywood in 1959. Anastas Mikoyan, the first deputy chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, visited the US in January of that year. Following a special official invitation from Eric Johnston, a MPAA president, Mikoyan visited Paramount Pictures Company in Hollywood, where he met with the American film company executive Young Freeman, other representatives of the US movie business, and movie stars such as Marlon Brando, Jerry Lewis, Dina Merrill, and Kirk Douglas. As a result of Mikoyan's official visit, some American actors, including Douglas, received official invitations to visit Moscow, and Paramount Pictures sent its official representatives to the USSR to establish "the mutually useful foundation" for US–Soviet film exchange.²⁸ During his official visit to the US, in September 1959, Nikita Khrushchev also went to Hollywood, where he met with American movie stars and film makers on the premises of the Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, confirming the official beginning of film exchanges between two countries.²⁹ At Khrushchev's personal invitation, Gary Cooper, an American movie star who had become popular with the Soviet public via the old trophy films, traveled to the Soviet Union at the end of 1959. Moreover, as a part of this film exchange, the independent US movie *Marty* (Delbert Mann, 1955) was shown in Moscow, and the following year, in 1960, it was released widely all over the Soviet Union.³⁰ The most important practical results of all these official visits were not only the increasing number of Soviet and American films shown in both countries as part of the exchange programs, and the frequent exchanges between official delegations of film makers, but also special invitations for US film directors and producers to

28 S. Allov, "Vstrechi v Gollivude," *Sovetskii ekran* 6 (1959): 3. See also Jindriská Blahová, "A Merry Twinkle in Stalin's Eye: Eric Johnston, Hollywood and the Soviet Union," *Film History* 22, no. 3 (2010): 347–359.

29 Vasilii Kiselev, "Vizit mira i družby," *Sovetskii ekran* 22 (1959): 2–3; Alexei Kozlov, "N.S. Khrushchev v Amerike," *Sovetskii ekran* 24 (1959): 2–3. For the preparation and organization of Khrushchev's visit to the United States, as recorded in his son-in-law's memoirs, see Aleksei I. Adzhubei, *Te desiat' let* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1989), 200–207; Adzhubei, *Krushenie illiuzii: Vremia v sobytiakh i litsakh* (Moscow: Interbuk, 1991), 214–226. Compare with Adzhubei et al., eds., *Litsom k litsu s Amerikoi: Rasskaz o poezdke N. S. Khrushcheva v SSHA, 15–27 sentiabria 1959 goda* (Moscow: Godudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1959), esp. 12, 13–23.

30 Jeffrey Meyers, *Gary Cooper: American Hero* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2001), 302, 303. *Marty* was received by Soviet audiences as a film offering a critical portrayal of life in the United States.³¹ Joshua Logan (1961); Stanley Kramer (1963); Fred Zinneman (1965); Dimitri Tiomkin (1967); King Vidor (1969); George Stevens (1973); Bert Schneider (1975); Jay Leyda (1981); Robert Young (1985).

serve as members of the MIFF jury: from 1961, each MIFF had at least one American as a member of its jury.³¹

At the same time, this second period of "Soviet Americanization" led to the beginning of serious studies of American civilization in Soviet academia and a gradual "institutionalization" of American studies after 1953, with pioneering research of Nikolai Bolkhovitinov in Moscow and Arnold Shlepakov in Kyiv. These Soviet experts in American Studies, known as Soviet Americanists, not only prepared the historical justification for the US visit of Nikita Khrushchev in 1959, but to some extent, laid the foundations for a diplomacy of détente (the relaxation of international tensions) during the 1970s, which created the conditions for the third stage of Soviet Americanization, under a new leader of the USSR, Leonid Brezhnev.

New agreements between the Soviet Union and capitalist West about various forms of cultural exchange, signed during the 1970s, especially the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, signed in Helsinki by the Soviet leaders together with thirty-four other heads of state on August 1, 1975, opened Soviet society to new Western influences through various forms of media. A crucial moment in this Westernization was the détente of the 1970s, especially the period from 1972 to 1979. During this period Soviet administration bought official licenses for manufacturing popular music records from the West; officially licensed Western movies were shown (more than 150 feature films from 70 countries in 1973 alone); Soviet TV broadcast concerts by popular Western musicians (since January 11, 1977, a special Soviet TV show, "Melodies and Rhythms of Foreign Estrada," had been shown on a regular basis); the official Soviet television shows, such as *International Panorama*, *Ogoniok*, *Benefis*, *Volshebnyi fonar'*, and *Vesiole rebiata*, incorporated with a range of Western rock and disco music – from the light dancing tunes of ABBA, The Beatles, Boney M., Paul McCartney, and Smokey, to songs from *Jesus Christ Superstar*, to the heavier beat of Slade, The Sweet, Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple, Nazareth, Queen, and UFO. Western acts such as Cliff Richard, B. B. King, Boney M., Elton John and others performed live for the public in the USSR and fragments of these concerts were shown on Soviet television.³² At the same time, the popularity of Anglo-American rock music contributed to the rise of the second wave of Soviet youth subculture – the hippie culture, which survived until the end of the 1980s. In the 1970s, *Sovetskoyefilm* had released, on average,

31 1-765-3

32 See Leonid Parfenov, *Namedni. Nasha era. 1971–1980* (Moscow: KoLibri, 2009), 215 (1978). I have already discussed this in detail elsewhere. See especially Sergei I. Zhuk, "Détente and the Western Cultural Products in Soviet Ukraine during the 1970s," in *Youth and Rock in the Soviet Bloc: Youth Cultures, Music, and the State in Russia and Eastern Europe*, ed. William J. Risch (Lanham, MD: Lexington Press, 2014), 117–151.

four US films annually.³³ In 1974, *Sovetskportfilm* released six US films, and American and Soviet film makers began a new, collaborative production – *The Blue Bird*, starring Elizabeth Taylor, Jane Fonda, and Ava Gardner. The film was shot by American film director George Cukor on the premises of the Soviet Lenfilm studios in both Leningrad and Moscow, commissioning music by the famous Soviet composer Andrei Petrov and coopting the literary genius of the prominent Soviet screenwriter Aleksei Kapler, whose script was based on the play of the same name by Belgian playwright Maurice Maeterlinck. *The Blue Bird* was simultaneously released in both the United States and the USSR in April of 1976.³⁴

The beginning of the period of détente in US–Soviet relations not only resulted in some important changes in the distribution and consumption of American films, but also in the direct appropriation (even copycatting) of the certain American cultural practices related to cinema and television, including such US film genres as the Western, the musical comedy, and even sitcoms, which were adapted for Soviet TV. A very important role in this process belonged to various Soviet Americanists, experts in US history, politics, and culture. During the 1970s, six hundred of them became active participants in the various political, cultural, and academic exchanges between the US and the USSR, contributing to the cultural politics of the Soviet administration.³⁵

To some extent, all other stages of Soviet Americanization, during the period of détente and then perestroika in the 1980s and the 1990s, followed the same paradigm as the first two (during late Stalinism and Khrushchev's tenure): an imitation of US cultural and political forms and practices, on the one hand, and opposition to the same practices on the grounds that they represented “dangerous capitalist propaganda,” on the other hand.

33 Special film exchanges were organized with professional support from Soviet film critics, some of whom, like Shestakov, became regular visitors in the US. A. Borodin, “My mozhem dat’ drug drugu mnogo tsennogo...,” *Sovetskii ekran* (1971): 16–17.

34 A. S. Aleksandrov, “Snimaetsia ‘Siniaia ptitsa’,” *SEPI* 9 (September 1975): 70–72; Semen Chertok, “Skazka o schastie,” *Sovetskii ekran* 13 (1975): 10–13. This film was the fifth screen adaptation of Maeterlinck's play, following two silent films, the studio's 1940 version starring Shirley Temple, and a 1970 animated feature. A positive review of this film is found in Romil Sobolev, “Naiti to, chto ob’ediniaet,” *Sovetskii ekran* 24 (1976): 4–5.

35 Robert English, *Russia and Idea of the West* (New York: Columbia University Press 2000).

“Seductive Adversary,” or “Americanization” and the Rise of the KGB Oligarchy

After the Second World War, during the Cold War, the KGB – the Soviet political police and major intelligence agency – targeted the United States of America as the “main enemy in the world” for the Soviet Union. According to Christopher Andrew, “throughout the Cold War, Soviet intelligence regarded the United States as its ‘main adversary.’”³⁶ In their everyday counterintelligence activities in Soviet Ukraine, through the entire period of post-Stalin socialism, KGB operatives still dealt mainly with intelligence from the “main adversary,” the United States. According to the official counterintelligence research of KGB in Kyiv, the number of the spies from the US always dwarfed the number of spies from other capitalist countries. Thus, from January to August of 1969, there were 133 cases of espionage committed by foreigners in Soviet Ukraine. Seventy-four of the spies were Americans, twelve were English, nineteen were French, and eleven were West Germans.³⁷ This was a typical ratio for KGB operations in Ukraine. During the 1970s and the 1980s, more than 60 percent of all recorded and reported KGB counterintelligence operations in Soviet Ukraine targeted only the US and Canada.

“Capitalist America” became not only the “main” but also a “seductive” “adversary” of the KGB, creating attractive cultural products and practices for Soviet consumers. Paradoxically, KGB operatives were also attracted to various “material and cultural items” they associated with “seductive America.” As one retired KGB officer recalled, “despite all our ideological communist upbringing, we, young KGB officers, still dreamed about the products ‘made in the USA’, about a possibility to get a special assignment involving a ‘business trip’ to America, which would allow us to bring the desired items from America to Ukraine.”³⁸ Former KGB officers, like Oleg Kalugin, recalled how KGB agents living in the US on intelligence assignments enjoyed their consumption of American products and services, literally “falling in

36 Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 150. See also John Earl Haynes, Harvey Klehr, and Alexander Vassiliev, *Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), esp. 293–481; Oleg D. Kalugin, *Spymaster: My Thirty-Two Years in Intelligence and Espionage Against the West* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 221.

37 Galuzevyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Sluzhby Bezpeky Ukrainy (hereafter SBU), f. 16, op. 1, spr. 988, ark. 138.

38 Interview with Leonid K., a retired KGB officer, March 3, 2019, Kyiv, Ukraine. Leonid was a close friend of the Soviet Ukrainian Americanists, such as Arnold Shlepakov and Leonid Leshchenko, who introduced me to this officer in 1992.

love with America” and the American way of life. As Kalugin (who was sent officially to the US as an exchange student in journalism) described his own fascination with America in his memoirs,

I was twenty-four and had been turned loose in New York City with the princely sum of \$250 a month in Fulbright spending money. [...] I was living for free in Columbia's John Jay Hall, [...] taking journalism courses, and being encouraged by the school newspaper – and the KGB – to sniff around New York and get acquainted with American life [...] I visited scores of neighborhoods and all the major museums. I saw ball games and went to the Metropolitan Opera. I rode buses and subways for hours and saw more than one hundred films. I went to a strip club in Greenwich Village, shelling out \$40 for a drink with one of the dancers...³⁹

But the most important effect of the exchange program on Soviet Americanists was the development, even among the “KGB people,” of a psychological phenomenon which some contemporaries called “a fondness of America and its people.”⁴⁰ As Allen H. Kassof from IREX explained:

We know in retrospect that many of the Soviet Americanists who came to do research on the United States as adversaries developed a very complex symbiotic relationship with their subjects. Beginning as analysts of American life, they gradually became supporters: the internal messengers of new conceptions of Soviet-American relations and, ultimately, spokesmen for alternatives. On the personal level, they developed significant friendships not only with their counterparts in the American sovietological community, who were their most readily accessible colleagues, but with a representative spectrum of American elites.⁴¹

This hidden curiosity and fascination about “capitalist America” were obviously present in all individual KGB reports (including the counterintelligence ones), which were submitted to their administration by KGB operatives who worked with the American visitors in Soviet Ukraine. Those KGB officers, who “worked” with the American tourists in Kyiv, recalled that “after a long communication with an American visitor, besides the classified intelligence information, a KGB agent usually reported the numerous details of everyday life in America of his vis-

³⁹ Kalugin, *Spymaster*, 27, 29.

⁴⁰ Pavel Palazchenko, *My Years with Gorbachev and Shevardnadze: The Memoir of a Soviet Interpreter* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 95. Palazchenko, Mikhail Gorbachev's interpreter, wrote in his memoirs: “Most [Soviet] experts on the United States, regardless of differences of view on particular issues, seemed genuinely to like America and the Americans.” *My Years*, 95. See also Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 91.

⁴¹ Allen H. Kassof, “Scholarly Exchanges and the Collapse of Communism,” *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 22, no. 3 (1995): 263–274; citation at 270.

itor: about American cars, education, food, fashions, even films and television shows."⁴² As KGB operatives joked, by participating in those anti-American operations, the KGB officers "discovered the various details of everyday life in American civilization: it was a peculiar process of the 'discovery of America/the American Other' by struggling not only with the alleged American intelligence agents, but also with American propaganda during consumption of the 'seductive American products'."⁴³

According to KGB statistics, the overwhelming majority of criminal cases involving American influences in Soviet Ukraine were not related directly to US intelligence, but rather to the consumption of cultural products produced in the United States. Massive consumption of American jazz and rock music by Soviet youth produced not only the massive phenomenon of the black market and *fartsovshchiks* (black marketers) in every Soviet city, but also the youth subcultures of *stilyagi*, hippies, and punks, which were considered by the KGB administration to be "the alternative political culture to Komsomol."⁴⁴ All those subcultures used a variety of American cultural practices and models of behavior; the KGB therefore interpreted those subcultures as an "anti-Soviet American threat" and organized special KGB operations against them, especially against the subcultures of hippies and punks during the 1970s and the 1980s.

During the Cold War *détente* period, the institutionalization of various academic centers for American Studies in Moscow and Kyiv was used by the officers of the KGB and GRU (military intelligence) – the two Soviet intelligence agencies – to create cover positions for themselves, to invite American policy-makers and academics to the Soviet Union and to undertake intelligence-related missions to the United States. Even the first group of four Soviet students of American Studies, who participated in the initial academic exchange with American students at Columbia University in 1958, included three professional Soviet intelligence officers. American hosts were aware of this mission by the Soviet research centers, who sent their representatives to the US "to spy and to interfere with American politics." According to the published "Vasilii Mitrokhin archive files" (KGB documents named for the KGB archivist who brought them to the West), the most influential "KGB man" among the Soviet experts in US politics, history, and culture was Georgii Arbatov, who had been a director of the Institute for the USA and Canada since 1967.

⁴² Interview with Leonid K.

⁴³ Interview with Igor T., a retired KGB officer, May 18, 1991, Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine.

⁴⁴ I quote my interview with Igor T. See also Zhuk, *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City*.

Arbatov, who had the KGB codename of “Vasilii,” built up an influential circle of high-level contacts in America, and he was regularly required to cultivate these connections. One of the most important of Arbatov’s contacts in the 1970s was former Under-Secretary of Defense Cyrus Vance, codenamed by the KGB as “Vizir” (‘Visier’).⁴⁵ Three other leaders of the Soviet Americanist centers were either KGB officers or KGB agents. I refer to Grigorii Sevostianov, an intelligence officer who was the head of such a center at the Institute of World History in Moscow between 1968 and 1988; to Nikolai Sivachev, a KGB agent and Sevostianov’s former student, leader of a similar center at Moscow State University between 1974 and 1982; and to Aleksandr A. Fursenko (1927–2008), a KGB operative and founder of the St. Petersburg school of Russian Americanists. Another prominent “KGB/FSB person” among Soviet and Russian Americanists was Vladimir Sogrin, Sivachev’s student, who became a director of the Center for North American Studies at the Institute of World History in Moscow after 2008. Many of those centers included professional intelligence officers who had officially retired from their KGB service. Sevostianov’s center had at least two of those officers: Vadim A. Koleneko (1943–2011), a specialist in Canadian Studies, and Vladimir V. Poznyakov (1946–2021), an expert in Soviet-American intelligence before and during the early Cold War.⁴⁶

As we have already seen, from the very beginning, the academic exchanges between the United States and the USSR were used as opportunities for infiltration by the “KGB people.” These “people” included a wide variety of the experts – from the ranked KGB officers to various scholars and scientists (including Soviet Americanists), who collaborated with the KGB and provided those “directing organs” not only with intelligence information and necessary “informal” contacts in academic and diplomatic circles, but also with very important expertise in such disparate fields of knowledge as the functions of the US Department of State, computer science, or the banking system. Many Soviet participants recalled how their KGB supervisors requested them to provide information about the different functions of US banks “to use this experience for the organization of the Soviet foreign banks, working abroad.”⁴⁷ According to former Soviet KGB officers who participated in these exchange programs, this information about banking and financial services in the West would be used for future financial operations in post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine.⁴⁸

The main result of the KGB’s operations in “capitalist America” was a typical industrial and technological espionage. The KGB provided Soviet military factories

⁴⁵ Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *Sword and the Shield*, 211–212, 213.

⁴⁶ Interview with Nikolai N. Bolkhovitinov, Moscow, May 21, 2001.

⁴⁷ Interview with Nikolai N. Bolkhovitinov, March 23, 1991, Moscow.

⁴⁸ See Kalugin, *Spymaster*, 424.

and research centers with precious technological and industrial information by stealing from their "main adversary." As the KGB officers who supervised these operations in Kyiv revealed:

[Between] 1965 and 1987, almost 90 % of all technological innovations in all research institutes and the factories of the "military-industrial complex" of Soviet Ukraine were based on the stolen information from the capitalist countries by the specially trained KGB agents. And at least 80 % of all those "secret samples" of important technological "inventions" came directly from the United States of America. Paradoxically, a majority of these technological secrets were stolen from the American laboratories and colleges by the Soviet engineers and scientists, who participated in the international academic exchanges programs and who executed the KGB orders, performing the functions of the Soviet spies on the American soil.⁴⁹

Soviet Americanists and their KGB supervisors began their own participation in the creation of an international community of scholars, becoming partners in academic exchange with their American colleagues. They established good relations not only with American experts in US history, politics, and culture, but also with American specialists in Russian/Soviet studies. To some extent, the participation of Soviet Americanists in this international community would not only shape the development of American studies in the USSR, but also influence Russian studies in America. After visiting America, Soviet Americanists hosted American guests, experts in Russian studies, building strong personal connections with them – as Bolkhovitinov did with Norman Saul, Sivachev with Donald Raleigh, Vladimir Sogrin with Saul and Alfred Rieber, and so on. (The two American historians linked to Sogrin stayed at his Moscow apartment, and were helped during their research in Moscow. Rieber was a "Slavist" while Saul was an "Americanist.") Eventually, through these personal connections, Soviet Americanists (including the KGB agents) and their American colleagues created an important academic international network, which involved their students as well, and which survived the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Sergei I. Zhuk, *KGB Operations against the USA and Canada in Soviet Ukraine, 1953–1991* (London and New York: Routledge, 2022), 152–153.

⁵⁰ I have written about this in detail in my book *Soviet Americana: The Cultural History of Russian and Ukrainian Americanists* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2018; repr. Bloomsbury, 2019).

Crisis of the Russian “Americanization” Under the KGB Regime of Putin

The process of “Americanization” for Russian politics and culture was gradually changed after 2000, when a new Russian President, Vladimir Putin, a former KGB officer, began transforming the political system of the Russian Federation, from which emerged the so-called “KGB kleptocratic regime.”⁵¹ A notion of “Americanization” never influenced the deep social, economic, political, and ideological foundations of the Soviet nor (after 1991) the Russian political regimes. Both political elites, including Putin’s KGB kleptocrats, and ordinary Russians enjoyed only the material comfort and various forms of entertainment they associated with this Americanization, mostly through various venues and forms of consumption, starting with James Fenimore Cooper’s novels and American Western films, later listening to Anglo-American rock and roll. As one KGB officer noted, “we loved in a process of Americanization only **comfort**, we never accepted such American concepts as a rule of law or democracy.”⁵² The KGB never understood and never accepted the rules of a democratic system of politics and the rule of law into Russia. Moreover, after a 2007 speech given by Putin in Munich, in which he accused the West and especially the US of anti-Russian politics, the Russian ruling elites, supervised by Putin’s kleptocracy, gradually began distancing themselves from old perceptions of Americanization. The peak of this distancing from “dangerous American influences” came in July 2021, when Putin published a historical essay in which he accused the USA of using Ukraine against Russia. This publication became his theoretical justification for open war against Ukraine, which was publicly presented as if it were a war against the threat to Russian security posed by the US and NATO.⁵³ Paradoxically, an indigenization of American influences led to their complete rejection. And the very people who used to provide and justify those influences into Russian society, the Russian experts in American studies (many of whom were, and still are, KGB/FSB officers and agents) now justify Putin’s expansionism and his anti-Americanism, focusing their attention on contemporary cultural consumption and youth culture, which became, in the

51 See Karen Dawisha, *Putin’s Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), and Mikhail Zygar, *All the Kremlin’s Men: Inside the Court of Vladimir Putin* (New York: Public Affairs, 2016).

52 Interview with Leonid K.

53 See Vladimir Putin’s article “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians,” published on the official Kremlin site on July 12, 2021. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>.

KGB imagination, the object of "Americanization," the direct result of American cultural and ideological influences.

KGB/FSB ideologists in Russia, like Andranik Migranian, blame America for "creating" all the domestic and international problems of the Russian state.⁵⁴ Another Russian ideologist, Vyacheslav Nikonov, served an Executive Director of Russkii Mir Foundation from 2007 to 2012, publicly taking an anti-American position, criticizing the Orange Revolution and Maidan Revolution in Ukraine as an "American conspiracy against Russia." In his textbook, the publication of which was funded by Russkii Mir Foundation, Nikonov presents the United States as the major geopolitical enemy of Russia. He interprets all events in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine since the collapse of the Soviet Union as a result of "US expansionism." According to Nikonov, the major goal of the United States is to "weaken" and to "punish" Russia, by exploiting the recent developments in Ukraine and Russia. Moreover, Nikonov supports Russian expansionism, the Russian annexation of Crimea, and Russian military presence in eastern Ukraine. He justifies the Russian war in Ukraine through the "historical mission" of Russian state to "defend" its state national interests against "American imperialism" in Eastern Europe, in a post-Soviet geopolitical space.⁵⁵ Other Russian ideologists also follow Nikonov in their criticism of US "public diplomacy," alleging that America has been "masterminding" "Ukrainian revolutions." They accuse US politicians of having attempted to "take out" Ukraine from the Russian sphere of influence in Eastern Europe as early as 2003. According to this group, US "public diplomacy" focused its efforts on pro-Western Ukrainian youth, organizing the so-called "Orange" Revolution and other anti-Russian movements in Ukraine. These Russian ideologists repeat the old Soviet concepts about an "American anti-Russian conspiracy." They emphasize that starting in 2003, "the USA were able to create [in Ukraine] a solid human potential, oriented to the West."⁵⁶ Paradoxically, both Nikonov and Migranian were among the first young Soviet Americanists from Moscow to visit the US as Fulbright scholars in the early 1980s, when they praised a "modern America."⁵⁷

54 Andranik Migranian, "Putin Triumphs in Ukraine," *The National Interest*, March 6, 2014. On the role of Andranik Migranian as an advisor to both President Yeltsin and President Putin, see Eugeniusz Górski, *Civil Society, Pluralism and Universalism* (Washington, D.C.: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2007), 57, 58, 61.

55 V. A. Nikonov, *Sovremennyi mir i ego istoki* (Moscow: Izd-vo Moskovskogo universiteta, 2015), esp. 302–304.

56 N. A. Tsvetkova, "Publichania diplomatiia SSHA: ot kholodnoi voiny k novoi kholodnoi voine," in *Rossii i SShA: poznavaia drug druga. Sbornik pamiati akademika Aleksandra Aleksandrovicha Fur-senko*, ed. Vladimir V. Noskov (Saint Petersburg: Nestor-Istoriia, 2015), 82–97; quotations at 92 and 93.

57 Richmond, *Cultural Exchange*, 173.

The imperial ideal of tsarist Russia, mixed with Soviet political and cultural stereotypes, now shapes not only political but also academic discourse in a post-Soviet space. As in the nineteenth century, according to Maxim Kovalevsky's complaint, the state (today, Putin's nationalist autocracy) again dominates Russian interpretations of US history and politics. And Russian Americanists still call on Russian politicians to "resist by all available means" the "American threat."⁵⁸ Unfortunately, Russian politicians today forget what Nikolai Bolkhovitinov, a pioneer in the studies of Russian-American relations, emphasized in 1968 during the Cold War: "We do not intend to present an idealized picture and create an impression that no disagreement or antagonism existed between Russia and America [...] The lesson of Russian-American relations consists not in the absence of differences and conflicts, but in the fact that history testifies to the possibility of overcoming them – not with the help of weapons, but peacefully, by means of negotiation."⁵⁹

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58 Nikonov, *Sovremennyi mir*, 371–380, 427–446.

59 Quoted in Lyman Henry Butterfield, "Introduction," in Nikolai N. Bolkhovitinov, *The Beginnings of Russian-American Relations, 1775–1815*, trans. Elena Levin (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1975), xvi. On the role of Bolkhovitinov in Soviet American Studies, see Sergei I. Zhuk, *Nikolai Bolkhovitinov and American Studies in the USSR: People's Diplomacy in the Cold War* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Press, 2017).

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