
knowledge of this country have grown considerably. A trickle of doctoral dissertations and monographs in the early 1960s had swelled into a flood of books by 1970. An Institute of the U.S.A. was established under Grigorii Arbatov in 1968 to serve as a new governmental "think tank." A new semi-popular journal, *USA*, appeared in 1970, devoted to the analysis of American politics, economics, and foreign policy; its circulation has now reached 33,000.

Today, Soviet specialists on the United States can be found in Leningrad, Kiev, Tbilisi, Tomsk, and other cities, in addition to Moscow, with its numerous academic centers and governmental institutes and agencies. Though far less numerous than American students of Soviet affairs, devotees of *beldomologiia*, or White-House-ology, constitute an industry capable of mounting frequent conferences on American topics, producing articles for the press, and providing confidential advice to senior government policy-makers.

The American Enigma

Why has "America-watching" achieved such prominence in the U.S.S.R.? The reasons do not differ greatly from those underlying the spread of Soviet studies in this country. There is genuine curiosity, to be sure. But with so much of their national budget tied up in the military, Russians too consider it important to "know their enemy," or, more politely put, to understand their partner in détente. Beyond this, there is a crucially important factor not present in American study of the U.S.S.R., namely the desire to study carefully a nation whose experience offers much that can be adopted or adapted in the U.S.S.R. Like the Japanese, the Russians are past masters at such international borrowing. This process has gone on since before Peter the Great, and will continue regardless of the fear of some Americans that the Soviet Union will, as it were, steal the raisins from their cake. *What Does America Have to Teach Us?*, asked a book published in Moscow in 1908. Along with their other tasks, the Soviet *Amerikanisty* are charged with finding today's answers to this question.

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This new "knowledge industry" requires solid information. This has always been a problem for Russians interested in America. The first detailed information on North America did not reach Russian leaders until nearly a century after Columbus. For the next 200 years Russians had to learn about this continent through the works of West European writers, rather than at first hand. In spite of a number of engaging travel accounts on America written by Russians in the 19th century, the United States remained, for most educated subjects of the Tsars, more the embodiment of one or another abstract principle than a real country inhabited by real people. Interest in the United States reached something of a peak in the first years after the 1917 revolution, but it was hard data on American industrial methods rather than broader information on American society that Russians were seeking and getting. And amidst the general paranoia of the Stalin years, broad scholarly inquiry was severely hampered.

Listening to the VOA

During the last 15 years this situation has changed dramatically for the better, at least for the specialist. Leading Soviet officials, journalists, and scholars feel obliged to be better informed than in the past, and have good access to American publications not otherwise available to the public at large. They use them extensively, if selectively, in their writings on this country.* The now unjammed Voice of America is never cited as a source, but any serious Soviet Americanist will expect to log several hours a week in front of his short-wave radio.

The flood of direct impressions taken home by travelers to this country is perhaps even more important. With some 12,000 Soviet visitors to the United States each year, there are now Russians in nearly every profession who have followed Khrushchev's call. The most fortunate among them have been able to study here, thanks to the various cultural exchanges that have flourished since 1958. True, there are those who, like Louis XVIII, have learned nothing and forgotten nothing, and, equally true, the pages of such leading publications as the Union of Soviet Writers' *Literary Gazette* are open to such people. But the expanding fund of direct impressions makes it more difficult to pass off the most egregious

*Examination of the footnotes of the journal *USA* indicates that the *New York Times* and the *International Herald Tribune* far outstrip all other papers in popularity, while among weeklies it is *U.S. News and World Report* rather than *Newsweek* or *Time* to which Soviet students of American affairs turn. Notwithstanding their lingering suspicion that Wall Street runs the country, the *Wall Street Journal* is all but ignored as a source for articles on the United States. So are most counter-culture publications.

distortions as fact. Writing on the United States has grown more sophisticated, if only to satisfy the rising expectations of better educated Russians.

No amount of information, of course, can by itself enable a person from one culture to decipher accurately the signs and symbols of another. In the end, the underlying assumptions and predilections of the observer will come into play, whether through the choice of subjects to which he is drawn or through the manner in which he chooses to treat them. At the deepest level, such assumptions are built into language itself. To take but one example, how can one expect Russians to take seriously the recent American debate over the Privacy Act when their language contains no precise word for "privacy"? Language aside, such assumptions have become crystallized in specific attitudes toward America, some of which have long recurred in Russian accounts.

A fairly representative compendium of such notions is the volume *Stars and Stripes*, published by a well-traveled Russian nobleman, Ivan Golovin, in 1856. Borrowing a phrase from Diderot, Golovin charged that America's distinction was to be like a fruit which begins rotting even before it has ripened. Diderot, in fact, had been speaking of Russia, and not America, but the notion of a United States both youthful and decadent held great appeal for both conservative and radical writers before 1917 and for Communist writers down to the present. As recently as June 15, 1976, readers of *Pravda* were treated to an article on America in this vein entitled "A Society Without a Future."

A Contradictory Approach

No less curious than the sustained, almost Wagnerian, decline ascribed to America is the way in which that image has been able to coexist with the equally persistent acknowledgment—even awe—of American scientific and technological progress. The founder of Russian publicist writing on the United States, Pavel Svinin, spoke warmly of American machines in his *Picturesque United States of America, 1811-1813*, and his heirs have never begrudged praise in this area. As Stalin put it, "Soviet power and American technique will build socialism." Such a view assumes that technology is culturally neutral, a point that was implied by N. N. Inozemtsev, the director of Moscow's Institute for International Economics and International Relations, in the first number of the monthly *USA*. While affirming that the American system "deforms" its own scientific and technological achievements, Inozemtsev argued that such matters as the combination of central-

ization and decentralization in American corporations, the American method of wholesaling, and the system of decision-making in the area of research and development "are all of interest to us, since concrete general principles relating to the scientific and technological revolution are coming to light through the American experience."

Without even acknowledging the apparent contradiction, Soviet commentators simultaneously elaborate both images. One reason they have not rejected the age-old idea of American decline is that it has proven useful in analyzing various current issues. It enabled Soviet observers to deal relatively calmly with the United States amid the furor of Vietnam, and to accept Watergate without surprise. Similarly, 75 years ago it underpinned the research of the brilliant Russian Americanist, Moisei Ostrogorsky, in whose eyes the United States had even then ceased to possess a Constitutional government in the strict sense. Writing for an audience that eventually included thousands of Americans, Ostrogorsky was the first scholar anywhere to analyze the combined impact of wealth, political parties, and a mass public on America's Constitutional heritage. His gloomy but profound insights justify his being ranked after Alexis de Tocqueville and Sir James Bryce as the most astute foreign observer of this country.*

An Extension of Europe

Confronted with a civilization so different from their own, some Russian scholars have avoided coming to grips with its distinctive aspects by declaring categorically that America is "nothing else but a continuation of European development." These words, by the 19th-century socialist, Alexander Herzen, could have been uttered by countless recent Russian writers. This view has two important corollaries: first, it has led Russian observers to neglect until recently the study of American culture and social psychology; and, second, it has served to justify the mechanical application to America of categories of analysis derived from the study of Western Europe.

A Russian nurse, A. N. Paevskaia, returning from her studies in Boston in the 1890s, asked, "What have [the Americans] given the world? What noble, honest, great human idea has been borne by them?" Assuming the answer to be "nothing," Russians have long neglected all but those few American writers and artists

*Ostrogorsky's best-known work is *Democracy and the Party System in the United States, A Study in Extra Constitutional Government* (1910). The latest edition in English was published by Arno Press in 1974.

deemed by them to be "progressive"—Theodore Dreiser, Mark Twain, Jack London, Sinclair Lewis. Many other American authors whose works would give Russians a more multi-dimensional impression were for long untranslated.

In this respect too the last few years mark a sharp break with all previous Russian experience. The first Russian translation of *Moby Dick* came in 1961—after a century of neglect. Then, in rapid succession, came works by William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, J. D. Salinger, Thomas Wolfe, William Styron, and even Kurt Vonnegut. Henry James, who acknowledged his debt to the Russian writer Turgenev, was also hauled from oblivion. But authors like Henry Miller and William Burroughs, whose works Russians judge to be pornographic, remain beyond the pale of acceptability, as do the writings of certain Black Nationalists, "reactionary" writers such as Herman Wouk, "fascists" like Ezra Pound, and writers known for their critical views on the Soviet Union, such as Saul Bellow.

By comparison with any other time in the last half-century, the situation has dramatically improved, and with important results. Reviewing the recent burst of translations, one American critic has noted that "Soviet translations of American literature belie the image of America as a cultural desert. Indeed, it projects an image of a culture that is both varied and vibrant. . . ."

With the gradual acceptance of America as a country possessing its own rich and diverse culture, the tendency automatically to impose on it the categories of analysis developed for the societies of Western Europe has come under scrutiny. One of the peculiarities of Soviet writing on America has always been its use of terminology not normally used by Americans themselves. There is nothing inherently wrong with this, of course, provided that the analysis succeeds in bringing greater clarity to the problem at hand. Endless polemical allusions to the American "proletariat," to the "reactionary manipulators of Wall Street," and to unspecified "progressive forces" have not had this effect, however.

Gone Is the Proletariat

This too is changing, at least among specialists. A. N. Melnikov's 1974 volume *Contemporary Class Structure of the USA* succeeds in getting to the real groups and strata that comprise American society today. Basing his analysis on an exhaustive study of U.S. census returns, Melnikov divides and subdivides his subject into ever more refined units, reveling in the specific at the expense of the hackneyed general categories of "capitalist," "worker," and

so forth. American labor, he finds, is no "solid, undifferentiated mass," any more than it is uniform in world view, work, or wealth. Nor, significantly, is labor seen on the verge of revolt—no great revelation, perhaps, but not an observation quite in line with the old Soviet faith.

The politics of détente have hastened the abandonment of the polemical vocabulary. It was well and good for *Pravda* to rail against the evils of American "monopolies" so long as the Soviet government was not entering into contracts with them. Nowadays, the more discrete term "firm" has become *de rigeur*. In a recent article, the Control Data Corporation was described as simply a "problem-solving organization," in spite of its excellent standing on the New York Stock Exchange. And what has become of the much-maligned capitalist, with his top hat, cigar, and jowls? Presto! He has been transformed into a "businessman," an "entrepreneur" (*delovoi chelovek*), or even a "manager," i.e., the sort of person one can do business with. Meanwhile, "bankers" are now "financial circles" and the "proletariat" has dropped from the scene entirely.

This shift has its parallel in the manner in which Soviet writers describe the American political process. Here again, the Stalin era bequeathed to the present Soviet generation of leaders a dangerously simplified notion of how American politics works. America being a capitalist country, it followed that businessmen could bring about whatever legislation they considered to be in their interests. On this doctrinal assumption, the Soviet campaign in favor of the U.S.-Soviet trade bill was directed almost entirely towards sympathetic leaders of American industry. The unanticipated passage of the 1974 Jackson-Vanik Amendment linking trade with Jewish emigration threw Moscow's White-House-ologists into confusion. Congress, it turned out, *did* count, and the successful Congressional drive against the illegal acts of the Nixon administration only confirmed it. In 1974, the Moscow leadership sent to Washington a prestigious group of parliamentary experts to see how the separation of powers actually functions.

The absence of contending political parties in the U.S.S.R., the Russian tradition of centralized authority, and the Soviet legal system's stress on duties to the State rather than rights against it present real barriers to Russian perceptions. Even when they have mastered the facts of a given case, Soviet observers will frequently misread American motives—not just because they are inhibited by ideological blinders, but because they honestly cannot conceive of people basing their actions on the abstract principles which sometimes impel us. This is particularly true in the case of

Americans who criticize the U.S.S.R. on civil libertarian grounds. "Like young harlots (although many of these people are quite gray-haired), they swing from one modish political current to the next. . . ." Thus one prominent Soviet Americanist characterized liberal critics of détente.

Nonetheless, sustained contact with American affairs has led a good number of Soviet analysts to a quite realistic understanding of American political processes. Whatever their ideology tells them about the structure of power in capitalist societies, they have come to appreciate the might of press and public opinion in America. And while Marxism-Leninism requires that they consider every Western government to be a conspiracy against "the people," the new wave of Americanists are fairly united in viewing American politics as relatively open and relatively adaptable to changing conditions.

Awe Leads to Error

In their eagerness to avoid the exaggerated statements on America's impending doom that have given rise to so many Soviet jokes in the past, Moscow analysts at times have erred by overestimating American strengths. Thus, Soviet economists analyzing our economy on the eve of détente failed to anticipate the impact of inflation here—and hence found themselves later having to adjust their prognostications downward rather severely. More recently, inflation and unemployment in America have been treated extensively in such Soviet journals as *World Economics* and *International Relations*, but Moscow specialists insist that America's boldness in the scientific and industrial areas will sustain its lead over the other large Western countries for the foreseeable future and, by implication, over the Soviet Union as well.

How, then, can we summarize such new Soviet perceptions of the United States? At the least, one can say that the specialists' views are based upon more and better information than those of their predecessors, and that this information covers more diverse aspects of American life than ever before. Moreover, the establishment of an organized, officially sanctioned field of inquiry dealing with American affairs has created an environment which encourages Soviet writers to elaborate their conceptions of this country in greater detail and to engage in open debate with one another when differing lines of interpretation emerge. This dialogue, and the wealth of impressions on which it feeds, has weakened, though not destroyed, many of the shibboleths that have long formed Russian opinion on this country.

During the past year, for example, Soviet scholars have sought to come to grips with the Bicentennial. Some Russian authors have seen the ideology of the American Revolution as marking a watershed in mankind's liberation from tyranny; others have condemned that same ideology as a hypocritical mask hiding selfish interest; while still others have flatly denied that the Revolution produced much of an ideology in the first place; each writer supporting his case with ample citations of the works of American scholars. A Soviet synthesis on this or other American issues will in all likelihood emerge, and such syntheses will inevitably take on the colorations of Marxist-Leninist doctrine. But very diverse positions have been defended or rationalized in terms of Marxism-Leninism in the past, and there is reason to think that American interpretations could contribute to the formation of official Soviet views in the future.

The Gains Are Limited

The Soviet rediscovery of America has occurred not through a few dazzling leaps but through hundreds of small steps. No great works of synthesis have appeared, but one can cite literally hundreds of competently written studies on small—even minute—topics, each the result of some specialist fulfilling the plan of work set out for him by the council of his institute or university. Thanks to this effort, a country that was once seen as simply the embodiment of such abstractions as "capitalism," "imperialism," or "technocracy" is now recognized as being infinitely complex and, to the intelligent Soviet observer, endlessly intriguing.

Unlike Soviet studies in this country, which have floundered as the old cliché of "totalitarianism" and the newer clichés about "interest groups" have in turn lost their hold, Soviet interest in the United States has blossomed through contact with America's complexity. Competition for entrance to the English-language primary and secondary schools in major cities is intense, and the graduates of such institutions compete fiercely for places in the major institutes and universities that offer programs of American studies. The fact that American studies have attracted an inordinate number of the sons and daughters of Moscow's political elite both reflects and contributes to the intellectual and social prestige such studies now enjoy.

Even so, the more realistic perceptions of this country promoted by the U.S.S.R.'s better *Amerikanisty* remain largely confined to a small circle of specialists and enthusiasts, much like the Marlboros they smoke or the American cut of the suits they wear.

The newer and more subtle perceptions of the United States have yet really to penetrate the schools, for example, where both textbooks and standardized curricula remain firmly rooted in the frozen soil of the Cold War. Soviet mass journalism is often no better. Gennadii Vasiliev of *Pravda* recently reported from Washington that under the American system of free enterprise it is quite normal for babies to be sold like commodities; the same correspondent used the resignation of U.S. Commissioner of Education Bell last May as an opportunity to demonstrate to Soviet readers that Americans cannot send their children through college on the salary of \$37,800 that Bell had been receiving. In both instances Mr. Vasiliev could base his story on evidence gleaned from the American press. Just as in the textbooks, however, the evidence was presented in a thoroughly distorted and, as the Soviets say, "one-sided" manner.

Mr. Vasiliev's heavy-gaited approach to the United States is not uncommon among Soviet journalists, TV newscasters, and film-makers, but it is by no means universal. Indeed, the same attitude of open-minded curiosity that informs some specialized studies on the United States is to be found among the staff of three of the Soviet Union's most authoritative mass newspapers: *Pravda*, the voice of the Communist Party; *Komsomolskaia Pravda*, the organ of the Communist youth movement; and *Izvestiia*, the government's mouthpiece. Within the last two years, three Soviet correspondents have produced accounts of their travels in America which are exceptionally revealing not only of the attitudes of the writers themselves but, equally important, of the interests of their mass audience.

Messages from the Sponsor

One of the writers is Boris Strelnikov, an old pro. A veteran of both World War II and many decades on the staff of *Pravda*, Strelnikov has turned out his share of anti-American boilerplate; his 1975 best seller, *The Land Beyond the Ocean*, is by no means free of thrice-told tales of American perfidy. Strelnikov's pages are punctuated from time to time with sermonets—messages, as it were, from the sponsor. But he has a capacity for presenting ambiguity as well, as when he describes his meeting with a family of hardy dirt farmers in Wisconsin. With unfeigned respect, he recounts Warren Miller's efforts to hold out against the expanding agro-businesses, and correctly identifies his hero as an heir to the Jeffersonian ideal. This "man from the land" will lose, however, and Strelnikov obviously feels for him. But wherein lies the am-

biguity? Both the author and his Soviet readers know that their own government has also opted for agro-business, just as they realize that literally millions of Russian Warren Millers were exterminated as *kulaks* [rich peasants] during Stalin's collectivization drive.

Why did *The Land Beyond the Ocean* sell 100,000 copies overnight after having already been serialized in some of the largest mass publications in the U.S.S.R.? Virtually any book on America will find a large Soviet audience, but the fact that Strelnikov had as his coauthor Vasilii Peskov surely did no harm. A popular writer on nature, Peskov was a leading figure in the effort to rescue Lake Baikal from polluting industries. Unlike most previous Russian writers on America, Peskov notices the land itself. The intensity of the scenery—dramatic rather than lyrical—is described with the freshness and enthusiasm that only a sensitive visitor can attain. And to readers who have heard only how Americans desecrate nature, Peskov's long passages on the popularity of bird-watching and on the system of National Parks could only come as an intriguing revelation.

California as Microcosm

The Soviet thirst for reliable descriptions of American life is strong but not indiscriminate, which makes for an increasingly competitive situation among those writers who choose to enter the field. As the U.S. correspondent of *Pravda* and his colleague from *Komsomolskaia Pravda* were producing their several volumes on this country, *Izvestiia's* veteran Washington correspondent, Stanislav Kondrashov, also decided to get in on the act. Kondrashov could have written on many American themes. In the end he chose California, where, as he put it, "one can discern sharp and clear, as through a magnifying glass, the features of contemporary American society."

In *A Meeting with California* Kondrashov is a superior tour guide. He takes his readers—100,000 of them—to a few usual sights and many unusual ones. Even a familiar subject like the Los Angeles freeways assumes a new aspect as he compares the seemingly fused cars and drivers to mythic centaurs. More portraitist than social diagnostician, Kondrashov's talents are enhanced by an impressive capacity for sympathy. Whether he is introducing Russians to an anti-war clergyman or to the topless dancers of San Francisco, he manages to illuminate the personality of his subject. He grinds few axes.

Kondrashov visited California at the height of the post-Cam-

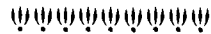
bodia agitation and returned again in 1973. His initial impressions were of a state—a country—that considered itself to be on intimate terms with the future. With uneasy fascination he compares the *vivace* tempo of Los Angeles life with the *allegro* of New York and the *moderato* of Moscow. He found the West to be inhabited by attractive and affable boosters, whom he treats with that peculiar blend of admiration, toleration, and condescension that the Old World has often reserved for the New. Concluding a chapter on the McCarthy campaign of 1968, he quotes James Reston:

Maybe life will not be changed by this drive for self-analysis and self-perfection, but there is nonetheless something inspiring and even majestic in these debates. Whatever one might say about America today, she is taking up the great questions of human life. She is asking what is the sense of all this wealth? Is poverty inevitable or intolerable? What sort of America do we really want? And what should be its relations with the rest of the world?

Returning in 1973, Kondrashov reflects on a California that has become “more modest, more sober, and more frugal”:

No longer raging and having grown tame and settled, California looks to the future without bravado and with even a certain trepidation and humility, a future which it now sees as an inaccessible sphinx rather than a self-confident sharpster who smiles so that all will know how well his affairs are doing and how they could not be otherwise.

Is this Kondrashov's America? Yes, but not without reservations. Like many of the Soviet Union's more sophisticated observers of the United States, he is far less prone than his predecessors to leap to sweeping generalizations. No less important, he knows that his Russian public does not want them. Why, I asked him, has the lowly travel account flourished as the most popular genre for Soviet *Amerikanistika* while more ambitious monographs gain currency largely among specialists? Kondrashov answered bluntly: “In a travel account one is not obliged to reach any final conclusions.” In a changing world, this approach is a promising alternative to dogmatism.



THE AMERICAN VIEW OF RUSSIA

by William Zimmerman

There are now more American specialists who know much more about the U.S.S.R. than did their counterparts 30 years ago—or than their counterparts knew about Tsarist Russia prior to the Revolution in 1917.

But their knowledge is not widely disseminated; consequently, numerous misconceptions about the Soviet Union persist in the United States. Indeed, the gap in knowledge between academic specialists and others professionally preoccupied with the Soviet Union—policy-makers and journalists, for example—is often substantial.

This is not to say that the academic specialists themselves do not have what historian Adam Ulam calls “skeletons in their filing cabinets.” For despite their substantial progress in accumulating knowledge, American scholars who study the Soviet Union have had their share of misconceptions, biases, and blunders.

What I shall try to do here is to discuss what those misconceptions have been, give the reader some idea of why it is so difficult to acquire knowledge about the Soviet Union (even though we have become better at it), and note several misperceptions of the U.S.S.R. that appear to me to be widely held in the United States. The only way to begin is by taking a step or two backward.

The Early Years

During the period between World Wars I and II, any Americans who wanted information about Soviet rule would have benefited from W. H. Chamberlin's *The Russian Revolution*, which remains one of the best books on that subject. By reading Samuel Harper's *Civic Training in Soviet Russia*, they could have got a sense of the process of political socialization. But on the whole, there were few scholars in the field, and their studies were often distortingly legalistic. As Ulam has remarked: “The average Anglo-

American academician approached categories like 'the police state,' 'terror,' and 'totalitarianism' with the same trepidation and distortions as the Victorian novelist felt when he had to allude to the sexual act." Americans in the 1930s who wanted to know about the Soviet system would have been better off reading the novels of Arthur Koestler or—if they had been available in English—the emigré journals of the Mensheviks.

After World War II, the situation changed drastically. With the onset of the Cold War, American research on the U.S.S.R. burgeoned, thus illustrating, perhaps, that scholarship, rather than trade, follows the flag. An impressive array of scholars and scholarship emerged. What had been a trickle of competent American scholarship in the 1930s became a freshet and then a flood—thanks largely to the pump-priming of major foundations and the U.S. government. At a few universities, great centers of professional competence on the Soviet Union developed. Under the auspices of Harvard's Russian Research Center alone, well over 30 books appeared in the 1950s, including Merle Fainsod's *How Russia is Ruled* (1953), a landmark in the development of Soviet studies. [See Background Books, page 128.] An increase in quality and sophistication accompanied the growth in quantity. American scholars had become—without doubt—the world's most competent repository of detailed information about the periods of high Stalinism (1936–41 and 1947–53).

A Darker Side

But there was a dark side to the picture of American Soviet studies in the 1940s and 1950s, just as there had been between the two World Wars. Scholars' conceptions of the Soviet system too often led them to extrapolate from the periods of high Stalinism to other periods of Soviet history. To be charitable, it should be noted that the disposition to extrapolate the universal from the time-defined particular is a natural human failing.

How did such extrapolations cloud American scholarship on the Soviet Union in the 1950s? And what effect have they had in this decade?

First, analysis by American specialists in the early 1950s frequently ruled out even the possibility of many of the significant changes which occurred in the Soviet Union following Stalin's death in 1953. All too often they implied that the Soviet system was nonreactive to the external world (except in the most mechanical sense) and that it was able to mobilize the entire society to the regime's purposes while remaining insulated from the in-

fluence of all domestic constraints.

The general picture they painted in the 1950s was of a static, self-perpetuating, totally politicized Soviet Union in which "politics" did not exist (except during a succession crisis set off by a dictator's death). The aversion to terms like totalitarianism and terror had been more than overcome. It was widely asserted that terror was the linchpin of the Soviet system; that mass purges were a permanent feature of the Soviet system; that the Soviet leader, like the Tsar, dies in office; that the outcome of a succession crisis would inevitably result in an omnipotent dictator; that (given the party-state's monopoly over the means of communication and violence) major overt dissent was inconceivable; that in foreign policy there *had* to be a main enemy, the United States; that the shifts in Soviet foreign policy (and in what was perceived as the monolithic world communist movement) were to be understood to turn almost totally on the question of which states—among those not then in either the U.S. or Soviet camp—to align with and for how long.

Extrapolating the Unextrapolable

Second, there was a tendency by Americans to extrapolate findings based on a reading of the record of high Stalinism to other periods of Soviet history. Consequently, the distinctions between the Leninist and Stalinist periods were often obscured, and the entire Stalinist period was treated as whole cloth. There was, in short, a systematic bias which led Soviet specialists to believe that change—at least change uncontrolled by the regime—was not possible. (Alexander Dallin, Stanford University's distinguished student of Soviet foreign policy, says that he once asked an American Soviet specialist about the likelihood of fundamental change in the Soviet Union. To which the specialist replied: "It won't happen—but if it does, I'll be sure to miss it.")

Why was American scholarship on the Soviet Union so static

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and faulty in the 1950s? Dallin attributes part of it to an "intuitive and often well-founded belief" that no one ever "incurred a risk to his professional reputation by taking a hard line—even if later such a posture proved to have been unwarranted." Then, of course, there was the very human desire to avoid being wrong—or, even worse, ignored. Anxiety on this score was undoubtedly magnified by the fact that widely predicted changes did not occur (such as "the great retreat" politically, which, it was asserted, would accompany the turning away from the radical social patterns of post-revolutionary Russia). American specialists were also guilty—unwittingly—of accepting too readily Soviet depictions of the Soviet Union; thus, Stalin's claims of monolithic unity found their reflections in the American scholar's image of a Soviet Union characterized by absolute control and a hierarchy in which politics was absent. Finally, a major role must be accorded the temper of the times—the context of the Cold War. One can make this point more systematically, but I have always thought the atmosphere was epitomized by a typographical error contained in the introduction to one of the most influential studies of totalitarianism. It said: "This issue runs like a red threat through all the papers and discussions. . . ."

In the 1960s and early 1970s, Soviet studies advanced rapidly. The concentration of expertise continues today in political science, history, and Slavic language and literature, but the shortage of sociologists, anthropologists, and economists persists. Geographically, the diffusion of expertise has proceeded apace. Whereas in the 1950s concentrations of Soviet specialists could be found only at Harvard and Columbia, centers equally capable of sustained research are now operating at Michigan, Indiana, Chicago, Wisconsin, Stanford, Berkeley, UCLA, and Washington; and serious work is also being done at numerous other schools.

Access to the Soviet Union has also broadened. While historians have comprised a disproportionately high percentage of the scholars visiting the Soviet Union, some sociologists, economists, and political scientists have also had lengthy research stays there. Such a pattern was inconceivable in the 1950s. But the problems of data availability remained exceedingly difficult. Even by contrast with Yugoslavia or Poland, for instance, the time and effort required to obtain data remained staggeringly large, to say nothing of the problem of "disinformation"—memory holes and deliberate misrepresentations of events. Only in the recent past has there emerged the beginning of concrete sociological investigation of Soviet society by Soviet sociologists—research of the sort conducted by Yugoslav and Polish social scientists for two

decades now. Systematic mass surveys of political attitudes in the Soviet Union by Americans and by collaborative teams of American and Soviet social scientists are not even on the horizon. The aggregate data sources—statistical yearbooks and the like—remain incomplete (and, by Yugoslav and Polish standards, methodologically primitive). Yet in recent years an American specialist on Soviet foreign policy could obtain access to unpublished dissertations or conference papers and could interview specialists on Soviet–U.S. or Soviet–Third World relations in the institutes of the Academy of Sciences; the student of local government could interview local government and party officials, and a sociologist with sufficient *chutzpah* could sit in the browsing room of a police station reading an unclassified police journal unavailable in the West.

The easing of the Cold War, changes in the Soviet Union itself, and developments in the social sciences had their impact on the general orientation of American specialists on the Soviet Union. The U.S.S.R. and its basic organizational structure were depicted in developmental terms of adaptation and coöptation. The Communist Party, long regarded as an instrument of repression that would have a decreasing role in an increasingly modernized Soviet Union, came to be viewed as performing what Professor Jerry Hough of the University of North Carolina termed a prefectural role in ensuring and expediting plan fulfillment and in adjudicating competing claims for resources. With the publication in 1963 of *Stalin's Foreign Policy Reappraised*, by Columbia professor Marshall Shulman, the reactive tendencies of Soviet foreign policy began to receive proper emphasis.

The New Crop of Specialists

The 1960s and 1970s have produced a whole new cadre of Soviet specialists who are less preoccupied with immediate policy relevance. These scholars also have extensive research experience in the U.S.S.R., as well as a thorough acquaintance with the methods and approaches of their respective social-science disciplines.

But unlike the dénouement of a Soviet novel, there is no assurance that this story will have a happy ending. Due partly to a vague expectation that peace will break out between the United States and the Soviet Union, partly to a legitimate new emphasis on domestic U.S. concerns, there has been a marked decrease in public attention to Soviet affairs in recent years—and in the availability of research funds as well. Although there has been some reversal in the trend of declining support over the last

year or so, the decrease has led to the underutilization of research capabilities at the university centers. Moreover, at many universities, specialists in Soviet anthropology, economics, and sociology are not being replaced when they leave. And these are the fields where the need for analysts is greatest.

As for the current state of the art, the pendulum may have swung too far in a new direction. Whereas a major flaw in the 1950s was the unthinking use of Stalinist concepts, today's problem may well be the mechanical application to the Soviet scene of models and scholarly concepts developed in and for an American context. In addition, the newly acquired ability of specialists on the U.S.S.R. in this country to speak the same jargon as their disciplinary confreres in the social sciences has further compounded their difficulties in communicating with the public.

The New Misconceptions

A casual reading of recent Congressional testimony, major American newspapers, news magazines, and journals of opinion leaves me convinced that the relatively sophisticated knowledge of Soviet specialists has not reached the public or the policy-makers. As a consequence, a number of misconceptions about the Soviet Union are widely held. In my view, these are the major ones:

Disputes within the Soviet Union are viewed too much in terms of dissenters vs. the regime. Witness this exchange in 1974 between Senator Claiborne Pell (D.-R.I.) and Professor Shulman:

Professor Shulman: We know quite a lot in this country about the dissidents. We know quite a lot about the officialdom, the establishment types. What isn't sufficiently understood or appreciated in this country is that the political life of the Soviet Union involves a very rich and complex spectrum, that there are many positions. There are degrees of involvement in a system. There are people who are involved in the system and yet are critical of it in one way or another. . . . There are people who are trying to modernize it . . . not necessarily to liberalize it in the Western sense, but to modify the system.

There are many forces for change within the Soviet Union which are not sufficiently appreciated in this country. . . . It is important that there are the dissidents . . . but the effective change is likely to come in the other whole range of in-between positions.

Senator Pell: . . . I never read about what you are saying now.

Just as the diversity of orientations toward change is not appreciated, so are the sources of support not understood. Here the *non-specialist* academic is as liable to perpetuate error as anybody else. For example, Hans J. Morgenthau, a distinguished student of international politics, recently remarked that the Soviet system "has to rely primarily on nothing but deception and terror"; and Richard Pipes, a scholar truly knowledgeable about 19th-century Russia and the early Soviet period, described the current Soviet regime as "a government devoid of any popular mandate." Statements such as these serve to suggest only that the Soviet Union is, by our values, a rather crummy place. They show no appreciation of the visceral nationalism of a substantial fraction of the Soviet citizenry—a nationalism generated by victory in World War II, by perceptions of how things are in comparison with the bad old days, and by the satisfaction that comes from being citizens of a world power.

Another pervasive misconception is that there are no personal incentives and rewards in the U.S.S.R. Many Americans fail to appreciate the immense role of material (and non-material) incentives there, 40 years after Stalin condemned the *petit-bourgeois* notion of egalitarianism. Incentives associated with plan fulfillment are so powerful, in fact, that they explain, in part at least, why innovation is often difficult to achieve in Soviet factories. The preoccupation with fulfilling short-term plans, using established methods, does not allow much room for innovations that might make production more efficient later. The incentive structure also precludes attention to social overhead costs—in much the same way that the profit motive does under capitalism. The results—polluted rivers, smog, and so on—are often the same.

Americans also may not understand the role of incentives in Soviet life because of two related misconceptions. One is that all jobs are allocated by the state; the other is that work plans are specific down to the last detail. Both are wrong. Job choice is not totally defined by the state; for example, it remains difficult for Moscow to get people to work in the far north—even though substantial bonuses are offered for accepting such assignments. An impressive network of rural hospitals and clinics has been built throughout the country, but few physicians are willing to staff them. Similarly, plan instructions are fairly general; enterprise managers have some leeway in determining how a given plan is to be fulfilled.

Although Americans do have a fair understanding that high politics comes into play where the right to rule the Soviet Union is at stake, they seem unaware of the importance of resource-

allocation and institutional controversies—that is, disputes about who gets what and who decides who decides. This lack of awareness is not surprising; news of such matters is not the kind that even the *New York Times* deems fit to print.

Lack of awareness in these areas contributes, in turn, to another misconception—one that is something of a mirror image of the treatment of Watergate by the Soviet press (Who is behind Watergate? Enemies of détente!). Some Americans who know something about the Soviet Union tend to explain political events there too much in terms of American-Soviet relations, often without a shred of evidence. Some examples: In advocating improved relations with the U.S.S.R., one Senator said, “We should remember that Nikita S. Khrushchev was removed from power primarily because his advocacy of détente with the West was opposed by Soviet conservatives and the Soviet military”; former Ambassador Averell Harriman, in discussing Leonid Brezhnev’s commitment to détente, observed archly, “We know what happened to Khrushchev.”

We do know what happened to Khrushchev. What is far less clear is *why* it happened. However, it is almost certain that he was not removed primarily because of conservative and military opposition to détente. Why, then, was he deposed? An awareness of the *Soviet* context of Soviet politics would lead one to look first to events inside the Soviet union, to agricultural failure and to organizational controversies. Such an orientation would lead to an examination of policy decisions by the successful conspirators following Khrushchev’s removal in 1964. These included an initial continuity in foreign affairs, the easing of Khrushchev-imposed restrictions on private gardening plots on the collective farms, and the unceremonious abandonment of Khrushchev’s pet scheme for bifurcating the Communist Party at the regional (*oblast*) level into separate committees for agriculture and industry.

Myths about Soviet Foreign Policy

Misconceptions with respect to foreign policy also abound. One is that the Soviet Union has, in George Meany’s words, “broken every international agreement.” This is what a colleague of mine calls a false fact. It is based on a true fact—namely, that the U.S.S.R. blithely disregarded its nonaggression treaties with the erstwhile Baltic states—but it ignores the country’s good record in observing commercial and other treaties.

Where the interested public appears to have the greatest

knowledge gap is in the area of Soviet foreign policy as it relates to Eastern Europe. I do not think the public realizes that some credence should be given to Soviet claims that it was exploited *economically* by its Eastern European client states in the 1960s—a price it was willing to pay because of the political benefits of bloc cohesion. Also, there seems little awareness here that the energy crisis has prompted the Soviet Union to encourage its Eastern European client states to become *less* dependent on it for sources of energy. And the quiet revolution in Polish trade has gone almost unnoticed in the American press. Whereas in 1970, 63% of Polish trade was with Comecon (the Soviet bloc's Council for Mutual Economic Assistance), this had dropped to 47% by 1974. In 1970, 27% of Poland's trade was with the West; by 1974, it had grown to 44%. A shift of that magnitude has only one parallel in the history of Eastern Europe after the communist takeovers—the trade reorientation that Romania undertook in the 1960s as part of its deliberate strategy to extricate itself from Soviet domination.

Hedrick Smith's Best Seller

For a special illustration of the gap in perception between American specialists on the Soviet Union and informed generalists, I turn to a brief consideration of Hedrick Smith's *The Russians*. [See Background Books, page 127.]

I do not pick on Mr. Smith because he is an easy target. On the contrary, he learned a lot during his stint as Moscow correspondent for the *New York Times*. I focus on his book because, as a best seller, it may have reached a larger public than have the combined works of all the academic specialists on the U.S.S.R. now at work.

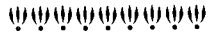
His book is a voyage of discovery: Mr. Smith candidly tells us when his previous conceptions were altered, and provides us with a vicarious sense of having been there. But the armchair traveler is likely to be misled by his narration (the accuracy of which I do not dispute) in two important respects. His tales of the Moscow elite's affluence, corruption, and cynicism are likely to impart a mistaken conception about this elite when compared with other elites. After the "thirteenth-month" payment, the "Kremlin ration," the special access to consumer goods, the special holiday, medical facilities, and all the other perquisites which power, status, and *blat* (influence) obtain, it is still true, as the British sociologist Mervyn Mathews has observed, that the Soviet elite "is by international standards poor."

The reader is also likely to be misled in some respects about ordinary Soviet citizens. One gets a sense of the regime's strong support from the Soviet "hard-hats" and of the nostalgia for Stalin on the part of some. Unfortunately, one also gets the impression that Moscow is representative of the Soviet Union and that the Russians and the Soviet citizenry are either synonomous or on their way to becoming so. As a result, the reader is likely to be much more persuaded of the progressive Russification of the Soviet Union than is warranted by the evidence. Mr. Smith quite properly reports the "persistent official efforts to promote the learning of Russian." But his readers are nowhere made aware that the 1970 census shows the U.S.S.R. to be less Russian than did the 1959 census or that assimilation has been modest (even when non-Russians adopt Russian as their principal language, they do not declare themselves Russians ethnically). As University of Michigan historian Roman Szporluk has written: "Eleven among the 15 major Soviet nationalities which possess their own 'Union Republics' increased at a higher rate than the Russians" during the years 1959-70. In the five Central Asian Republics (Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Tadzhikistan, Turkmenia, and Uzbekistan), the three Transcaucasian Republics (Armenia, Azerbaidzhan, and Georgia) and in Lithuania, the population of the titular nation increased as a proportion of the total population of the republic and the Russian fraction decreased (except in Lithuania, where each increased marginally).

The Knowledge Gaps

In short, specialists on the Soviet Union do have an expertise which differentiates them from journalists, policy-makers, and the general public. The gaps among and between them stem partly from the specialists' failure to disseminate their knowledge. And even though the specialists know a lot about a lot of areas of Soviet life, much (that is researchable) remains to be learned. Little is known about the urban lower classes, their lifestyles and their beliefs. Soviet mass culture is largely unexamined. At the elite level there exists only the merest beginning of an understanding of the links between social background, attitude, and behavior. The emerging social and political role of the scientific elite has been only modestly explored. Research on resource-allocation controversies and the connection between issue and policy process is not far along. The connection between U.S.-Soviet and Soviet-East European relations has been insufficiently explored. One could go on. So much still needs to be known that

one can only welcome the glimmer of a renewed awareness that continued study of the Soviet Union should have some place in national research priorities. What gives an added importance to the American (and, more generally, the Western) study of the Soviet Union is that Western specialists are doing what remains exceedingly difficult for Soviet citizens to do: they are objectively analyzing the contemporary Soviet Union and keeping straight the historical background that lies behind the Soviet present.



BACKGROUND BOOKS

THE SOVIET UNION

As economic and cultural exchanges between the United States and the Soviet Union increase, more Americans are turning to books for help in penetrating the enigma that is everyday Russia. Enjoying the widest readership are three recent popular accounts by U.S. journalists who worked in Moscow: Robert Kaiser's ambitious, somewhat disjointed **Russia: The People and the Power** (Atheneum, 1976, cloth; Pocket Books, 1976, paper); Jerrold and Leona Schechter's intimate **An American Family in Moscow** (Little, Brown, 1975), with contributions by the Schechter children who attended Soviet schools; and Hedrick Smith's fat, anecdotal **The Russians** (Quadrangle, 1976, cloth; Ballantine, 1977, paper).

"Are they becoming more like us?" Smith asks. Not really, is his answer. Most Western scholars agree. Despite the two countries' apparent similarities (size, economic growth, technological advance), the Russians live in a political culture difficult for Americans to grasp.

This reading list, which focuses on the domestic aspects of the Soviet period, is necessarily limited. It starts with history—general accounts, studies of the bloody formative years and of the Stalin regime—and goes on to books about contemporary Soviet politics, the legal system, social structure, ideology, and science in Russia today.

The U.S.S.R. was born in revolution, and for a serious but eminently readable account of the Revolution's origin, the upheaval and civil war, and the careers of Lenin, Trotsky, and other founders of the system in the early years, **The Bolsheviks: The Intellectual and Political History of the Triumph of**

Communism in Russia by Adam B. Ulam (Macmillan, 1965) is a good place to start. The classic study by Barrington Moore, Jr., **Soviet Politics—The Dilemma of Power: The Role of Ideas in Social Change**, first published in 1950 and newly reprinted (White Plains: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1976), provides a political and social chronicle from the Revolution to the late 1940s.

Alec Nove's **An Economic History of the U.S.S.R.** (London: Allen Lane, 1969, cloth; Penguin, 1972, paper) presents in lay language an analysis of Soviet economic policies and practices from 1917 to the present, with emphasis on the forced collectivization of agriculture and the development of heavy industry under the first Five-Year Plan (1928–33).

For the years up to 1930 the encyclopedic **A History of Soviet Russia** by Edward Hallett Carr (London; Macmillan, 1950–71) serves as the basic reference. More manageable works that shed light on the central phenomenon of Stalin's rise to power in the late 1920s include: Moshe Lewin's **Lenin's Last Struggle** (Pantheon, 1968), which shows how the Revolution's unresolved problems, especially the latent opposition of the peasantry, plagued the Moscow leadership; Stephen F. Cohen's **Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888–1938** (Knopf, 1973), in which Cohen argues that the more moderate policies advocated by Nikolai Bukharin (who briefly emerged as an alternative to Stalin) were politically feasible and as logical an extension of Leninist thinking as Stalin's despotic policies; and Roger W. Pethyridge's **The Social Prelude to Stalinism** (St. Martin's, 1974), an analysis of the "social ingredients"

that, the author believes, contributed as strongly to Stalin's rise as did his vaunted mastery of political skills.

Despite Stalin's enormous impact on Soviet history, much about the man remains shrouded in mystery. A recent biography, **Stalin As Revolutionary, 1879-1929: A Study in History and Personality** by Robert C. Tucker (Norton, 1973), is the first of three projected volumes of psycho-history probing the relationship between Stalin's personality and his political behavior.

Less concerned with explaining Stalin than with understanding his role in history is Soviet dissident historian Roy Medvedev. In **Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism** (Vintage, 1973) Medvedev recounts, in detail that stuns the reader, the terror and purges of the 1930s. This and other accounts of the ferocities that marked the Stalin era—most notably, sections of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's chilling **The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956** (Harper & Row, 1974, cloth; 1975, paper)—suggest a leadership divorced from society. Yet interviews with persons displaced from the Soviet Union as a result of World War II revealed broad prewar support for the Stalin regime and approval of its policies, as Alex Inkeles and Raymond Bauer show in **The Soviet Citizen: Daily Life in a Totalitarian Society** (Harvard, 1959). And a just-published study by Vera S. Dunham, **In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction** (Cambridge, 1976), uses what the author calls "the perishable output of safe writers" of popular fiction to document what she terms the "Big Deal" between the managerial class and the regime.

The nearly 24 years since Stalin's death have brought significant changes in Soviet politics and society. The basic book on the practice of government in the Soviet Union remains the late Merle Fainsod's **How Russia Is Ruled** (Har-

vard, 1963, rev. ed.). Fainsod's description of the Communist Party organization and the management of the country's social and economic life is now being updated by Duke political scientist Jerry F. Hough for 1978 publication.

Meanwhile, readers interested in the pressures on policy-makers may turn to the somewhat specialized but highly readable **Interest Groups in Soviet Politics** edited by H. G. Skilling and Franklyn Griffiths (Princeton, 1971), in which the roles of such contending "establishment" groups as the military, economic managers, and jurists are thoroughly examined.

Other worthy books on recent Soviet politics include a collection of essays by Zbigniew Brzezinski, **Dilemmas of Change in Soviet Politics** (Columbia, 1969) and the two volumes of memoirs, **Khrushchev Remembers** (Little, Brown, 1970, cloth; Bantam, 1971, paper) and **Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament** (Little, Brown, 1974, cloth; Bantam, 1976, paper), dictated by one of Stalin's successors in the Kremlin, Nikita S. Khrushchev.

Of late there has been a trend in Western scholarship away from Kremlinology toward a sociological approach. No more sophisticated work for the general reader exists in this category than Wright Miller's deceptively simple **Russians as a People** (Dutton, 1961). An important new addition is **Class and Society in Soviet Russia** by Mervyn Matthews (Walker, 1973), in which official Soviet socio-economic and demographic data are used to describe the class structure (workers, peasants, intelligentsia) and such matters as migration to the cities from the backward countryside, self-perpetuation of the elite, competition for higher education, and the discrepancies between adolescent expectations and real job opportunities.

The survival of religious life and of "national" or ethnic aspirations are dis-

cussed in **Religion and Atheism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe** edited by Bohdan R. Bociurkiw and John Strong (Univ. of Toronto, 1975) and in **Ethnic Minorities in the Soviet Union** edited by Erich Goldhagen (Praeger, 1968)—notably in John Armstrong's long essay, "The Ethnic Scene in the Soviet Union: The View of the Dictatorship."

The activities of a variety of persons who stand outside the one-party political process in Russia are exhaustively covered in **Dissent in the U.S.S.R.: Politics, Ideology, and People** edited by Rudolf L. Tökés (Johns Hopkins, 1975).

Perhaps because the absence of legality was so pervasive under Stalin, the evolution of the Soviet legal system since his death holds special interest. In **Justice in the U.S.S.R.: An Interpretation of Soviet Law** (Harvard, 1963, rev. ed. cloth; 1974, paper) Harold Berman describes post-Stalin reforms and advances his own thesis about the "parental" or educative role of Soviet legal institutions. In a more popular vein, George Feifer's **Justice in Moscow** (London: Bodley Head, 1964) provides an eyewitness report of a series of Moscow criminal trials. On the strength of the trials he attended, Feifer concludes that, though rough and informal

by American standards, ordinary Soviet criminal justice is not unfair.

Crime persists in Russia as elsewhere. How Soviet experts explain this problem and what they are trying to do about it is the subject of Walter D. Connor's **Deviance in Soviet Society: Crime, Delinquency, and Alcoholism** (Columbia, 1972).

What of tomorrow? The future of Soviet society, many of its own spokesmen assert, will depend upon the achievements in one particular field—science. To many Westerners as well, the long-uneasy relationship between Soviet ideology and Soviet science appears crucial. Soviet gerontologist Zhores Medvedev (twin brother to historian Roy) tells us in **The Medvedev Papers** (London: Macmillan, 1971) about the frustrations resulting from bureaucratic interference. These and other tensions are explored by Loren Graham in **Science and Philosophy in the Soviet Union** (Knopf, 1972). But Graham argues that despite exceptions (the Lysenko genetics controversy being the best-known in the West) the interaction between Marxist philosophy and scientific research has been creative and provides an increasingly sound take-off point for basic long-range scientific inquiry.

EDITOR'S NOTE. *Susan Gross Solomon and Peter H. Solomon, Jr., both Soviet studies specialists and associate professors in the Department of Political Economy at the University of Toronto, and S. Frederick Starr, executive secretary of the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies at the Wilson Center, cooperated in the selection of the books above and provided comment on a number of the titles.*