

Pia Koivunen

Performing Peace and Friendship

Rethinking the Cold War



Edited by
Kirsten Bönker and Jane Curry

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Pia Koivunen

Performing Peace and Friendship

The World Youth Festivals and Soviet Cultural
Diplomacy

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Introduction

The first postwar years were coloured by fatigue, despair, and strong antiwar mentality. Widely shared experiences of the destructive power of total war sparked numerous initiatives of international cooperation, most notably the United Nations, aspiring to help avoid global wars in the future. One of those endeavours was an international youth gathering, later known as the World Festival of Youth and Students, which brought thousands of young people to celebrate together in Prague two years after the war had ended.¹ In a leaflet handed out to the participants, Kutty Hookham, a member of the British communist youth league and an early secretary of the World Federation of Democratic Youth, explained the emotional and ideological rationale of the event.

A World Youth Festival was something youth dreamed of but which seemed so distant in the days of the occupation and war against tyranny, in the days of the V-1 and V-2 weapons and of death camps, in the days when the basic decencies of human relations and human life were threatened. But the celebration of Victory Day in Europe and Asia brought that dream within the realm of possibility – the possibility of the world's youth meeting in comradeship with the common aim of working together for a fuller, happier future.²

Drawing on the horrors of and the victory in World War II, Hookham described the World Festival of Youth both as a prize of winning the war against the Axis Powers and a pattern for the global community to build the future world together.

The Prague festival was the first in a series of massive public celebrations which during the postwar years became one of the most well-known and visible international events of the socialist world. Between 1947 and 1989, each of the World Youth Festivals brought together between 10,000 and 34,000 participants – young workers, students, intellectuals, artists, athletes and political activists – to celebrate, enjoy arts, compete in cultural and sports competitions, debate about politics, and tour around socialist, and a few times non-socialist, cities (see Table 1). However, the grand idea of uniting world youth to work together for a happier future, emphasized by Hookham, quickly ran into difficulties as mutual distrust

1 The name of the celebration took its final form, the World Festival of Youth and Students, at the Berlin festival in 1951. In the Soviet context, the festival has been referred to by several names. At first it was called the International youth festival (*Mezhdunarodnyi festival' molodezhi*), international festival of youth for peace and friendship (*Mezhdunarodnyi festival' molodezhi za mir i druzhbu*) or International youth festival in defence of peace (*Mezhdunarodnyi festival' molodezhi v zashchitu mira*). In the mid-1950s, the World Festival of Youth and Students (*Vsemirnyi festival' molodezhi i studentov*) became the most used variant for the event.

2 *Czechoslovakia* (Prague: “Mlada fronta”, 1947), 63.

and suspicion between the Soviet Union and its Western allies began to drive them into renewed conflict. In this strained political climate, it proved to be difficult to establish global forums that would have been recognized by both sides. Over the ensuing decades, the same event that for many people signified friendship, hope and solidarity, meant for others fear, brainwashing, and state-orchestrated propaganda.

Tab. 1: The World Festivals of Youth and Students, 1947–2017.

1947	Prague, Czechoslovakia	1978	Havana, Cuba
1949	Budapest, Hungary	1985	Moscow, USSR
1951	Berlin, East Germany	1989	Pyongyang, North Korea
1953	Bucharest, Romania	1997	Havana, Cuba
1955	Warsaw, Poland	2001	Algiers, Algeria
1957	Moscow, USSR	2005	Caracas, Venezuela
1959	Vienna, Austria	2010	Tshwane, South Africa
1962	Helsinki, Finland	2013	Quito, Ecuador
1968	Sofia, Bulgaria	2017	Sochi, Russia
1973	Berlin, East Germany		

This book is a history of how the Soviet Union employed the World Youth Festival in its cultural diplomacy in the 1940s and 1950s. In the historiography of the USSR and the Cold War, scholars have typically focused on the World Youth Festival held in Moscow in 1957 as part of the domestic Thaw and opening up of the USSR towards the Western world. Other festivals, and the event's institutional existence, have merited much less attention.³ The Moscow 1957 festival indeed marked a significant moment in Soviet cultural and political history, and therefore most of this book is also devoted to discussing it. However, in order to understand the World Youth Festival in the broader context of Soviet cultural diplomacy abroad and the transformation of Soviet cultural relations with the outside world in the late and post-Stalin eras, we need to look at the institutional evolution of the event as such

³ E.g. Gilburd, Eleonory, *To see Paris and die. The Soviet Lives of Western Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018); Zubok, Vladislav, *Zhivago's Children. The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Roth-Ey, Kristin, "‘Loose Girls’ on the Loose?: Sex, Propaganda and the 1957 Youth Festival", in *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, edited by Melanie Ilic, Susan E. Reid and Lynne Attwood (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Stites, Richard, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society since 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 132; Ryback, Timothy, *Rock around the Bloc: a History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 18.

as well as the festivals held in Prague (1947), Budapest (1949), Berlin (1951), Bucharest (1953), and Warsaw (1955).

By drawing on both “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches, this book discusses the evolution of the youth festival into a Soviet cultural product, the experiences of the participants, as well as its reception by the wider global public.⁴ This integrated approach enables us to explore the dynamics between the goals of the Soviet state and their reception at the grass-roots level. In so doing, this study aims at widening our understanding of what Soviet cultural diplomacy was in practice: how was it designed, implemented and received. Inspired by studies on cultural production, this book argues that the World Youth Festival was neither created in a vacuum nor entirely defined by the Soviet political establishment. Discussing the world of art, Pierre Bourdieu maintains that “the work of art is an object which exists as such only by virtue of the (collective) belief which knows and acknowledges it as a work of art”.⁵ In a similar fashion, the World Youth Festival’s ability to reach its target audience and channel the organizers’ visions was highly dependent on the attendants as mediators of the desired messages. Rather than simply being dictated from above, the event was shaped by manifold actors and environments: the Soviet socialist system with its conceptions of culture,⁶ national youth and student organizations and individual festival participants with varying cultural, political, and organizational

4 For similar approaches, see Kotkin, Stephen, *Magnetic Mountain. Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 1–25; Ross, Corey, *Constructing Socialism at the Grass-Roots. The Transformation of East Germany, 1945–65* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); McDougal, Alan, *Youth Politics in East Germany. The Free German Youth Movement 1946–1968* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004); Autio-Sarasma, Sari and Katalin Miklóssy, “Introduction”, in *Reassessing Cold War Europe*, Sari Autio- Sarasma and Katalin Miklóssy (London: Routledge, 2011), 1–15.

5 Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Field of Cultural Production* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 35; Griswold, Wendy, *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World* (Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 2004), 16–18. See also Lenoë, Matthew, *Closer to the Masses. Stalinist Culture, Social Revolution and Soviet Newspapers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

6 The Soviet idea of culture was based on the combination of high art (classic arts, ballet, fine arts), popular cultures (folk music and dancing, film, mass events) and a criticism of western “bourgeois” culture. The traditional conflict between high and low cultures was resolved by the Bolsheviks, who claimed to have taken culture to a higher stage in comparison to bourgeois culture. See Hoffmann, David L., *Stalinist Values. The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917–1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Kelly, Catriona & Shephard, David, *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution: 1881–1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Brandenberger, David, *National Bolshevism. Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931–1956* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

backgrounds, and finally the Cold War conflict.⁷ In the “Cultural Olympics” between the Soviet Union and the United States, the reactions of the “other side” were of the utmost importance.

The case of the World Youth Festival offers us a Soviet perspective on the cultural Cold War, the dimension of the systemic conflict between the USSR and the United States that took the competition into the realm of culture, arts and entertainment, values, ideology and worldviews.⁸ It shows that central to this battle was how the two socio-economic systems, socialism and capitalism, encountered and interacted with each other. Being successful in this competition was very much dependent on how the Soviet Union and the United States managed to promote their systems, values and worldviews at home and abroad, and equally importantly, how these systems were perceived by domestic and foreign populations.

In order to trace Soviet thinking on and aims for the festival from late Stalinism through the early Khrushchev period, this book draws on the archival materials of the Communist Youth League (Komsomol), the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), various ministries of the USSR, and to a lesser extent to the holdings of the World Federation of Democratic Youth, the CIA and NATO.⁹ The Soviet materials mainly include monitoring reports from the festivals, stenographic reports from the meetings of the World Federation of Democratic Youth and the International Union of Students, as well as correspondence between Komsomol, Party and state organs. While these materials provide a view to the institutional perspective on the youth festivals, shedding light on the aims and thinking of the Soviet officials, it needs to be considered that the report writing

7 For similar argument on the role of friendship societies in Soviet cultural diplomacy, see Grossmann, Sonja, *Falsche Freunde im Kalten Krieg? Sowjetische Freundschaftsgesellschaften in Westeuropa als Instrumente und Akteure der Cultural Diplomacy* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019).

8 For discussion on the cultural Cold War, see Major, Patrick and Mitter, Rana, “East is East and West is West? Towards a Comparative Socio-Cultural History of the Cold War”, in *Across the Blocs: Cold War Cultural and Social History*, edited by Rana Mitter and Patrick Major (London: Frank Cass, 2004), 1–22; Scott-Smith, Giles and Krabbendam, Hans, “Introduction. Boundaries to Freedom”, in *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945–1960*, edited by G. Scott-Smith and H. Krabbendam (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 1–10; Johnston, Gordon, “Revisiting the Cultural Cold War”, *Social History* 35, No. 3, 2010, 290–307; Vowinckel, Annette, Marcus M. Payk and Thomas Lindenberger, “European Cold War Culture(s)? An Introduction”, in *Cold War Cultures. Perspective on Eastern and Western European Societies*, edited by Annette Vowinckel, Marcus Payk and Thomas Lindenberger (New York: Berghahn, 2012), 1–17.

9 The archive of the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) has not been available for scholars, but a selection of the archival materials of the WFDY, especially from the early years, is available at the People’s Archive (KansA) in Helsinki.

followed a certain pattern, starting with excessive self-praise and ending at the other extreme, with a section of self-criticism. Especially during the Stalin period, there was a tendency to ignore problems and embellish the positive, which means that festival reporting often tells more about the ways in which officials wished to present the festivals to the higher echelons of the Komsomol and the Party than how things actually were.¹⁰

Grass-roots narratives open another window onto the festivals, one that goes beyond the traditional view of East-West dichotomy and rivalry. Oral history interviews, memoirs, travelogues, and diaries give voice to ordinary youths and their experiences, perceptions and memories, which – unlike the documents produced by party-state bureaucracy – were written from an individual’s perspective and directed to another audience. The narrators of this compilation come from Finland, Sweden, East and West Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, France, United States, Canada, Nicaragua, Columbia, Australia, and Russia. They were born between 1925 and 1941 and were 17–32 years of age at the time of festivals. The majority of the narrators were from leftist background, which ranges from being a communist youth league rank-and-file to having a leftist leaning without affiliation to any political organization. Most of the festival participants belonged to a national delegation; however, some of them joined a delegation only for the sake of being able to attend the festival or visit the host country.

Oral history and ego-documents (diaries, memoirs, travelogues, letters) are a rich and fruitful material for historians. Narrating one’s past provides insight from individual choices, perceptions and experiences and tells us how individuals relate to the past through their memories.¹¹ Rather than stories of what happened at a particular moment, reminiscence about the past is a process of giving meaning to one’s personal history and reconstructing meaningful parts of one’s life.¹² Therefore, narrated experience – oral or written – is already an interpretation, a subjective observation of the world.¹³ But at the same time, as experiences are subjective and individual, they are also shared and social.

10 For a discussion on the problems with Soviet archival sources, see Davies, Sarah, *Popular Opinion in Stalin’s Russia. Terror, Propaganda and Dissent, 1934–1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 9–17.

11 Abrams, Lynn, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010), 22–23.

12 Peltonen, Ulla-Maija, “Memories and Silences. On the Narrative of an Ingrian Gulag Survivor”, in *Memories of Mass Repression. Narrating Life Stories in the Aftermath of Atrocity*, edited by Nanci Adler, Selma Leydesdorff, Mary Chamberlain and Leyla Neyzi (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 65; Portelli, Alessandro, “What Makes Oral History Different?”, in *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson (London: Routledge, 1998), 67.

13 Scott, Joan, “The Evidence of Experience”, in *Critical Inquiry* 17, No. 4, 1991, 773–797.

Experiencing is a cultural, and societal phenomenon which is intertwined with the surrounding world, in its meaning-making process, power relations and institutions. Experiences are not born narrowly in individual minds but created in social interaction. Given this social aspect to experience, the World Youth Festival can be viewed as a “community of experiences”, an institutional structure that facilitated certain types of experiences and emotions.¹⁴ The youth festivals brought together thousands of young people with shared social and ideological backgrounds, shared interest in global solidarity and lived memories of World War II. Despite the fact that the participants came from different cultural, linguistic, ethnic, political and religious backgrounds, the festival concept and structure maintained and enabled common experiences shared within this international community.

A number of studies have shown that Soviet people, including those within the party and state apparatuses, could to a certain extent follow their own goals despite the ubiquitous power of the Communist Party.¹⁵ For example, studies on Soviet youth have profoundly widened our understanding of how the Soviet state failed to curb the lure of Western consumer products, popular culture and fashion, finally alienating people from the Soviet project.¹⁶ In a similar fashion, the examination of World Youth Festival participants and organizers shows how difficult it was for the Soviet authorities to manage the diversity of festival youth. Furthermore, the young people adapted the festivals to their own needs, making the youth gatherings spaces for transnational and trans-systemic communication and exchange. Grass-roots’ experiences inform us about the ways in which young people employed the festivals to overcome the many restrictions and boundaries set up by the Cold War rivals to prevent the flow of information, consumables, and

14 Kivimäki, Ville, Suomenjoki, Sami and Vahtikari, Tanja, “Lived Nation: Histories of Experience and Emotion in Understanding Nationalism”, in *Lived Nation as the History of Experiences and Emotions in Finland, 1800–2000* edited by Ville Kivimäki, Sami Suomenjoki and Tanja Vahtikari (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 12–14. The concept of “a community of experiences” derives from Barbara Rosenwein’s notion of “emotional community”.

15 Yurchak, Alexei, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More. The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University press, 2006), 4–7; Tomoff, Kiril, *Creative Union. The Professional Organisation of Soviet Composers, 1939–1953* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 3–5. For other socialist countries see e.g. Fullbrook, Mary, *The People’s State. East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), viii–xii.

16 Fürst, Juliane, *Stalin’s Last Generation. Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Zhuk, Sergei, *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City. The West, Identity, and Ideology in Soviet Dnepropetrovsk, 1960–1985* (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, 2010); Tsipursky, Gleb, *Socialist Fun: Youth, Consumption, & State-Sponsored Popular Culture in the Soviet Union, 1945–1970* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016).

people. Emigrants and their offspring utilized the festivals for meeting relatives living in socialist countries, some people smuggled illegal literature, Global South revolutionaries established networks with other socialist leaders, and curious adventurers used the festival for entering and exploring socialist countries at a time when traveling was restricted.

Soviet Cultural Diplomacy

The cultural combat between capitalism and socialism was a specific moment in history. In David Cauter's words, "never before had empires felt so compelling a need to prove their virtue, to demonstrate their spiritual superiority and admiration by gaining ascendancy in each and every event of what might be styled the Cultural Olympics."¹⁷ One of the key tools that states employed in these Cultural Olympics was cultural diplomacy, a way of interacting with foreign audiences by means of a variety of forms of culture, such as educational and scientific exchanges, artistic tours, exhibitions, international events, sports, and popular culture.¹⁸

The origins of Soviet cultural diplomacy date back to the early Bolshevik regime, which quite successfully employed cultural resources in strengthening its influence abroad. During the interwar period, cultural contacts with foreign countries were primarily harnessed to seek recognition for the Bolshevik regime and to impress foreign visitors with the new social experiment.¹⁹ The main overseas audience were Western fellow travellers: intellectual friends of the Soviet Union, fascinated by the first socialist society. Their visits to the Soviet Union were coordinated and controlled by the All-union Society of Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (VOKS), a publicly independent but in reality governmental body founded in 1925.²⁰ VOKS guided Western intellectuals and tourists through model factories, kolkhozes, schools and cultural institutions according

¹⁷ Cauter, David, *The Dancer Defects. The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3.

¹⁸ Gienow-Hecht, Jessica C. E. and Donfried, Mark C., "The Model of Cultural Diplomacy", in *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy*, edited by Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 13–29; Luke, Christina and Kersel, Morag, *Us Cultural Diplomacy and Archeology: Soft Power, Hard Heritage* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 2–5.

¹⁹ David-Fox, Michael, *Showcasing the Great Experiment. Cultural Diplomacy & Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921–1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 28–60.

²⁰ David-Fox, Michael, "The Fellow Travellers Revisited: The 'Cultured West' through Soviet Eyes", *The Journal of Modern History*, 75, No. 2, 2003, 300–335; Fayet, Jean-François, "VOKS: The Third Dimension of Soviet Foreign Policy", in *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy*, edited by Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht & Mark C. Donfried (New York: Berghahn, 2010), 33–49; Stern,

to a carefully designed and controlled pattern. These methods of receiving foreign travelers developed by VOKS laid the foundation for the cultural exchange of the late 1950s.²¹ Another element that remained in use in the postwar period was the popular front policy. After the rise of Nazi Germany in 1933, Soviet cultural diplomacy managed to take advantage of a united front, which gathered communist, socialist and other non-communist leftist parties together to fight against rising fascism. Except for the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact (1939–1941), this anti-fascist front cultivated various forms of cultural exchange between the allies through the work of Anti-Fascist Committees of Jews, women, youth, and scientists until the Cold War.²²

World War II marked a major turning point in Soviet history. As one of the victors in the war, the USSR enjoyed a new geopolitical status, which required rethinking the whole Soviet revolutionary project and its relations with the outside world.²³ In its own narrative, the Soviet Union had saved the world from fascism, and the victory over Nazi Germany became a new founding myth next to the October Revolution. Based on this claim, the Soviet Union regarded itself as a more powerful and legitimate player in world politics than before.²⁴ This shift also altered the focus of cultural diplomacy, which now, instead of merely looking for support for the existence of the USSR, began to legitimize the socialist system as an alternative to capitalism and facilitate the superpower identity of the country.

Ludmila, *Western Intellectuals and the Soviet Union, 1920–40. From Red Square to the Left Bank* (London: Routledge, 2007), 92–142.

21 David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great*, 98–141; Hollander, Paul, *Political Pilgrims. Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba 1928–1978* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 16–21, 347–399.

22 David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great*, 288–290, 317–318.

23 Fürst, Juliane, Jones, Polly and Morrissey, Susan, “The Relaunch of the Soviet Project, 1945–64. Introduction”, *The Slavonic and East European Review* 86, No. 2, April, 2008, 201–207; Edele, Mark, “More Than Just Stalinists: The Political Sentiments of Victors 1945–1953”, in *Late Stalinist Russia. Society between Reconstruction and Reinvention*, edited by Juliane Fürst (London: Routledge, 2006), 167–191; Fitzpatrick, Sheila, “Postwar Soviet Society: The ‘Return to Normalcy’, 1945–1953”, in *The Impact of World War II on the Soviet Union*, edited by Susan J. Linz (New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld, 1985), 129–156.

24 Weiner, Amir, *Making Sense of War. The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Lovell, Stephen, *The Shadow of the War. Russia and the USSR, 1941 to the Present* (Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 1–20; Gorlizki, Yoram and Khlevniuk, Oleg, *Cold Peace. Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945–1953* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4–5.

From the end of the war until the death of Stalin, the USSR continued to showcase its cultural achievements to foreign audiences; however, the direction was now different. While in the interwar years the new socialist society eagerly invited foreign visitors to enjoy the best parts of the first socialist society, the isolated and xenophobic USSR of late Stalinism allowed only a handful of foreign delegations to enter the country. Instead, Soviet cultural diplomacy focused now on sending carefully selected cultural and artistic delegations to “near abroad”, that is the newly built people’s democracies in Central Eastern Europe, like Poland and Czechoslovakia, and semi-neutral states in-between the blocs, like Austria and Finland, to tie these countries closer to the socialist empire.²⁵

One of the new instruments for advancing Soviet goals abroad was an international network that consisted of a cluster of transnational organizations, bilateral friendship societies, and campaigns for peace.²⁶ Western intellectuals remained an important target group also in the post-war era; however, the goal was to widen the organizational power of the socialist world with the new international structures tailored for specific target groups in order to have a more widespread impact on foreign populations in Europe and globally. The organizers of the World Youth Festival, the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY, founded in 1945) and the International Union of Students (IUS, founded in 1946) were among the first of these Soviet-sponsored organizations established in the late 1940s.²⁷ These organizations included the World Federation of Trade Unions (1945), the Women’s International Democratic Federation (1945), the World Federation of Scientific Workers (1946), the International Organization of Journalists (1946) and the World Peace

25 For Soviet cultural diplomacy in Eastern and Northern Europe, see Babiracki, Patryk, *Soviet Soft Power in Poland. Culture and the Making of Stalin’s New Empire, 1943–1957* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Applebaum, Rachel, *Empire of Friends. Soviet Power and Socialist Internationalism in Cold War Czechoslovakia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019); Grossmann, *Falsche Freunde im Kalten Krieg?*; Mikkonen, Simo, “Interference or friendly gestures? Soviet cultural diplomacy and Finnish elections, 1945–56”, *Cold War History* 20, No. 3, 2019, 349–365.

26 Wettig, Gerhard, *Stalin and the Cold War in Europe. The Emergence and Development of East-West Conflict, 1939–1953* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 30–32; Clews, John C., *Communist Propaganda Techniques* (London: Methuen & Co, 1964), 97, 112.

27 The WFDY was established at the World Youth Congress held in London in 1945, and the IUS a year after at a parallel student congress in Prague. On the World Youth Congress, see e.g. Moshniaga, V. P., *Vsemirnaia federatsiia demokraticeskoi molodezhi* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1976), 11; Cornell, Richard, *Youth and Communism. An Historical Analysis of International Communist Youth Movements* (New York: Walker and Company, 1965), 74–76; Kotek, Jöel, *Students and the Cold War* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 62–85.

Council (1949).²⁸ Instead of the political liturgy of Marxism-Leninism, these organizations attempted to attract people beyond communist parties and associations with universal sounding humanist concepts, such as peace, friendship, democracy, and mutual understanding and agendas promising, for example, gender equality, improvement in labour rights, and decolonization in the Global South. Initially considered umbrella organizations for various interest groups, these associations soon fell under Soviet domination and, in the West, came to be considered front-organizations and instruments of Soviet foreign propaganda. The picture behind this Cold War view was, however, much more complex.²⁹

The second half of the 1950s marked a shift in Soviet cultural diplomacy. Nikita Khrushchev's foreign policy orientation, namely peaceful co-existence, paved a way to more relaxed and reciprocal relations with the outside world. Returning on Lenin's view of the possibility of peaceful co-existence between capitalism and socialism, Khrushchev thought that the USSR and the United States could continue competing against each other, especially economically, but without military confrontations.³⁰ In this new political climate, the late 1950s saw cultural exchange proliferate. The USSR opened its borders for foreign cultural delegations, tourists, and cultural products. Exhibitions of modern Western art were organized

28 For the Soviet-sponsored “democratic” organizations see Barghoorn, Frederick C., *Soviet Foreign Propaganda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964); Barghoorn, Frederick C., *The Soviet Cultural Offensive. The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960); Wernicke, Günter, “The Communist-led World Peace Council and the Western Peace Movements: The Fetters of Bipolarity and Some Attempts to Break Them in the Fifties and Early Sixties”, *Peace & Change* 23, No. 3, 1998, 265–311; Egorova, N. I. “Dvizhenie storonnikov mira v Evrope v kontekste mnogostoronnoi diplomatii, 1950–55 gg.”, *Mnogostoronniia diplomatiia v gody kholodnoi voiny. Sbornik statei*, edited by N. I. Egorova and I. A. Aggueva (Moscow: IVI RAN, 2008), 83–108; de Haan, Francisca, “Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations: the case of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF)”, *Women's History Review*, 19, No. 4, 2010, 547–573; Ilic, Melanie, “Soviet women, cultural exchange and the Women's International Democratic Federation”, in *Re-assessing Cold War Europe*, edited by Sari Autio-Sarasmo and Katalin Miklóssy (London: Routledge, 2011), 157–174; Gradskova, Yulia, *The Women's International Democratic Federation, the Global South, and the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2020); Nordenstreng, Kaarle, Björk, Ulf Jonas, Beyersdorf, Frank, Høyer, Svennik and Lauk, Epp, *A History of the International Movement of Journalists. Professionalism versus Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

29 Wettig, *Stalin and the Cold War*, 30–32; Gradskova, *The Women's International*, 1–2, 17–20. Compare with Barghoorn, *Soviet Foreign Propaganda*, 13; Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, vii, 44, 99–100.

30 Fuserenko, Aleksandr and Naftali, Timothy, *Khrushchev's Cold War. The Inside Story of an American Adversary* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006), 23, 28–29, 526; Gilburd, *To see Paris*, 28–34.

in Moscow and Leningrad, the World Youth Festival was celebrated in Moscow in 1957, and parallel American and Soviet national exhibitions were held in Moscow and New York in 1959.³¹ Soviet orchestras, ballets, theatres, artists, and cultural delegations began to extend their tours across the East-West divide. World famous stars, such as violinist David Oistrakh, pianist Emil Gilels, prima ballerinas Galina Ulanova and Maia Plisetskaia, Igor Moiseev's folk dance ensemble and numerous other artists and groups, who had toured around the Eastern Europe in the late Stalin years, were now sent to Great Britain, France, the USA and elsewhere to win over capitalist viewers. The signing of cultural agreements with Western countries in the late 1950s institutionalized educational, scientific and cultural exchanges and shifted the focus of cultural diplomacy towards face-to-face encounters.³²

Recent studies have shown that the USSR sought to create not only a new societal and economic system, but also a new cultural order: an alternative to the “commercialised culture of the West”. As Kiril Tomoff has argued, cultural production was central to the Soviet Union's “imperial ambitions from the start”. Even though this idea was an essential part of Soviet cultural diplomacy and propaganda already during the interwar period, it became more pronounced in the immediate post-World War II years, when the USSR sought to integrate Eastern Europe into the Soviet cultural sphere and then in the post-Stalin era expanded its mission to the West and the Global South.³³ The Soviet relation to Western cultural heritage was two-fold. On one hand, the Soviet Union viewed itself as the guardian of classical European cultural traditions and emphasized the moral supremacy of Soviet over Western “decadent and commercialized” culture.³⁴ On the other hand, the West served as a source of imitation and inspiration. Although the Soviet Union claimed to offer an alternative path to modernization, it still looked to the West for new ideas. Thus, Soviet cultural interaction with the rest of the world was not only about preventing foreign influences, it was also a

31 Magnúsdóttir, Rósa, *Enemy Number One. The United States of America in Soviet Ideology and Propaganda, 1945–1959* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 11, 13.

32 Gilburd, *To see Paris*, 28–54; Magnúsdóttir, *Enemy Number One*, 79–83, 123–33; MacDaniel, Cadra Peterson, *American-Soviet Cultural Diplomacy. The Bolshoi Ballet's American Premiere* (Lanham: Lexington, 2015); Tomoff, Kirill, *Virtuosi Abroad. Soviet Music and Imperial Competition during the Early Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 117, 130–132, passim.; Nagornaia, Oksana et al., *Sovetskaia kul'turnaia diplomatiia v usloviakh Holodnoi voiny 1945–1989* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2018); Gould-Davies, Nigel, “The Logic of Soviet Cultural Diplomacy”, *Diplomatic History* 27, No. 2, 2003: 193–214.

33 Tomoff, *Virtuosi Abroad*, 11.

34 Gilburd, Eleonory, “Picasso in Thaw Culture”, *Cahiers du monde russe*, 47, 2006, 65–108; Clark, Katerina, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931–1941* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 10–12.

dialogue, where the most suitable parts of Western culture were adopted for the benefit of the socialist system.³⁵ The ambition to create a Soviet culture and cultural products that would have global significance is key for understanding the broader purpose of the World Youth Festival. The festival – understood as an institution with a recognisable image and concept – was essentially an attempt to leave a Soviet imprint in global public culture. Unlike the Worker’s Olympics (Spartakiads) or the Intervision Song Contest, the youth festival did not serve as an alternative or socialist version of any existing international events, but was a unique cultural product and one of the most long-lasting of the Soviet efforts to design cultural exports.

The Anatomy of the Festival

Throughout its history, the World Youth Festival has been characterized in numerous ways. In the Cold War years, Western observers and researchers alike tended to view it from the macro perspective and within the framework of Soviet foreign propaganda, with references like “major propaganda effort”, “a monster communist world youth festival” or “Communism’s sugar-coated device for mass brainwashing of youngsters”.³⁶ Propaganda was a crucial element in the cultural and ideological battle between the Soviet Union and the United States, but it was only one method employed in this fight. The youth festival was without doubt propagandist; however, the propaganda framework offers little explanatory power to interpret the phenomenon.³⁷

35 Gorsuch, Anne E., *All This Is Your World. Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Roth-Ey, Kristin, *Moscow Prime Time. How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire that Lost the Cultural Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); Reid, Susan E., “Who Will Beat Whom?: Soviet Popular Reception of the American National Exhibition in Moscow, 1959”, *Kritika*, 9, No. 4, 2008, 855–904; Reid, Susan E. and Crowley, David (eds), *Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in postwar Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 2000); Zubok, *Zhivago’s Children*; Péteri, György (ed.), *Imagining the West in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010).

36 Barghoorn, *Soviet Foreign Propaganda*, 261; Clews, *Communist Propaganda*, 141–143; *Time*, 26 August 1957, Vol. 70, Issue 9, 15, “The Mis-Guided Tour”; *Life*, 12 August 1957, 22, Flora Lewis, “Youth from 102 Lands Swarms over Moscow”. For the West, considering the festival as a propaganda tool was a strategic choice in the cultural Cold War, in which journalists and often also scholars took part either consciously or unconsciously. For the politicized nature of Soviet studies in the USA see Engerman, David C., *Know Your Enemy. The Rise and Fall of America’s Soviet Experts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

37 Lewin, Moshe, *The Soviet Century* (London: Verso, 2005), 9.

In the Soviet context, the festival, together with the World Federation of Democratic Youth, the International Union of Students and their national member associations, formed “the democratic youth movement”, an institutionalized network coordinated by the Soviet Komsomol. The concept of a social movement, as defined by Charles Tilly, well captures many key features related to the festival and its organizers. Campaigning, organizational networks, empowerment, and collective claims were at the core of these activities.³⁸ But unlike most of the social movements, which include an idea of targeting elites, authorities, and the establishment, the democratic youth movement, dominated and controlled by the Soviet Komsomol, was not truly a social movement born at the grass-roots. It was often presented as such in rhetoric, and to some extent there were initiatives and activities designed by young people themselves, yet the movement’s broader agenda came from Moscow. It is also important to note that despite its name, the movement was not democratic but quite the contrary: the decision-making was centralized and hierarchical.³⁹

The World Youth Festival also shared many characteristics of mega-events, large-scale international events with mass appeal, mediated reach, gigantic costs and transformative impact on societies.⁴⁰ The concept of mega-event offers a prism through which to view the festival as a part of modernizing and globalizing world. These are usually organized with governmental support and contribute to “official” versions of public culture. One of the central elements of mega-events is multidimensionality; they can be seen as multinational, cosmopolitan, supranational or global, but also at the same time as national and local.⁴¹ Like the iconic mega-events, the World’s Fairs and the Olympic Games, the World Youth Festival attempted to reach a global audience and form a recognisable cultural tradition with an established structure, name, message and visual representation.⁴² Furthermore,

38 Tilly, Charles, *Social Movements 1768–2004* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2004), passim.

39 For the decision-making in the USSR, see Merl, Stephan, “Kulturen des Ensheidens in der Sowjetunion seit 1917”, *Politisches Entscheiden im Kalten Krieg. Orte, Praktiken und Ressourcen in Ost und West* edited by Thomas Großbölting and Stefan Lehr (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020), 45–80.

40 Müller, Martin, “What Makes an Event a Mega-Event? Definitions and Sizes”, *Leisure Studies*, 34, No. 6, 2015, 627–642.

41 Roche, Maurice, *Mega-events and Modernity: Olympics, Expos and the Growth of Global Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000), 1–32.

42 Gold, John R. and Gold, Margaret M., “Athens to Athens: the Summer Olympics, 1896–2004”, in *Olympic Cities. City Agendas, Planning, and the World’s Games, 1896–2012*, edited by John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold (London: Routledge, 2007), 17–47; Keys, Barbara, *Globalizing Sport. National Rivalry and International Community in the 1930s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 1–2.

the World Youth Festival shared the characteristic idea for mega-events of representing “the world in a village, creating a global public space for a limited time span”. Instead of confining the events to a limited group in official venues, the whole host city was employed as the stage, which meant that the impact of the games or festivities far transcended the “official” participants, touching the streets and squares of the respective city.⁴³

Performance provides another useful concept with which to anatomize the essence of the World Youth Festival. In Richard Schechner’s words, “any action that is framed, presented, highlighted, or displayed is a performance”.⁴⁴ Moreover, a performance is created for and interacts with an audience.⁴⁵ The World Youth Festival as a performance was based on the concepts of peace and friendship, the widely employed tools of Soviet foreign policy. The core idea of the festival, endlessly repeated in textual and visual representations, formed a specific recognizable set of slogans and images that became known among its supporters and adversaries during the Cold War years.⁴⁶ In their visions, the organizers reserved a special role for the participants: an ideal delegate took part in mass gatherings, went to concerts, visited exhibitions, exchanged gifts in bilateral friendship meetings, and smiled to photographers with new “friends” from around the world. Consequently, attendants were not only to accept and support the festival’s agenda but also to *perform* peace and friendship. The performance of peace and friendship was neither a mere propaganda spectacle nor a staged ritual, even though mass celebrations of the communist organizations are often viewed as such.⁴⁷ Certainly, the World Youth Festival could be viewed and experienced as artificial, inauthentic, propagandist or

43 Wolfram, Kaiser “The Great Derby Race: Strategies of Cultural Representation at Nineteenth-Century World Exhibitions”, *Culture and International History*, edited by Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Frans Schumacher (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 45–59; Munro, Lisa, “Investigating World’s Fairs: An Historiography”, *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, 28, 2010, 80–94; Rydell, Robert, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-progress Expositions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).

44 Schechner, Richard, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006), 2. See also Carlson, Marvin, *Performance. A Critical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

45 For social aspects of performance and face-to-face interaction, see Goffman, Erving, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), 26–27.

46 Petrone, Karen, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades. Celebrations in the Time of Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 7–9.

47 I follow here Lorenz Erren’s thoughts on using performance rather than “artificial staging” or “meaningless ritual”, as “performance” does not imply artificiality or inauthenticity. Erren, Lorenz, “Stalinist Rule and Its Communication Practices. An Overview”, in *Totalitarian Communication. Hierarchies, Codes and Messages*, edited by Kirill Postoutenko (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2010), 48.

untruthful. This study argues, however, that it was up to the participants how they wished to participate in the performance.

More than just performances of peace and friendship, the World Youth Festivals were also showcases of existing realities of the socialist system. Any festival as a celebration is a detachment from everyday life, and therefore “experiencing socialism” during the World Youth Festivals was in fact watching and participating in the traditions of socialist celebration.⁴⁸ At the encounters with the Soviet delegations, and especially at the Moscow 1957 youth festival, foreign festival participants encountered Soviet performative culture. As Jeffrey Brooks has shown, Soviet public culture was based on a never-ending Stalinist political theatre, where the role of citizens was to support the great leader and the magnificent society that he had created.⁴⁹ The theatrical representation of socialism with rituals, slogans, and a special visual vocabulary, as well as regulated ways to meet foreigners, were also applied when the Soviet system was on international display. For example, Soviet tourists were also expected to “perform socialism” abroad; tourist trips were politically motivated and were used for promoting the socialist homeland.⁵⁰ Even more so, the festivals served as a forum to promote the socialist system and its development by showcasing the capitals of the people’s democracies. For the two weeks that a festival usually lasted, the whole society was turned into a spectacle by local communists, who pursued their efforts to present the best of their socialist society. Thus, each festival held in a socialist country can also be viewed as the performance of a socialist society produced by the festival organizers, the local communist party, the youth league, and the socialist state.

As a number of studies have shown, Soviet citizens were not exclusively oppressed victims of the Stalinist system but instead they learned how to navigate within it. In Stephen Kotkin’s terms, they learned to speak Bolshevik and took advantage of “little tactics of the habitat”, a set of methods used by Soviet citizens in their everyday lives in the Soviet system.⁵¹ Timothy Johnston has conceptually developed the repertoire of grass-roots methods, including performance, re-appropriation, bricolage and avoidance. Soviet people not only

48 For Soviet public and mass celebrations, see von Geldern, James, *Bolshevik Festivals, 1917–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Petrone, *Life Has Become*; Rolf, Malte, *Sovetskie massovye prazdniki* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2009).

49 Brooks, Jeffrey, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), xvi.

50 Gorsuch, *All this is*, 106–108.

51 Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 198–237.

“*spoke* Bolshevik” in order to get on in the system but *performed* the Bolshevik ideology and rhetoric, for example by participating in official rituals. Moreover, Soviet people *re-appropriated* state-orchestrated campaigns and events for different purposes than the state had intended, fused material and information from official and unofficial sources (*bricolage*), and sometimes simply *avoided* the Soviet power and its mechanisms.⁵² The World Youth Festival, which gathered youth delegations from tens of different countries with a great variety of cultural, social, political, and ethnic backgrounds, forms an intriguing space to examine cross-cultural interaction and the use of “little tactics” within a multinational context. The question was not only about how Soviet people dealt with the Soviet system, but also about how Soviet people came to terms with the showcased reality presented in the festival space and how foreign visitors coped with the boundaries of the festival performance and the Soviet state.

Structure of the Book

The book is organized chronologically from the Prague 1947 festival through the 1957 Moscow festival. Chapters 1 and 2 focus on Soviet efforts to sell “peace and friendship” abroad by exporting Soviet culture to Eastern Europe during the last years of Stalinism. Chapter 1 examines the evolution of the World Youth Festival into an internationally known cultural event and its role as a battlefield in the cultural Cold War. Chapter 2 demonstrates how the de-Stalinization process influenced the use of the festival for cultural exchange and enabled the Komsomol to suggest hosting a World Youth Festival in Moscow. Chapters 3–6 tell the story of the Moscow 1957 festival and its employment in Khrushchev’s project of refashioning the image of the USSR. Chapter 3 focuses on the preparations for the festival within Soviet society and shows what kind of a risk the showcase of the new, open Post-Stalin USSR was. Chapter 4 examines the long-awaited encounter between Soviet people and the outside world from the viewpoint of grassroots experiences. While foreign visitors embraced the chance to explore the unknown Soviet society, local youth mostly enjoyed meeting new people, fashion, and music trends. Chapter 5 shows how the boundaries of the permissible were tested, negotiated, and redrawn during the festival, and how much the Soviet authorities

⁵² Johnston, Timothy, *Being Soviet. Identity, Rumour, and Everyday Life under Stalin 1939–1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), xx–xli.

were ready to accept in order to maintain the impression of the new openness. Chapter 6 discusses Soviet authorities' evaluation of the festival and its impact on authorities' thinking about their ability to wage propaganda among foreigners. Furthermore, it traces the immediate and long-term imprints the festival left in Soviet society. The book ends with an epilogue, outlining the festival's continued history, through the adventurous experiment to the capitalist world and finally back to the socialist bloc.

**Part I: Selling Peace and Friendship to World
Youth, 1947–56**

1 Stalinist Youth Festivals, 1947–51

Contemporaries did not know it at the time, but the socialist world had struck gold. In the summer of 1947, the Soviet-sponsored World Federation of Democratic Youth introduced a new kind of international event that immediately resonated with the young generation. After the years of darkness, despair and misery, this new celebration, which promised togetherness, joy and hope, seemed to respond to the needs of young people, mentally and physically drained by the devastating and total war. During the first gatherings in Prague (1947), Budapest (1949) and Berlin (1951), this new international event developed into a recognizable concept, a socialist cultural product, which became acknowledged both within the socialist orbit and in the “free world”. At the emergence of the Cold War, misgivings about communist domination over the festival made Western, non-communist youth organizations boycott the event, which soon turned into a battleground of the cultural Cold War, where two blocs projected their competing narratives about youth and the future world.

Prague 1947: The Stage for Postwar Hope

The first World Festival of Youth was held in Czechoslovakia’s capital Prague in July-August 1947. Approximately 17,000 young people from 71 countries gathered together with around 62,000 locals in a hopeful atmosphere. The cheering crowd marched through the city centre with portraits of Stalin and other communist leaders, they enjoyed ballet and folk-dance performances, fooled around in a carnival, saw a large exhibition of the role of youth in the war, took excursions to historical monuments in Prague, and paid visits to Lidice village, a site destroyed by the German army in June 1942. Some foreign participants had already taken part in voluntary reconstruction work in Czechoslovakia prior to the festivities.¹ During those ecstatic summer days, young people were neither bothered by President Winston Churchill’s “Iron curtain speech”, which had already proclaimed the division of Europe in March 1946, nor were they worried about the devolving relations between the Soviet Union and its former Western allies due to the Marshall Plan having been

¹ RGASPI, f. M-4, op. 1, d. 504, ll. 114–117. World Federation Democratic Youth, 29 August 1947, World Youth Festival; RGASPI, f. M-4, op. 2, d. 5, 1–63; RGASPI, f. M-4, op. 1, d. 4, l. 1. World Youth Festival, No. 2, Prague, Czechoslovakia July 20 to August 17, 1947.

introduced in June 1947.² In Prague, as one of the participants, Ele Alenius, later penned in his memoirs, "young people were still friends with one another".³

Alenius, a Finnish student activist in the Academic Socialist Association of the University of Helsinki, Minister of Finance in 1966–70 and the leader of the People's Democratic Party of Finland in 1967–79, was fascinated by the principal idea of the festival – that young people would gather together in order to advance mutual understanding. Alenius' passion for peace work came from a leftist family background and his personal experiences at the front. He had only been 17 when he was called to war against the Soviet Union within the youngest age group in 1943. "For many years European youth had been on the opposite sides and killed each other as enemies, but now they would meet in a completely different spirit. It was something that I had been dreaming of", he reminisced.⁴ Many young Europeans shared his dream and felt strongly about doing something tangible in order to secure world peace at a moment when the fear of a new global war had not completely vanished with the signing of the Paris peace treaty. Between the end of the war and the epoch-making year of 1956, numerous Western fellow travellers, intellectuals, artists and scientists gave their support to Soviet peace work, most often being active in the World Peace Council.⁵ Young workers and left-leaning students found a channel for these sentiments in the WFDY or the IUS, and in the World Youth Festivals.

Organized only two years after World War II, this massive four-week gathering with a large cultural and sports program can be regarded as a success for its main organizer, the WFDY. The summer of 1947 was a busy time in terms of youth events: in late July, the World Christian Youth Conference met in Oslo, in August, over 24,000 scouts began their traditional camp Jamboree at Moisson, France, and the University Summer Games brought student athletes from all around the world to Paris. Still, this new and unknown event managed to attract to thousands of European young people from all over the political spectrum. The majority came from the ranks of the communist and "democratic" youth leagues; however, there were also notable numbers of social democrat and labour-party youth, members of

² For Soviet reactions to Marshall aid, see Roberts, Geoffrey, *The Soviet Union in World Politics. Coexistence, Revolution and the Cold War, 1946–1991* (London: Routledge, 1999), 24–25.

³ Alenius, Ele, *Salatut tiet* (Helsinki: Painatuskeskus, 1995), 112.

⁴ Alenius, *Salatut tiet*, 108–109; Interview with Ele Alenius, 21 November 2007.

⁵ Hollander, Paul, *Political Pilgrims. Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba 1928–1978* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 102–117; Cauter, David, *The Fellow-travellers. Intellectual Friends of Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 298–299, 312–313, 316–318, 340–341.

scout organizations as well as some conservatives and liberals.⁶ One of the non-communist attendees was a British Conservative Party member, Gordon Grant, who reviewed the festival in rather positive terms in a letter to the editor of *The Manchester Guardian*. Grant had “entered into discussion with people from many countries, and these were conducted on a friendly basis, politics entering the conversation only on rare occasions”.⁷ Only a few Global South organizations managed to send their people to Prague, yet the WFDY secretariat reassured “that these countries have a prominent place in the program of the Festival.”⁸

The idea of the World Youth Festival had been born at the founding congress of the WFDY in London in November 1945. The initiative was announced at a special commission on youth cooperation, which suggested that the WFDY should hold a festival to widen cultural contacts between countries and to provide a way of creating pen pals and working camps amongst young people.⁹ The discussions for planning the World Youth Festival started in early 1946 in the WFDY executive committee. Besides Prague, Copenhagen, Paris and Vienna were among the candidates, but Vienna was soon dropped because both Austrian and Soviet representatives were categorically against it. Yet it was only thirteen years later, in a very different international situation, that the seventh World Youth Festival was celebrated in Vienna in 1959.¹⁰ Copenhagen and Paris were considered at much greater length; however, the unstable political climate between Eastern and Western Europe finally prompted the WFDY officials to choose Prague. Both French and Danish governments refused to endorse the festival, because they were unable to ensure that the event was not a communist enterprise.¹¹ Moreover, Paris

6 RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 3, d. 512, l. 7. Ob itogakh festivalia 1947; Bresslein, Erwin, *Drushba! Freundschaft? Von der Kommunistischen Jugendinternationale zu den Weltjugendfestspielen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fisher Taschenbuch Verlag 1973), 86; Viitanen, Reijo, *SDNL 50 vuotta* (Helsinki: SDNL, 1994), 117–121.

7 *The Manchester Guardian*, 28 August 1947, 4, “Serious Politics”.

8 World Youth Festival, a letter to WFDY member organisations, Vidya Kanuga for the secretariat, November 1946, 1, Box WFDY 1945, Reijo Viitanen’s collection, KansA.

9 Moshniaga, V. P., *Molodoie pokolenie internatsionalistov* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1972), 46. The initiative might have come from the Chinese delegation. Kotek, Jöel, “Youth Organizations as a Battlefield in the Cold War”, in *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945–1960*, edited by Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam (London: Routledge, 2003), 188–189 (note 10).

10 RGASPI, f. M-4, op. 1, d. 344, l. 71. Executive committee meeting, plenary session 29 July 1946.

11 Kotek, 1996, 112; Mikhailov, Nikolai, *Pokoi nam tol’ko snitsia*, Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1982, 236; RGASPI, f. 17, op. 128, d. 1049, l. 136. Spravka o Mezhdunarodnogo festivalia molo-dezhi. V. Ivanov, E. Fedorov.

was already going to be crowded, hosting Students' University Games.¹² For the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc, organizing the first World Youth Festival in the Western half of Europe would have served as an indicator of the WFDY's non-partisan nature and would have helped to present the Festival as a fete of the whole world. According to similar thinking, the WFDY and many other Soviet peace movement organizations had their headquarters in Paris and in other West European capitals up until the early 1950s.¹³

Prague was a fit and safe choice. Unlike many other capitals in Central Europe, it had not been as seriously damaged in the war and, most importantly, state support was ensured.¹⁴ The national committee of Czechoslovak youth took a very positive attitude toward hosting the festival and later the Czechoslovakian government expressed their approval in informal discussions.¹⁵ At that time communists still enjoyed wide public support in Czechoslovakia and rose to power through democratic elections in 1946.¹⁶ Government cooperation guaranteed that public buildings, venues for mass meetings and accommodation services were available for the festival guests. Furthermore, public transportation, which during the period of reconstruction was not an easy task to deal with in every European country, would run smoothly.¹⁷ The only thing that the foreign minister of Czechoslovakia Jan Mazaryk (1886–1948) demanded from the WFDY was that the event be strictly non-political.¹⁸ Disagreement on the overly political nature of the youth festival was to be one of the central topics that came to divide Soviet and Western youth leaders during the years to come. Many Western European youth leaders did not like the Soviet way of mixing youth activities with high politics and wished to see the youth festivals purely as cultural events, completely detached from political agendas.¹⁹

12 RGASPI, f. M-4, op. 1, d. 344, ll. 69–71. Executive committee meeting, plenary session 29 July 1946.

13 Clews, John C., *Communist Propaganda Techniques* (London: Methuen & Co, 1964), 287–288.

14 Berend, Ivan T., *Central and Eastern Europe 1944–1993. Detour from the Periphery to the Periphery*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 4–6.

15 RGASPI, f. M-4, op. 1, d. 344, l. 3. Executive meeting of the WFDY, 26 July 1946.

16 Kocian, Jiří, “Czechoslovakia Between Two Totalitarian Systems (1945–1948)”, in *A History of the Czech Lands*, edited by Jaroslav Pánek and Oldřich Tůma (Prague: Charles University in Prague, 2009), 465.

17 *World Federation of Democratic Youth*, Bulletin No. 4 September 1946, 6.

18 RGASPI, f. 17, op. 128, d. 1049, l. 29. Vsemirnyi festival' na Prage (no date); see also Kotek, Jöel, *Students and the Cold War* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 112.

19 See RGASPI, f. 17, op. 128, d. 248, l. 14. Bogatyrev i Mishin Mikhailovu, Ivanovu i Voinovoi, 20.12.1947; RGASPI, f. 17, op. 128, d. 247, l. 212. Sekretariam TsK VKP(b) tov. Zhdanovu,

For the Komsomol and the Soviet cultural establishment, the World Youth Festival stood for more than just an international cultural event: it was an arena for promoting the USSR as a cultural super power and for selling the socialist future wrapped up in the rhetoric of peace and friendship. A Komsomol report on the Prague festival eulogized how the Soviet delegation had “demonstrated before the youth of the world the predominance of Soviet socialist culture, showed the high ideological level of our arts and high virtuosity of our musicians.”²⁰ These young virtuosi, competition laureates in arts and sports, who had brought fame to their socialist Motherland, were celebrated on the pages of *Komsomol'skaia pravda* and other central newspapers and introduced as the rising stars of Soviet culture and sport for the domestic audience.²¹ The demonstration of Soviet culture at the World Youth Festival was not only a question of showing the “achievements of the Soviet Union” but was part of the plan to become “a world center of culture.”²² This endeavour was based on the view, inherited from the Tsarist era, that Russia was the true custodian of Europe’s classical cultural heritage originating in ancient Greece. While culture in the West had fallen into moral decadence, Soviet socialist culture represented the most avant-garde of civilization.²³

Soviet festival participation was not simply a matter of the youth league, but, like any endeavours outside Soviet borders, a state project. The Komsomol with its head Nikolai Aleksandrovich Mikhailov (1906–82) was responsible for the Soviet festival arrangements. Mikhailov was born in 1906 to a family of handicrafts. He joined the Communist Party during Stalin’s cultural revolution in 1930 and worked as a journalist in *Pravda*. He became the head of the Komsomol in the

Kuznetsovu, Suslovu i Popovu, N. Mikhailov, 4.9.1947; RGASPI, f. M-4, op. 1, d. 499, ll. 1–22. Materialy ispolkoma VFDM 1947.

20 Ob itogakh uchastiia delegatsii sovetskoi molodezhi v mezhdunarodnom festivale demokraticeskoi molodezhi, iz postanovleniia TsK VLKSM, 20.8.1947, in *My – internationalisty. Dokumenty i materialy s'ezdov, konferentsii i Tsk VLKSM, AKSM i KMO SSSR ob internatsionalnykh svyaziakh sovetskoi molodezhi i mezhdunarodnom molodezhnom dvizhenii (1918–1971 gg.)* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1972), 162.

21 *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 9 August 1947, 3, “Molodye мастера искусства i sporta – pobedim konkursov i sorevnovaniia na mezhdunarodnom festivali molodezhi”; *Pravda*, 27 July 1947, 4, “Mezhdunarodnyi festival” demokraticeskoi molodezhi”.

22 Reid, Susan E., “Toward a New (Socialist) Realism. The Re-Engagement with Western Modernism in the Khrushchev Thaw”, in *Russian Art and the West. A Century of Dialogue in Painting, Architecture, and the Decorative Arts*, edited by Rosalind P. Blakesley and Susan E. Reid (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007), 219.

23 Clark, Katerina, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931–1941* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 10–12.

darkest times of Stalinist terror in 1938 and led the youth league until 1952. Later, Mikhailov was involved with the Warsaw and Moscow festivals in the capacity of Soviet ambassador to Poland in 1954–55 and as the minister of culture. The Komsomol and the Anti-Fascist Committee of Soviet youth (AKSM),²⁴ the official Soviet representative at the WFDY and the IUS, enjoyed the full support of several state bodies in the preparation of delegates, including the Art Committee of the Council of Ministers (artistic performances), the Ministry of Cinematography (films), Sports Committee of the Council of Ministers (athletes), and the Minister of Trade (food for the Soviet delegates during the preparation period). The Ministry of the Textile Industry provided costumes, and the respective ministers looked after the transportation of the delegates. Finally, Mikhailov kept the party leadership, Malenkov, Molotov and Zhdanov, and sometimes even Stalin, updated about the results of the festival and how the money – 2.2 million roubles allocated for the expenses of the Prague event – were spent.²⁵

A typical Soviet delegation comprised a cultural group, a sport group, political leadership including people from the Komsomol Central Committee and the Communist Party, as well as a group of young workers and peasants from different republics and smaller regions of the country representing a variety of professions.²⁶ Every Soviet delegate had a special duty: to win a sporting or cultural competition, to tell foreigners about socialism and the successes of the Soviet Union, or to supervise the other delegates and make sure that they were doing the right thing – in effect, their task was to serve as missionaries of the socialist way of life – a responsibility that every Soviet citizen crossing the border or having contact with foreigners was expected to fulfil.²⁷

24 The Anti-Fascist Committee of Soviet Youth (*Antifashistskii komitet sovetsoi molodezhi*, AKSM) was set up in 1941 to manage international relations of Soviet youth during the war. Using the AKSM instead of the Komsomol was part of the Soviet strategy to eliminate direct links to communist organizations. The AKSM was administratively subordinate to Sovinform, but in practice it was directly linked to the CPSU and the Komsomol central committees. The AKSM was renamed the Committee of Youth Organizations (KMO) in 1956. *Slavnyi put' Leninskogo Komsomola*, tom 1 (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1974), 195. Petrova, N. K. "Antifashistskie komitety v SSSR v gody kholodnoi voiny", in *Sovetskoe obshchestvo: budni kholodnoi voiny. Materialy "kruglogo stola"* (Moscow: Arzamas, 2000), 234–253.

25 RGASPI, f. M-4, op. 1, d. 473, ll. 29–33. Postanovlenie no 2531–771s ot 15 iulia 1947, Moskva, Kreml; RGASPI, f. 17, op. 128, d. 247, ll. 7–8. Smeta raskhodov delegatsii sovetsoi molodezhi na Vsemirnyi festival' molodezhi v Prage. 15.2.1947.

26 See for example RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 3, d. 870, ll. 4–5.

27 Gorsuch, Anne, *All This Is Your World. Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 106–108.

One of the Soviet cultural delegates to the early World Youth Festivals was the prima ballerina from Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre, Maya Plisetskaya (1925–2015). Plisetskaya belonged to the group of “future hopes” and was chosen to the Soviet team in the ballet competitions at the Prague, Budapest and Berlin festivals. In her memoirs, Plisetskaya poignantly describes her experiences as a pawn in the Kremlin's propaganda spectacle, which, in her words, “was supposed to become a grandiose Hollywood show, to impress the world with the luminous joy of those living in the Stalinist people's prison.”²⁸ Written at the time of perestroika and published in Russia in 1994, Plisetskaya's memoirs accentuate her bittersweet relationship with the Soviet system which provided her both with a long, successful career at the Bolshoi theatre as well as with various limitations on international mobility and creative work. Plisetskaya's account offers us a rare chance to take a look behind the public facade of Soviet cultural delegations, to read something that Komsomol and party reports or print media do not tell: what being a Soviet delegate felt like at a time when the USSR was largely isolated, even from the socialist Eastern Europe.

Plisetskaya moved among the very privileged group of people. During the late Stalinist years, only a very few selected political and cultural delegations travelled abroad, while the masses of ordinary citizens were encouraged to enjoy domestic tourist destinations.²⁹ The Soviet contingents to the World Youth Festivals included 500 to 1,000 members, and other Soviet youth delegations abroad numbered even fewer (see Table 2). According to a report on the exchange of youth delegations, a total of 22 Soviet delegations and 1,170 people travelled abroad in 1953.³⁰

Plisetskaya, as all the Soviet delegates, had to go through a selection process where the most suitable individuals were chosen to represent their socialist motherland. Every Soviet citizen was obliged to fill out a form, or a short biography (*kharakteristika*), to prove that one's background was both suitable for a model communist and that there was not a risk that the person might emigrate during the trip. Besides biographical information and Komsomol/party membership, Plisetskaya recalls that the forms listed “a good fifty questions about everybody and everything. Were you ever prisoners of war, did you live in territories occupied by

²⁸ Plisetskaya, Maya, *I, Maya Plisetskaya* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 95.

²⁹ Gorsuch, *All this is*, 28–48, 82; Gorsuch, Anne E., “‘There's No Place like Home': Soviet Tourism in Late Stalinism”, *Slavic Review*, 62, No. 4, 2003, 760–785; Caute, David, *The Dancer Defects: the Struggle for Cultural Supremacy During the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 20–24, 395–396.

³⁰ RGASPI, f. M-4, op. 1, d. 1737, l. 7. Otchet ob obmene molodezhnymi i studencheskimi delegatsiiami mezhdou AKSM i zarubezhnymi organizatsiiami v 1953 godu.

Tab. 2: Festival Participants and Countries 1947–1989.³¹

City	Year	Countries	Participants	USSR	Finland	The UK
Prague	1947	71	17,000	497	9	10
Budapest	1949	82	10,371	630	60	449
Berlin	1951	104	26,000	756	1,300	1,061
Bucharest	1953	111	30,000	960	2,416	1,100
Warsaw	1955	115	26,000	1,090/1,144	2,000	1,000
Moscow	1957	131	34,000	3,044	2,100	1,590
Vienna	1959	112	18,000	802	459	*
Helsinki	1962	137	13,140	*	2,259	209
Sofia	1968	138	20,000	900	600	*
East Berlin	1973	140	30,000	*	800	*
Havana	1978	145	18,500	1,000	350	*
Moscow	1985	157	20,000	*	1,500	*
Pyongyang 1989	162	15,000	1,000	150	*	

Sources: RGASPI, f. 17, op. 137, d. 544, l. 106; RGASPI, f. 17, op. 137, d. 546, l. 102; RGASPI, f. 17, op. 137, d. 44, l. 84; RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 3, d. 794; *Festival mondial de la jeunesse et des étudiants*, Budapest: Fédération mondiale de la jeunesse démocratique, 1949; RGASPI, f. M-4, op. 1, d. 473, ll. 29–33; Krekola, Joni, “Kuumia tunteita ja kylmää sotaa nuorisofestivaaleilla”, in *Työväki ja tunteet*, E. Katainen & P. Kotila (eds), Turku: Työväen historian ja perinteen tutkimuksen seura, 2002, 253. *Information not available.

the Germans, your parents’ background, your mother’s maiden name, her employment record, and of course, everything about your father”. Suspicion of those among the population who had lived in the western regions was rooted in the Stalinist fear that people who had been in contact with Germans or other foreigners during the war, might not be loyal to the Soviet Union. The possibility of a festival trip could also be blocked because of difficulties with the Komsomol or the Party, or, as in Plisetskaya’s case, because her father, a rising apparatchik in the coal industry, had been shot in 1938 as a class enemy. “It was impossible to hide anything about my father”, Plisetskaya wrote, having feared that she would never be able to travel outside the country again. After intense questioning in front of the

³¹ The figures on Soviet Festival participants for the Berlin and Bucharest festivals are taken from a separate notebook on Soviet festival participants and honoured guests. The notebook is not attached to any official fond, but is kept in RGASPI’s reading room 3 (Komsomol archive) in Moscow. The participant figures for each delegation are collected from various sources. Often sources give different numbers, which makes it difficult to compile accurate statistics. So it needs to be noted that these figures are only suggestive.

Komsomol central committee, she nevertheless was allowed to travel to Prague, a few days later than the other delegates.³²

Prague was especially unforgettable for Plisetskaya because it “still looked prosperous that year. Private stores, small shops, and markets did not lack for goods. But we didn’t have any money. We were fed Komsomol-style, in a herd. And so we only got to look and lick our lips.”³³ The prospect of seeing a foreign country and a widespread appreciation of the World Youth Festivals in the Soviet Union made the festival trips desirable and the ability to secure a spot in one very difficult. Young musical and athletic talents saw in this a great opportunity to test their skills in the international arena and many future stars, such as violinist Leonid Kogan, and singers Ėdita P’ekha and Sofia Rotaru, began their careers abroad at the World Youth festivals.³⁴ Cellist Mstislav Rostropovich became the star of the Prague Festival in 1947 after winning the cello competition with marvelous reviews. The successful competition made him famous beyond the Soviet borders, especially in Czechoslovakia. A year later Rostropovich represented his country again at the Budapest festival, and again won the first prize with his compatriot Daniil Shafran. At the Bucharest festival in 1953, Rostropovich was on the jury.³⁵

A similar cavalcade of top Western musicians and artists was not seen at the festival. The United States and Great Britain, then still formally Soviet allies, had strong reservations concerning the Prague gathering. Unlike with the founding congress of the WFDY in London in 1945, which had been supported by such names as President Harry Truman, Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt and Prime Minister Clement Attlee, the Western governments chose a different strategy toward the festival.³⁶ The US State Department had been informed about its communist links and adopted a policy of not sending an official delegation to the gathering, fearing the consequences if an authoritative US delegation should be implicated in anti-US resolutions. The US embassy in Prague saw things differently and suggested sending a delegation, which “could have played a leading role in the festival and

32 Plisetskaya, *I, Maya*, xii, 95–99.

33 Plisetskaya, *I, Maya*, 95–99.

34 Plisetskaya, *I, Maya*, 96; MacFadyen, David, *Red Stars. Personality and the Soviet Popular Song 1955–1991* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), 83, 138–139; Ewen, David, *Musicians since 1900. Performers in Concert and Opera* (New York: H.W. Wilson company, 1978), 407.

35 Wilson, Elizabeth, *Rostropovich. The Musical Life of the Great Cellist, Teacher, and Legend* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2008), 45–46, 113.

36 Cornell, Richard, *Youth and Communism. An Historical Analysis of International Communist Youth Movements* (New York: Walker and Company, 1965), 75; Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 76–77.

seriously jeopardized Soviet use of [the] festival as [a] vehicle of Communist propaganda”.³⁷ In similar fashion, American and British newspapers still preferred the way of cooperation, although hints and informed guesses about communist dominance in the WFDY and the IUS were in the air. They remarked on Soviet preparedness to utilize this new forum in the promotion of the USSR, while maintaining that the USA had missed a golden opportunity to showcase American life to Central East European youth.³⁸ *The New York Times* lamented that “Soviet Russia had ‘stolen the show’ because of the quality of their exhibits and performers”. While the Soviet exhibition had demonstrated “a giant statue of Stalin” and propaganda on the achievements of Soviet youth, “the American display emphasized lynching, racial tensions and ‘worried-looking’ veterans of World War II”.³⁹ In *The Washington Post*, William Attwood similarly mourned the missed opportunity to use the festival for American ends: “these [youth festivals] provide the best opportunities for meeting the ideological opposition on its own grounds”. Attwood regarded the lack of American participation in the festival “a striking example of how American apathy, ignorance and stinginess is helping communism win the battle of ideas in Eastern Europe”.⁴⁰

The most vigorous adversary of the Prague festival was, however, the Catholic Church, which viewed the Soviet way of appealing to young people as especially dangerous because it was itself undertaking missions against the same target group. The Vatican and the Catholic Church had opposed communism since the late 19th century and this fight was only accelerated by the Soviet Union’s success in World War II. Pope Pius XII, whose papacy lasted from 1939–58, was especially afraid of the fact that the Catholic countries in Eastern Europe were falling under Soviet dominance.⁴¹ According to Soviet monitoring report, Pius XII advised young people not to choose communism on Radio Vatican: “Do not betray yourselves by travelling to Prague; this is indeed the way that leads to Moscow”.⁴² Pius XII was

37 Ninkovich, Frank A., *The Diplomacy of Ideas. U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 157–159; Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 112–117, 120.

38 *The New York Times*, 24 July 1947, 7, “World Youth Groups Converge on Prague”; *The Washington Post*, 20 August 1947, 8, “Czech Detains U.S. Delegate to Youth Fete”.

39 *The New York Times*, 7 October 1947, 5, “Red Issue Splits Youth Delegates”.

40 *The Washington Post*, 14 September 1947, B6, Attwood, William, “U.S. Snubs a Youth Show and Russians Steal It”.

41 Phayer, Michael, *Pius XII, the Holocaust, and the Cold War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 134–140.

42 RGASPI, f. 17, op. 128, d. 247, l. 43. V TsK VKP(b), sekretariam Zhdanovu i Kuznetsovu, N. Mihailov, E. Fedorov, February 1947; *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 25 July 1947, 3, M. Tiurin, “Prazdnik demokraticeskoi molodezhi mira”.

on target. In September 1947, only a month after the end of the Prague festival, Stalin's chief ideologist Andrei Zhdanov announced that the world had divided into two opposing camps in a speech given at the founding congress of the Cominform. Both the speech and the establishment of a new international communist organization marked the Soviet leadership's decision to abandon the path of cooperation with the West.⁴³ The division of the world had become a reality.

Propaganda Spectacle, Socialist World's Fair, or Stalinist Olympics?

When the World Youth Festival entered the scene on July 1947, very few contemporaries knew what this new event was all about. During its first years, the festival was called a "congress", a "jamboree", its exhibitions were described as being akin to a "world's fair in miniature", and the sports activities compared to the Olympic Games.⁴⁴ Later, the festival was even considered Stalin's "counter-Olympic boycott".⁴⁵ It did not take long before the epithets like "communist", "red", and "Soviet-sponsored" became the dominant labels for the festival in non-communist Western media. Given that the USSR had created an alternative Olympics, the Spartakiads, in the 1920s, it was tempting to think that the rationale behind the World Youth Festival was to make it a competitor to existing international events. Rather than attempting to create a Stalinist Olympics or a Socialist World's Fair, the organizers of the youth festival managed to put together a completely new kind of international event that combined elements from the Western mega-events as well as from socialist celebration traditions. While many of the contemporary youth events, such as the Scout Jamborees and Christian and student organizations' events were for a limited audience, the World Youth Festival attempted to become a globally recognized gathering for all young people. Moreover, like the Olympic Games and the World's Fairs, which contributed to the formation of international public culture,⁴⁶ the designers of the World Youth Festival intended to do the same. A widely

⁴³ Roberts, Geoffrey, *Stalin's Wars. From World War to Cold War, 1939–1953* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 318; Roberts, *The Soviet Union*, 26–30.

⁴⁴ *The Washington Post*, September 14, 1947, B6, William Attwood, "U.S. Snubs a Youth Show and Russians Steal it"; *World Student News*, 12/1954, B. L. Gupta, "Student Olympics"; *World Student News*, 5/1957, 16, Readers' letters: Ihaddaden Hafid, "To Clarify Student minds".

⁴⁵ Hoberman, John, *The Olympic Crisis. Sport, Politics and the Moral Order* (New Rochelle: Aristide D. Caratzaz, 1986), 18; For a critique on Hoberman's argument see Murray, Hugh, *Journal of Sport History*, 16, No. 1, 1989, 108.

⁴⁶ Roche, Maurice, *Mega-events and Modernity: Olympics, Expos and the Growth of Global Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000), 21–22.

appreciated cultural event would facilitate the authority of the WFDY as the speaker of world youth, help recruit new members, and, above all, it would support the USSR's self-proclaimed position as the world leader in culture.⁴⁷

In terms of its contents, the World Youth Festival was an ambitious undertaking. Its programme combined cultural activities (classical and folk music, ballet, artistic competitions, theatre and dancing performances, film screenings, exhibitions), sport games, leisure activities (visits to tourist attractions, camp fire evenings, get-togethers) and political functions (meetings, seminars, visits to local factories and schools).⁴⁸ In the festival designers' desire to cover every human endeavour from culture to sports, from political and educational to recreational and entertaining activities, the World Youth Festival was a unique enterprise. Yet its institutional structure and message had roots in the existing forms of celebration traditions in both the capitalist West and the socialist East.

While the available sources do not illuminate the initial and developing thinking behind the festival, the vast amount of materials produced by the Komsomol, the CPSU, the WFDY, the IUS and national youth organizations consulted for this study widely illustrate its resemblance to the largest international events of that time. Before the Prague festival, the organizers keenly followed the Scout movement's Jamboree, a large international summer camp held regularly in different parts of the world from the 1920s onwards.⁴⁹ Such elements as singing round a campfire, a special scarf for each festival, and national uniforms might have been borrowed from the scout movement.⁵⁰ Much more than the jamborees, however, the World Youth Festival resembles the World's fairs and the Olympic Games.

The World's Fairs, especially in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, can be seen as manifestations of Western technological modernity and dominant Western cultural values. Similarly, the World Youth Festivals promoted an idea of modernity; however, it was an alternative view largely shaped by the Soviet way of envisioning the future. Especially the national exhibitions and the artistic competitions

⁴⁷ Reid, "Toward a New", 219; Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth*, 10–12.

⁴⁸ Preliminary Programme, World Youth Festival, 18 November 1946, 1–4, Box WFDY 1947, Reijo Viitanen's Collection, KansA.

⁴⁹ Parsons, Timothy, *Race, Resistance, and the Boy Scout Movement in British Colonial Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), 57.

⁵⁰ Especially in 1946–47, the WFDY bulletins keenly followed what was happening in the Scout movement. *World Federation of Democratic Youth Bulletin*, No. 2 May/June 1946, 26, "Girl Scouts and Girl Guides"; *World Federation of Democratic Youth Bulletin*, No. 1 April 1946, "World Festival of Youth".

at the festivals resembled the World's Fairs in their attempt to demonstrate the best qualities of each nation's cultural traditions but concurrently provided forums for the organizers to disseminate their dominant cultural ideas.⁵¹

The closest capitalist model for the World Youth Festival was, however, the Olympic Games. Exactly like the Olympics, and modern sport in general, the World Youth Festival simultaneously emphasized national representation and a transnational, universal agenda of bringing peoples together in the spirit of friendship and mutual understanding.⁵² Both events occurred in regular cycles, teams wore national uniforms, organization was taken care of by the International Festival/Olympic Committees, they used recognizable symbols and shared similar quasi-religious rituals (torch/festival relay, the opening ceremony, releasing doves, and a special hymn).⁵³ At the early festivals, the organizers used either the white dove designed by Pablo Picasso for the World Peace Congresses or a picture where male and female figures held hands around a globe – using the same idea as the United Nations' globe symbol.⁵⁴ In contrast to the thinking of the father of the modern Olympics, Pierre de Coubertin, who embraced the idea of mixing intellectual and physical arts, in practice the Olympic Games came to be understood principally as a sporting competition. The World Youth Festival, conversely, better managed to embrace every part of human culture, and was therefore closer to the conception of both the ancient and Coubertin's Olympic ideals, in that it combined “sports, the arts, technology and culture as mutually enriching and interrelated aspects of human life”.⁵⁵

51 Munro, Lisa, “Investigating World's Fairs: An Historiography”, *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, 28, 2010, 80–94; Hoffmann, David L., *Stalinist Values. The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917–1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Kelly, Catriona and Shepherd, David, *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution: 1881–1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth*.

52 Keys, Barbara, *Globalizing Sport: National Rivalry and International Community in the 1930s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 2.

53 Gold, Margaret and Revill, George, “The Cultural Olympiads: Reviving the Panegyris”, in *Olympic Cities. City Agendas, Planning, and the World's Games, 1896–2012*, edited by John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold (London: Routledge, 2007), 62; Hill, Christopher, *Olympic Politics. Athens to Atlanta, 1896–1996* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 5–33.

54 On the origins of the dove as a symbol of the peace movement, see *The Guardian*, 12 September 1981, 9, “Painting Picasso Red”; Deery, Philip, “The Dove Flies East: Whitehall, Warsaw and the 1950 World Peace Congress”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 48, No. 4, 2002, 449–468.

55 Gold and Revill, “The Cultural Olympiads”, 59–83; John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold, “Introduction”, in *Olympic Cities. City Agendas, Planning, and the World's Games, 1896–2012*, edited by John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold (London: Routledge, 2007), 2–3.



Fig. 1: Releasing doves at the opening ceremony of the Bucharest festival in 1953. Photographer: Yrjö Lintunen, People’s Archive, Helsinki.

Given that the organizers, the WFDY and the IUS, had their organizational roots in the international communist movement and that most of the representatives in their decision-making bodies were either communists or sympathizers, it is obvious that the World Youth Festival leaned on socialist models of mass celebration. Festivals and other forms of public celebration played an important role in implementing the new Soviet culture and in legitimizing the new rule in the 1920s and 1930s. Public celebrations, as James von Geldern notes, “become particularly meaningful during times of revolutionary change, when societies not only must project themselves into the future but must grapple with the legacy of their past”.⁵⁶ Soviet public mass festivals embodied myriad ends. On one hand, public celebrations sought to bring the state and its people closer to each other, while on the other, they were used in propagandizing the correct values.⁵⁷ The World Youth Festival drew on Soviet mass culture tradition in many respects, yet it also differed from it a great deal. Like the May Day parades, Women’s day celebration, International Spartakiads, or the

⁵⁶ von Geldern, James, *Bolshevik Festivals, 1917–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 5–6.

⁵⁷ von Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals*, 1–13; Petrone, Karen, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades. Celebrations in the Time of Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 15 (quotation); Rolf, Malte, *Sovetskie massovyie prazdniki* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2009).

physical culture parades, the World Youth Festival was organized top-down, and the mixture of cultural and political dimensions, as well as the centrality of visual propaganda, constituted an essential part of it. The festival programme was based on the Soviet conception of culture as a mixture of high (classic arts, ballet, fine arts) and popular (folk music and dancing, film, mass events).⁵⁸

The first international celebrations arranged by the communist youth movement were an International Youth Week and International Youth Day that were celebrated annually from the 1910s to the early 1940s. Both were established by the Second Youth International, and continued to be organized by its successor, the Communist Youth International.⁵⁹ During World War II, the World Youth Council (the predecessor of the WFDY) revived this tradition by launching World Youth Week and World Youth Day. Both remained part of the WFDY's annual calendar in the post-war period; however, they never received as much attention as did the World Youth Festival.⁶⁰ Compared with these earlier international events of the communist youth movement, the World Youth Festival was far larger: instead of one week, the World Youth Festival lasted approximately two weeks, it gathered thousands of participants and the scope of combined events of culture and sport was something never seen before. Furthermore, while International and World Youth Weeks had been celebrated separately in each country, the World Youth festival provided a common place for young people from different countries to party together.⁶¹ A festival that demanded travelling abroad made the participation much more limited than that of World Youth Week, which everybody had been able to celebrate equally at home. Therefore, the WFDY and the IUS encouraged national and local associations to arrange national and local events prior to each festival in order to highlight the forthcoming global celebration, create possibilities for wider masses to manifest peace and friendship, and select the best of the best to represent one's country at the *World Youth Festival*. As a WFDY circular reminded, "our Festival must be representative of the best members of the youth movement and not merely of those who can afford a vacation abroad." Indeed, the World Youth Festival was meant to be

58 Grant, Susan, *Physical Culture and Sport in Soviet Society. Propaganda, Acculturation, and Transformation in the 1920s and 1930s* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 124–131; Naimark, Norman M., *The Russians in Germany. A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945–1949* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995), 398; Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values*, 2003.

59 Cornell, *Youth and Communism*, 17; Luza, Radomir, *History of the International Socialist Youth Movement* (Leyden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1970), 26–27.

60 *Pravda*, 21 May 1952, 1, "Molodye bortsy za mir".

61 World Youth Day 1946, Report 2, end of November 1946, 1–7, Box WFDY 1945, Reijo Viitanen's collection, KansA.

the highlight of the “democratic” youth movement, a special forum to perform peace and friendship.⁶²



Fig. 2: Finnish participants mingling with new friends at the Bucharest festival in 1953. Source: The Finnish Labour Museum Werstas.

As a cultural mass event of the refashioned communist movement, which strove for a world-wide audience and recognition, the World Youth Festival followed the tactics of the Soviet peace project. Any direct references to communism or the USSR were avoided and instead the event was marketed with such key terms as internationalism, progress, democracy, peace and mutual understanding.⁶³ *World Youth* and *World Student News*, the organs of the WFDY and the IUS, as well as local communist papers, repeated the core idea of the festival in textual and visual representations that, during the early festivals, formed a specific narrative, which gave the festival its agenda, shape and recognizable image. The “peace and friendship narrative” depicted the World Youth Festival as a universal cultural

⁶² Letter from the International Festival Committee, signed by Peter Varga (MINSZ, Hungarian youth organisation), Luiz Azoarate (IUS), Kutty Hookham (WFDY), 21 February 1949, 2, Box 1949-, Reijo Viitanen’s collection, KansA.

⁶³ Similar remarks in Behrends, Jan, “Agitation, Organization, Mobilization. The League for Polish-Soviet Friendship in Stalinist Poland”, in *The Sovietization of Eastern Europe. New Perspectives on the Postwar period*, edited by B. Apor, P. Apor and E. Rees (Washington: New Academia Publishing, 2008), 183.

forum, which united young people all across the world.⁶⁴ The idea of universalism was emphasized in the public representations of the festival, for example by listing the international youth and student organizations that had officially taken part.⁶⁵ Each World Youth Festival was planned and designed by an International Preparatory Committee (IPC), which was formed for each festival by the WFDY council. The IPC consisted of political activists of the democratic youth and student movements, artists, athletes, young revolutionaries from Global South countries and well-known figures of cultural and political life, often Western fellow travellers.⁶⁶ Each IPC dealt with the festival program and with practical matters in cooperation with local youth organizations and communist parties, such as accommodation, transportation and visas.⁶⁷ The Komsomol and the CPSU operated in the IPC through AKSM representatives, who pushed through Soviet aims.⁶⁸ None of the World Youth Festivals were fully dictated by the Komsomol and the Communist Party; however, they had the ultimate power to control which elements, emphases and political slogans were chosen for each festival. As much as the World Youth Festival aspired to represent universal values and serve as global platform for cultural exchange, it was predominantly a Soviet cultural product.

Budapest 1949: Cold War Cultural Frontlines Take Shape

Preconditions for a global event promoting world peace shattered soon after Prague and the second World Youth Festival held in Budapest, Hungary between 14 and 28 August 1949 was celebrated in a very different world. The earlier hope for cooperation between the US and the USSR had gone and the former allies had turned into two antagonist blocs, sealed by the establishment

⁶⁴ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 137, d. 544, ll. 46–47. Direktivnye ukazaniia predstaviteliam sovetskogo studenchestva na sessii ispolkoma IUS v Pekine 27.3.–3.5.1951.

⁶⁵ RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 3, d. 512, ll. 7–10. Ob itogakh festivalia 1947.

⁶⁶ On fellow travellers, see Caute, David, *The Fellow-travellers*, 1988, 285–346; Stern, Ludmila, *Western Intellectuals and the Soviet Union, 1920–40. From Red Square to the Left Bank* (London: Routledge, 2007), 10–34, 121–122, 128–129, 204–205; David-Fox, Michael, *Showcasing the Great Experiment. Cultural Diplomacy & Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921–1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁶⁷ RGASPI, f. M-4, op. 1, d. 499, ll. 1–22, Materialy ispolkoma VFDM 1947 god; Cornell, *Youth and Communism*, 145–146.

⁶⁸ See e.g. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 128, d. 247, ll. 183–184. Direktiva predstaviteliam sovetskoi molodezhi na zasedanii ispolkoma Vsemirnoi federatsii demokraticeskoi molodezhi v iune 1947 v Moskve; idem., ll. 187–189, Ivanov Zhdanovu, Kuznetsovu i Suslovu, 26.6.1947.

of the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) in October 1947 and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in April 1949.

The same wind blew within the international youth and student world, where the frontline settled between the Soviet-sponsored “democratic youth movement” and the defenders of the “free world”. After the Prague festival, Soviet dominance and behind-the-scenes manoeuvring began to narrow the possibilities for voicing oppositional views within the WFDY and the IUS. This resulted in resignations and led to the scandalous expulsion of a WFDY secretary, the Danish Svend Beyer-Pedersen, and four Scandinavian organizations from the WFDY in 1948. The WFDY leadership accused Beyer-Pedersen and the organizations of harming the federation with their talks; however, Soviet reporting on the matter shows that the underlying reason was an irreconcilable disagreement on the role of youth and student organizations and Soviet officials’ refusal to tolerate any oppositional voices.⁶⁹ European and North-American liberal and conservative youth and student groups, which had left the Soviet dominated organizations or had not been involved with them at all, felt they needed to create competing international organizations to challenge WFDY-IUS dominance. During 1946–1950, the WFDY and the IUS gained three rivals. Socialist youth had followed their own path already in 1946 by establishing the International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY). Non-communist youth and the student bloc gained new members as the World Assembly of Youth (WAY) was founded in 1948 and the International Student Conference (ISC) with its Coordinating Secretariat (COSEC) a year after the Budapest festival in 1950. All three organizations aimed at offering a free and independent alternative to the communist WFDY and IUS. As was revealed two decades later, these organizations were not as independent as they claimed to be: the IUSY and ISC/COSEC received funds from the CIA, and the WAY functioned in association with the British foreign office.⁷⁰

The growing understanding of the Soviet and communist dominance of the WFDY and the IUS made non-communist organizations boycott the festival and caused a significant drop in participant numbers. Whilst the Prague festival had appealed to over 17,000 foreign youths, the Budapest celebration gathered only roughly 10,000 young people from abroad. The clear majority of the attendants, as

⁶⁹ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 128, d. 429, ll. 2–12. Otchet o rabote ispolkoma VFDM 18–27.2.1948. B. Buriakov, I. Voinova.

⁷⁰ Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 73, 107–108, 168–173; Paget, Karen, “From Stockholm to Leiden: The CIA’s Role in the Formation of the International Student Conference”, in *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe 1945–1960*, edited by G. Scott-Smith & H. Krabbendam (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 136–137; van Maanen, Gert, *The International Student Movement. History and Background* (The Hague: International Documentation and Information Centre, 1967), 89, 93–94.

much as 82 per cent, were communists, and approximately 90 per cent of them were from Europe.⁷¹ Around 10,400 official delegates represented 82 countries, including 1,760 from Czechoslovakia, 1,143 from France, 1,100 from Austria, 770 from Germany, 680 from Poland and 449 from Great Britain.⁷² Even though the attendance met the organizers' goal, which had been 10,000 delegates, the drop in 7,000 compared to the attendance in Prague did not look good as a signifier of the prestige of the event. In fact, a later Soviet publication enhanced the number of participants to 20,000 in order to show linear growth in participation figures.⁷³

The division of the world radically shifted the festival rhetoric. The drive for universalism, still so central in Prague, was replaced by open antagonism towards the Soviet Union's new enemies, which in Ted Hopf's terms was embodied in "the discourse of danger".⁷⁴ "The meaning of the festival is", elucidated the Komsomol head Nikolai Mikhailov in a press conference in Budapest "that it once again helped the democratic youth of the world to see its friends and its foes, to understand, which path for youth is the right one."⁷⁵ Articles in *Komsomolskaia Pravda* draw the line between "the peace forces" (pro-Soviet group) and the fascist/imperialist aggressors (those who did not support the Soviet policy). Festival participants now constituted a more definite group, which no longer consisted of just any young person: they represented "the progressive youth of the world", whose peace activism translated into the fight against fascism and "reaction".⁷⁶ Shrewdly, the peace and friendship rhetoric focused more on an active fight against the enemy than on actual ways of progressing peace. This was a characteristic feature of the Soviet peace agenda and separated it from "the passive spirit of bourgeois pacifism".⁷⁷

71 Bresslein, *Drushba! Freundschaft?*, 86–87.

72 RGASPI, f. 17, op. 137, d. 44, ll. 84–99. N. Mikhailov Stalinu, avgust 1949.

73 Plan for the work of the Secretariat for the Festival, 3, Reijo Viitanen's collection, KansA; Proposals for Festival, Executive committee of WFDY, December 1948, Paris, 2, Reijo Viitanen's collection, KansA. For fixed numbers, see *Saliut, festival! Reportazh o XII Vsemirnom festivale molodezhi i studentov!* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1986).

74 Hopf, Ted, *Reconstructing the Cold War. The Early Years, 1945–1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 254.

75 *Izvestiia*, 20 August 1949, 1, "Zaiavlenie rukovoditeli sovetskoi delegatsii tov. Mikhailova na press-konferentsii".

76 *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 14 August 1949, 1, "Boevoi smotr sil demokraticeskoi molodezhi" (editorial); *Molodoi Bol'shevik*, nro 16, August 1949, 8, M. Pesliak, "Pered vtorym kongressom demokraticeskoi molodezhi mira"; *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 30 August 1949, 1, Iu. Doriakov, "Moshchnaia demonstratsiia edinstva molodykh bortsov za mir".

77 Johnston, Timothy, *Being Soviet. Identity, Rumour, and Everyday Life under Stalin, 1939–1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 156.

In Soviet society, the shift in rhetoric towards the outside world was followed by a series of anti-Western campaigns until the end of the Stalin era.⁷⁸ These campaigns aimed at uprooting Western influence in arts and science, resulting in a xenophobic atmosphere and spy mania that particularly targeted pro-western artists and scientists, slandered as “rootless cosmopolitans” who “kowtowed to the West”.⁷⁹ The spy-mania also affected Soviet-led international organizations and their member organizations. In between friendship meetings and peace demonstrations, the Komsomol leadership was occupied with locating possible foes inside the foreign festival delegations. Nikolai Mikhailov and other Komsomol bureaucrats were on the alert for suspicious talks and behaviour that was not in line with the ideal performance of peace and friendship. In a report to Stalin, for example, Mikhailov estimated that the US, French, British, Canadian and Italian delegations had included suspicious elements, possibly even spies. One of the indicators of the existence of “reactionaries”, the report stated, had been that French sportsmen wanted to carry out the sport competitions without any political slogans.⁸⁰ In Soviet bureaucrats’ understanding, culture and politics were intertwined aspects of state-organized youth activity, where apolitical culture or individualistic approaches to life would not help the common cause. The World Youth Festival was no exception to that.⁸¹ It was seemingly hard for the Komsomol servants to understand why members of communist or “democratic” organizations, who, they thought, shared the same political and ideological goals, were not willing to use the World Youth Festival for promoting these political agendas.

The most egregious indicator of the growing connection to Soviet foreign policy and the changing situation within the WFDY-IUS was the treatment of the Yugoslav youth organization before the Budapest festival. The background to this was the break between Stalin and the Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito, who had decided to build socialism without copying the Soviet example. As a result, Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform in 1948 and its relations

78 Gorlizki, Yoram and Khlevniuk, Oleg, *Cold Peace. Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945–1953* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 31–35, 70.

79 Azadovskii, Konstantin and Egorov, Boris, “From Anti-Westernism to Anti-Semitism: Stalin and the Impact of the Anti-Cosmopolitan Campaigns on Soviet Culture”, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 4, No. 1, 2002, 66–80; Johnston, *Being Soviet*, 176–177.

80 RGASPI, f. 17, op. 137, d. 44, ll. 86–94. Ob itogakh festivalia v Budapeshte, N. Mikhailov tov. Stalinu; RGASPI, f. M-4, op. 1, d. 862, l. 1–19. Ob itogakh vtorogo kongressa vsemirnoi federatsii demokraticeskoi molodezhi i mezhdunarodnogo festivalia molodezhi i studentov, 1949; RGASPI, f. M-4, op. 1, d. 862, l. 21–24. Postanovlenie plenuma AKSM, ob itogakh vtorogo kongressa VFDY i mezhdunarodnogo festivalia molodezhi i studentov, sentiabr, 1949.

81 Fürst, Juliane, *Stalin’s Last Generation. Soviet Post-war Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 73, 200–201, 235.

with the USSR were not restored until 1955.⁸² One target of the deteriorated Soviet-Yugoslav relations was the People's Youth Organization of Yugoslavia (*Narodna Omladina Jugoslavije*).

In July 1949, shortly before the start of the Budapest festival, Nikolai Mikhailov suggested to Georgi Malenkov, a member of the Soviet Politburo, that they should not issue more than five visas to Yugoslavs in order to prevent them from organizing any provocations in the name of Tito at the festival. Mikhailov envisaged that in the best-case scenario Yugoslavians might completely skip the festival.⁸³ In the end, only one Yugoslav representative, a member of the international preparatory committee of the festival, Dževad Midžič, was issued a visa to Hungary. Midžič was arrested upon his arrival, taken under guard to the border and expelled from Hungary. The reason given for this procedure was that his visa and passport were not in order. As a consequence, Yugoslavia was not represented at the festival and the organizers did not even put their national flag on display.⁸⁴ This had long-lasting repercussions. The Yugoslavian youth and student organizations did not participate in the World Youth Festivals again until the Moscow 1957 event.

The WFDY's official explanation claimed that the Yugoslav Youth organization had not participated in the Budapest festival because Yugoslav officials had denied them the right to travel. They also claimed that Yugoslavs had not given transit visas to Albanian delegates. The Yugoslav organization attempted to demonstrate their version of the story in a leaflet entitled *Why the Yugoslavian Youth did not Take Part in the International Youth and Student Festival in Budapest*. According to the leaflet, the Yugoslav youth organization had prepared for the festival but Hungarian officials had not issued their visas in time. Furthermore, they stated that Albanians had never even requested transit-visas from Yugoslavian officials.⁸⁵

The Yugoslav case ended speculation on the nature of the World Youth Festival. On 21 August 1949, M.S. Handlers used the treatment of the Yugoslav youth organization at the Budapest festival as an example of the changes in

82 Hopf, *Reconstructing the Cold War*, 106–110; Zubok, Vladislav, *A Failed Empire. The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 73–74, 118–119; on the People's Youth of Yugoslavia see Cornell, *Youth and Communism*, 163–164.

83 RGASPI, f. 17, op. 137, d. 44, l. 70. N. Mikhailov tov. Malenkovu, 19.7.1949.

84 RGASPI, f. M-4, op. 1, d. 1005, ll. 9–27. Why the Yugoslavian Youth did not Take part in the International Youth and Student Festival in Budapest, 18 August 1949; Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 148–149, 154–156.

85 RGASPI, f. M-4, op. 1, d. 1005, ll. 9–16.

Soviet foreign policy.⁸⁶ Two days later *The New York Times* reported on the Budapest festival simply by publishing a photograph of the opening ceremony at the Pest Stadium, portraying the march of the national delegations to the stadium with a massive picture of Josef Stalin. In the background the huge portraits of Lenin, general secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party Mátyás Rákosi and, once again, Stalin decorated the stadium.⁸⁷ *The Washington Post* described the Budapest festival bluntly as communist⁸⁸ and *The Manchester Guardian* noted only the results of the World Student Games, organized by the IUS concurrently with the World Youth Festival. The writer believed that the political character of the festival would diminish the meaning of the World Student Games in the future.⁸⁹ The difference in the scale of the coverage between the Prague and Budapest festivals was huge. While in 1947 some US newspapers had considered not sending an official delegation a weakness, in 1949 they only shortly remarked the communist gathering.

The decision of major non-communist organizations and Western governments to boycott the Budapest festival meant that the USSR had unlimited possibilities for showcasing its supremacy there. The idea was no longer to show Soviet greatness vis-à-vis capitalist culture and sport, but to demonstrate its position as the bloc leader – the first among equals. This was the case especially at the festival's cultural and sport competitions. Because there were no state-sponsored teams from the capitalist countries, the competitions were diminished into intra-bloc battles between the Soviet Union and its socialist little brothers. Whereas the USSR and other socialist countries allocated vast resources to their lavish cultural program, Western festival groups were on their own, lacking state resources and unable to get the biggest stars to compete in the artistic competitions. While the Soviet cultural representatives included world-famous names such as composer Vano Muradeli and long-distance runner Vladimir Kuts, Western cultural delegations and sport teams were mostly full of unknown names.

“There were no foreigners”, commented Maya Plisetskaya on this bizarre situation in her memoirs: “With whom were we going to compete? In addition to the dancers from Moscow, there were dancers from Leningrad, Kiev, Tbilisi, and Tashkent – some ‘friendship of peoples!’”⁹⁰ Plisetskaya's recollection incisively describes the supreme Soviet presence at the festivals and the way in

⁸⁶ *The New York Times*, 21 August 1949, E5, M. S. Handlers, “What Will Stalin Do? The Question for Tito”.

⁸⁷ *The New York Times*, 23 August 1949, 14, “At the Opening of the Budapest Youth Festival”.

⁸⁸ *The Washington Post*, 29 August 1949, 3, “World Youth Festival Ended by Communists”.

⁸⁹ *The Manchester Guardian*, 5 October 1949, 2, “World Student Games”.

⁹⁰ Plisetskaya, *I, Maya*, 96–98.

which Soviet supremacy was performed. At the early festivals the Soviet competitors won almost everything there was to win, making Soviet superiority a commonly known condition at the competitions.⁹¹ “The first prize went to the USSR, of course, it was always like that”, bitterly commented a Finnish ballerina Elsa Sylvestersson on the ballet contest at the Bucharest 1953 festival.⁹² It was not until the Warsaw 1955 festival that the Komsomol leadership questioned the value of organizing the cultural competitions without serious participation from the capitalist countries.⁹³

For Hungarians the Budapest festival appeared as one of the few international gatherings with Western attendees in many years. Hungary had been allied with Nazi Germany and was occupied by the USSR at the end of the war. By the time of the festival, the country was already in the hands of the communists, who utilized the youth festival to make the image of the Party more appealing to locals and showcase Budapest as a prime example of a good socialist society. Popular opinion about the Soviet impact on Hungary varied: while some considered it as a liberator, others were more sceptical about the new communist-led regime. Although the festival was a Soviet export and a communist undertaking, the local population probably viewed a cheerful youth celebration much more positively than the previous Soviet presence they had experienced: plundering and raping soldiers at the end of the war.⁹⁴ In an account published in 1960, Hungarian poet and writer Tamas Aczel (1921–1994) and journalist Tibor Meray (1924–2020), both of whom later emigrated to the West, describe the festival and the general atmosphere in Budapest in the summer of 1949 still with fairly positive terms. “The young people exchanged ties, took snapshots of each other, and pledged never again to take up arms against each other. [. . .] The town lived and vibrated and was happy as it has never been since the war. This was the golden era. It was the epitome of the new system.”⁹⁵ Aczel and Meray maintained that some people were already suspicious of the glamorous festivities and shops full of things to buy, calling it “a ‘Potemkin prosperity’”, but many Hungarians were still fascinated by the new system

91 *IV-yi Vsemirnyi festival’ molodezhi i studentov za mir i druzhbu*, 1954, 8–19.

92 Sylvestersson, Elsa and Puomies, Anu, *Elämäni piruetit. Primaballerinan muistelmat*, Porvoo: WSOY, 1995, 133.

93 RGANI, f. 5, op, 28, d. 265, l. 83. Sekretar’ TsK VLKSM, A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, 9.12.1954.

94 Kenez, Peter, *Hungary from the Nazis to the Soviets: The Establishment of the Communist Regime in Hungary, 1944–1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 38–39, passim.; Klenjánsky, Sarolta, “‘Világ fiataljai, egyesüljete!’ Az 1949-es budapesti Világifjúsági Találkozó és a francia fiatalok részvétele a fesztiválon történeti kontextusban”, *Múltunk*, 61, No. 1, 2016, 207–232.

95 Aczel, Tamas and Meray, Tibor, *The Revolt of the Mind. A Case History of Intellectual Resistance Behind the Iron Curtain* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1960), 69–70.

and “since there was no sudden change in sight, such misgivings fell on deaf ears”.⁹⁶ Aczel’s and Meray’s account probably echoes the views of some Hungarians but not the whole population, who held varying opinions on the new regime.

The sharpened tensions in world affairs, the ubiquitous Stalin cult or even the conflicts in the youth and student organizations did not necessarily resonate with foreign participants in Budapest. Also fascinated by Budapest was Pekka Kanerva, a regional secretary of the Finnish Democratic Youth League, who had dreamed of traveling to a socialist country. Kanerva, who worked in a local textile factory, journeyed to Budapest as a member of a communist youth choir. Kanerva, who did not know any foreign languages, found a way of communicating with other foreign delegates via singing internationally known labour movement songs, folk tunes and new pieces specially composed for the World Youth Festivals, like the hymn of the democratic youth.⁹⁷ *The hymn of the democratic youth*, composed by Anatoli Novikov and written by poet Lev Oshanin for the Prague festival, was an essential element in the soundscape of the World Youth Festivals. Novikov’s hymn became familiar to young peace activists and everyone recognized the tune even if people were singing in different languages. For many attendees, singing and marching together formed an empowering experience and reinforced their feeling of solidarity. “The lyrics told about the lives of young people, they resonated with us”, explained a Finnish participant. Singing together with like-minded people formed an experience of acceptance for capitalist working-class youths, whose political activism was often questioned or criticized in their home countries.⁹⁸ What was empowering for some, sounded like propaganda to the others. John Clews, a contemporary American writer on communist propaganda, considered the WFDY hymn a powerful song with lyrics acceptable for any young person. “It is sung as the climax to rallies, with everyone holding hands, a technique that draws in the most reluctant”.⁹⁹

Maya Plisetskaya’s experiences with, and the context for, group singing tells a different story. In her recollections, singalongs and other festival related rituals appeared as coercive, even oppressive practices from which a Soviet delegate could not escape. She felt that one was obliged to participate in rituals not only in public events but also within the Soviet delegation. Every time

⁹⁶ Aczel and Meray, *The Revolt of the Mind*, 70.

⁹⁷ Kanerva, Pekka, an unpublished memoir, 2006.

⁹⁸ Koivunen, Pia, “A Dream Come True. Finns Visiting the Lands of Socialism at the World Youth Festivals in the 1940s and 1950s”, *Twentieth Century Communism*, 2012, 133–158; Myrdal, Jan, *Maj. En Kärlek* (Stockholm: En bok för alla, 1999), 30.

⁹⁹ Clews, *Communist Propaganda*, 29.

Soviet delegates sat in a bus being transported to a concert or a meeting, Plisetskaya reminisces,

we sang Novikov's hymn to youth, 'we are the children of different peoples and we live inspired by the dream of peace', a hundred times, out of tune, but with dedication. There were many spies. If you didn't burst into song, you were considered incompatible, unreliable. So whether or not you had a good voice, you'd join in the singing

Group singing, the Novikov hymn in particular, would follow Plisetskaya at different occasions in all three festivals she attended. She describes the festivals as repetitions of state orchestrated performances with ballet competition, concerts, meetings and factory visits all ended with speeches and "a show of brotherliness", where all "the participants would hold hands in friendship and sing the same Novikov hymn, ecstatically chanting, 'Stalin, Stalin, peace, peace, friendship, friendship'".¹⁰⁰ Plisetskaya's description is an incisive portrayal of what was expected of Soviet artists when they participated in the performance of peace and friendship. It was not only at the concerts, performances and shows, where the Soviet delegates represented their socialist motherland; rather, anytime they were present in public, or, as in the citation above, when they were assembled as a group, they were supposed to perform the Soviet way of living. "Half of the delegation [. . .] were eavesdropping escorts", Plisetskaya writes. "There were ears and eyes all around you. One small misstep and they'd send you home. You'd never get to go anywhere again. And they did send people home!" Sadly for Plisetskaya, after the trips to the youth festivals she missed the first episode of the opening of cultural exchange between the USSR and the West and the first foreign tours of the Bolshoi theatre because she was banned from travelling abroad until 1959.¹⁰¹

Plisetskaya and other Soviet delegates were admired by young communists from capitalist Europe eagerly wishing to meet with representatives of the Soviet Union. "People leave their places and run to the green field to be able to see the ambassadors of Soviet youth" is how *Komsomol'skaia pravda* described the welcome the Soviet delegates received at the opening ceremony at the Budapest festival.¹⁰² To the disappointment of young people from Northern and Western Europe, personal contact with Soviet youth was often not possible since the only places Soviet delegates seemed to appear in public were the concert halls, sport stadia or other venues of the official program. Therefore, Soviet

100 Plisetskaya, *I, Maya*, 97.

101 Plisetskaya, *I, Maya*, 99 and passim.

102 *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 16 August 1949, 1, "V Budapeshte otkrylsia mezhdunarodnyi festival' molodezhi".

delegates often remained distant, leaving youth from other countries looking out for the rare chance for informal encounter.¹⁰³ This was a crucial point at which Soviet cultural diplomacy failed to utilize its full potential: namely the great enthusiasm Western young people felt towards the Soviet peace project in the early Cold War. Instead of allowing free face-to-face contact, the Soviet strategy was to demonstrate the successes of the country and the socialist system with superior but distant ambassadors of Soviet socialism.

Berlin 1951: The Cultural Battle between Socialism and Capitalism

The first two World Youth Festivals had gone more or less peacefully, but the third one in Berlin in August 1951 became an unparalleled cultural clash between the Soviet Union and the United States. The Korean war that was underway during the festival had already brought the world to the brink of World War III, but placing the festival in Berlin, a divided city and the most heated spot in Cold War Europe, guaranteed the event the flavour of a battle between the superpowers. Western governments who had either ignored or boycotted the earlier rallies were forced to react now that the Soviet-sponsored celebration was taking place right under their noses. What followed was a propaganda battle, where both sides used soft and hard tactics in order to show one's own system in a favourable light.¹⁰⁴

In Berlin, Western governments were well prepared to challenge Soviet efforts to influence the opinion of world youth. Prior to the festival, some governments denied visas to young people willing to participate in the festival and West European countries forbade transit travel through their territories, including Western occupation zones in Austria. The biggest media spectacle grew around the British delegation, which faced serious difficulties during their journey to Berlin; especially in the US occupation zone in Austria, where some 300 British delegates were halted for several days before they managed to travel on to Berlin.¹⁰⁵ In the end, the group only managed to get there by the time of the closing ceremony. Back home, they published a leaflet entitled *The Innsbruck Story*, which criticized the US and French policies of hindering travel to the festival.

103 Interview with Finnish participants, 16 March 2006; RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, l. 189.

104 Viitanen, *SDNL 50*, 209–219; Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 189–200.

105 Branson, Noreen, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1941–1951* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1997), 226–227.

The strongest protest must be made at the gross infringement of travel rights, and at the brutal and humiliating treatment of these young people. For underlying the denial of the right to travel freely to Berlin, is the wider, deeper issue of the right of young British people to establish friendship with the youth of other countries – not only those with which we may agree, but also those from precisely the countries with which it is most necessary to reach understanding to-day.¹⁰⁶

The Western counter-measures and travel bans left lasting memories in participants' minds. In comparison with the other festivals, the Berlin festival narratives more often focused on the juxtaposition of East and West, “the peace-loving Soviet bloc” versus “the capitalist warmongers”. The hardships that the British delegation faced during the trip to Berlin exemplified the inconsistency between rhetoric and practice in the Western governments. A British communist Denis Hill, a member of the communist youth league and later a worker for the IUS paper *World Student News* in the 1950s, confronted Western counter-measures in France. All the traffic through Western Germany had been cancelled, and so the special trains booked for the British delegation never appeared. Hill and his party were rescued by the ocean liner *MS Batory* sent by the Polish government, and in the end, thanks to this “magnificent act of solidarity”, Hill missed only a few days of the festival.¹⁰⁷ Peter Waterman, another British worker in the *World Student News* in the 1950s, travelled on the same boat with Hill to Berlin. Waterman had just become a member in the communist youth league and was heading towards his first foreign adventure at the age of fifteen.¹⁰⁸ An interviewee from Birmingham was not as lucky. He was in the British contingent travelling through the allied and Soviet occupation zones in Austria, was stuck in the US zone for days and finally got to Berlin only to see the closing ceremonies. He could not remember much about the festival itself but the thrilling journey left a lasting memory of the Western governments' way to handle the red danger.¹⁰⁹ Before the Berlin festival had even begun, the Western governments had turned the question of free democracies vs totalitarian regimes upside down. Now it seemed that it was actually the Western democracies which were creating barriers to free mobility, not those states accused of erecting the iron curtain in the first place.¹¹⁰ We now know what the socialist regimes did to restrict travel from Eastern Europe, but the thousands

106 *The Innsbruck Story* (London: British Youth Festival Preparatory Committee, 1951), 3–25.

107 Hill, Denis, *Seeing Red, Being Green. The Life and Times of a Southern Rebel* (Brighton: Iconoclast Press, 1989), 208. Another British participant, Walter Lassally, travelled to Berlin by a Polish ship Jaroslaw Dobrowski.

108 Waterman, Peter, autobiography, chapter 1.

109 Interview with a British man, 12 December 2007.

110 Rutter, Nicholas, “The Western Wall: The Iron Curtain Recast in Midsummer 1951”, *Cold War Crossings. International Travel and Exchange across the Soviet Bloc, 1940s–1960s*, edited

of young workers and leftist students on their way to Berlin were not all aware of this in August 1951. What they experienced went hand in hand with the festival organizers' narrative about the corrupt and demoralized Western governments, who, instead of building bridges, were blocking free movement. What kind of states forbid their citizens from travelling to a peace festival?

The Berlin festival was carried out in cooperation with the Free German Youth (Freie Deutsche Jugend, FDJ),¹¹¹ the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED), the Berlin city administration, different state bodies, including the state security policy, Stasi, the international preparatory committee of the WFDY and IUS and the Soviet Control Commission. The main organizer was FDJ head Erich Honecker, who as leader of the GDR again welcomed world youth to the Berlin World Youth Festival in 1973.¹¹² While the first two World Youth Festivals had primarily displayed Soviet cultural achievements, the Berlin festival became an unparalleled showcase of Soviet geographical and cultural power. The CPSU and the Komsomol paid substantially more attention to the Berlin gathering than any other festival held outside the Soviet Union before and after 1951. Usually the Komsomol officials took care of the reporting from the festival, but in the case of Berlin, the Soviet Control Commission took the leading role. For the USSR, Berlin and East Germany were in many ways exceptional. Unlike the other people's democracies, the Soviet Union controlled only part of Germany and part of Berlin, both of which were divided between the former allies. This made Berlin a continuous scene of political, diplomatic and also cultural Cold War, the most well-known incidents being the Berlin blockade in 1948 and the erection of the Berlin wall in 1961.¹¹³

Given the special status of Germany in the Cold War, the Komsomol and the Party had considerably brighter prospects for using the World Youth Festival to consolidate Soviet cultural influence in the GDR, and they utilized that opportunity. Soviet cultural strategy in East Germany was to make a break with the Nazi past and to guide German culture toward a Soviet type of socialist culture.¹¹⁴ The World Youth Festival with parades, demonstrations and friendship meetings appeared as

by Patryk Babiracki & Kenyon Zimmer (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014), 78–106.

111 McDougal, Alan, *Youth Politics in East Germany. The Free German Youth Movement 1946–1968* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 2.

112 RGASPI, f. 17, op. 137, d. 234, l. 204. Tov. Malenkovu, N. Mikhailovu, 30.12.1950; Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 4, 11–23, 349; Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 61–93.

113 Judt, Tony, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London: Pimlico, 2007), 146, 156, 250–254.

114 Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 399, 467, 468.

an excellent opportunity to “re-educate” East German youth, to enhance Soviet influence in the country. Berliners, according to Soviet reporting, worked “voluntarily” at construction sites where new stadia, swimming pools and sport halls were being built, and approximately 100,000 Berliners gave their homes to foreign visitors for accommodation – free of charge.¹¹⁵

With 26,000 official delegates from 104 countries, and around two million East German young people, the Berlin festival became the first among the grandiose celebrations of the 1950s and started a golden age of the festival.¹¹⁶ During the two-week festivities, peace and friendship symbols covered the centre of Berlin, along with political portraits of communist leaders Stalin, Mao, Kim Il-Sung, and the GDR bosses prime minister Otto Grotewohl, president Wilhelm Pieck, and SED first secretary Walter Ulbricht (see Figure 3). Above all, the Berlin festival



Fig. 3: Posters of political leaders decorated the venues in Eastern Berlin.

Photo: Railii Laitinen.

Source: The Finnish Labour Museum Werstas.

¹¹⁵ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 137, d. 643, l. 119. TsK VKP(b) tov. Simnovu A.A., podpol’kovnik Liul’ka, 5.9.1951.

¹¹⁶ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 137, d. 544, ll. 106–112. Otchet delegatsii sovetskoi molodezhi ob itogakh sessii soveta WFDY v Berline avguste 1951; Bresslein, *Drushba! Freundschaft?*, 89–95; Krekola, Joni, “Kuumia tunteita ja kylmää sotaa nuorisofestivaaleilla”, in *Työväki ja tunteet*, edited by Elina Katainen & Pirkko Kotila (Turku: Työväen historian ja perinteen tutkimuksen seura, 2002), 254.

witnessed the peak of the Stalin cult. Not a single article in the socialist papers went by without mentioning the gratitude and love festival youth felt towards Stalin. One of the examples of his mighty position was a greeting from German youth with four million signatures asking comrade Stalin to help reunite Germany.¹¹⁷ The program, which started with a pompous opening ceremony at the newly built Walter Ulbricht stadium, consisted of 150 daily events, including the usual cavalcade of ballet and folk-dance performances, theatre spectacles, the University Summer Games, visits to factories, schools and historical monuments, such as the Soviet war memorial, as well as meetings between national delegations.¹¹⁸

War-torn Berlin was a powerful space to stage a peace festival. Despite the huge building project for the festival, there was still much left from the destruction of World War II. Peter Waterman describes Berlin at the time of the festival as “a real mess of bombsites and swirling sandstorms”.¹¹⁹ The concurrent presence of ruins and bomb shelters and the newly built shining edifices, such as *Haus der Weltjugend* (House of World Youth), brought the past and the future together, implying that by embracing the socialist way of supporting peace one could help build a better future. The temporal proximity of the war is evident in the photographs taken by festival attendees. Young people pose next to ruined houses and damaged streets (see Figure 4), which together with a shabby general outlook illuminate how destructive the war had been in Germany. Maya Plisetskaya, who had seen Berlin with her father in the 1930s, was shocked to witness the city again. “My new meeting with Berlin in 1951 at a youth festival was a striking contrast. Horrid ruins gaped everywhere. There was no city.”¹²⁰ Ruins also carried symbolic meaning, reminding of the war and the defeat of fascism, the core reason why such a festival was established.

Fascinated by the new course of the Eastern part of Germany, Anni Mikkola, a rank-and-file member of the Finnish Democratic Youth League, wrote in her travel diary that she felt like visiting a real democratic country, which was building a new society amidst the ruins.¹²¹ Mikkola, a passionate communist and a young mother, recorded her perceptions throughout her festival journey. The predominant narrative

117 RGASPI, f. 17, op. 137, d. 643, ll. 118–133. TsK VKP(b) tov. Simnovu, podpol’kovnik Liul’ka, 5.9.1951; *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 14 August 1951, 4, “Privetstvennoe poslanie nemetskoi molodezhi I. V. Stalinu”.

118 RGASPI, f. 17, op. 137, d. 544, ll. 106–107. Otchet delegatsii sovetksoi molodezhi ob itgakh sessii soveta VFDM v Berline 23–28 August 1951; Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 195–196; Anni Mikkola’s diary of the Berlin 1951 festival, Tauno and Anni Mikkola’s collection, KansA.

119 Waterman, autobiography, chapter 1, 32–33.

120 Plisetskaya, *I, Maya*, 18.

121 Mikkola’s diary.



Fig. 4: A Finnish couple posing amid ruins in Berlin in 1951.
Source: The Finnish Labour Museum Werstas.

in her diary is that of empowerment: seeing a socialist society in action, feeling solidarity with European and colonial youth, and realizing that the future belonged to communism. One of the most notable events for Mikkola, and for many other participants, was a military-style parade of FDJ members that went past the Marx-Engels Platz and was reported to have lasted up to eight hours.¹²² “The spectacle was so huge”, wrote Mikkola in an ecstatic passage, “I will never forget it. Hoorays and fraisaf, fraisaf [Freundschaft] sang in my ears for the whole eight hours. Children and elders waved with tears in their eyes”.¹²³ British communist Denis Hill, too, devoted a passage in his memoirs for this “amazing event”, in which “for hour after hour the youth of East Germany paraded before their country’s leaders and all the foreign visitors”. It was not simply peace and friendship, though, Hill notes, as many of the marchers were “chanting the name of the S.E.D. leader: Wilhelm Pieck. Also conspicuous were giant portraits of Josef Stalin. But then – we were all Stalinist in those days. It is dishonest to pretend otherwise.”¹²⁴ Keijo Savolainen, a Finnish participant

¹²² RGASPI, f. 17, op. 137, d. 544, ll. 106–107. Otchet delegatsii sovetskoi molodezhi ob itogakh sessii soveta VFDM v Berline 23–28.8.1951; Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 195–196; Mikkola’s diary.

¹²³ Mikkola’s diary.

¹²⁴ Hill, *Seeing Red*, 212.

to Berlin, considered the mass events in retrospect to have been similar to collective religious rituals and called himself and his group as “peace believers”, so strongly did they support the festival’s agenda.¹²⁵

While Soviet reports considered the march an indicator of the strength and desire for peace among German youth, Western newspapers equated the parade with the state-sponsored youth activities of the recent Nazi regime, so as to underline the totalitarian nature of the youth rally. *The Manchester Guardian* taunted that “the communist-led movements with their bands and uniforms and above all, their sense of comradeship and purpose, must be attractive to those who miss (if unconsciously) the ordered energy of the Hitler Youth”.¹²⁶ Referring to the Nazi era touched an open wound, as the FDJ and the GDR were trying to build its new identity. Because of the recent past, the FDJ was admitted to the WFDY only in 1948 and the IUS in 1949, and Germans were not even invited to the first World Youth Festival in 1947. In the eyes of the winners of the war, the FDJ first needed to show that they did not continue the Fascist line but were wholeheartedly committed to the peaceful and democratic development of Germany. The opportunity to hold the festival therefore symbolized the acceptance of the FDJ as full members of the Soviet-led youth movement.¹²⁷

During the festivities, Western non-communist groups organized cultural activities, whose purpose was to break the consensus among festival guests and to attract both foreigners and East German youth to the Western side of the city to view the wonders of capitalism. Besides free meals and cultural activities, West Berlin offered visitors a Marshall Plan exhibition, which demonstrated the latest entertainment technology with over a hundred of black-and-white TV sets spread around the city’s shop windows and with two open-air colour television projection screens at Potsdamer Platz and near the West Berlin town hall.¹²⁸ In order to prevent East German youths from visiting West Berlin, the FDJ leadership and authorities closed metro stations and circulated rumours that festival delegates who crossed the border were given poisoned food and jailed by West Berlin police. Despite the warnings from the FDJ leaders it was estimated that half a million East

125 Interview with Keijo Savolainen, 10 August 1998, by Tauno Saarela, Kansa.

126 RGASPI, f. 17, op. 137, d. 643, ll. 118–133. TsK VKP(b) tov. Simnovu, podpol’kovnik Liul’ka, 5.9.1951; *The Manchester Guardian*, 7 August 1951, 4, “Youth in Berlin”.

127 Rossow, Ina, “. . . alles nett, schön und gefühlsbetont, mit viel Absicht”. Die III. Weltfestspiele der Jugend und Studenten 1951 im Kalten Krieg”, in *Fortschritt, Norm und Eigensinn. Erkundungen im Alltag der DDR* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 1999), 18; Viitanen, *SDNL 50*, 210; Honecker, Erich, *From my Life* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1981), 160, 187–188.

128 Castillo, Greg, *Cold War on the Home Front. The Soft Power of Midcentury Design* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xvi–xvii.

Germans and festival guests went and enjoyed the capitalist counter-spectacle.¹²⁹ Anni Mikkola only admitted having been on the border between the Soviet and allied sectors, where she been able to see to the Western side of Berlin, but Peter Waterman could not resist the enticement of capitalist Berlin. “Without telling a friend, or my brother David, I broke ranks and went by U-Bahn two stops into West Berlin”.¹³⁰ Western press took full advantage of “the exodus” to West Berlin in its propaganda. *The New York Times* wrote about East Berliners who sneaked into West Berlin to see shop windows and buy things that were not available on their side.¹³¹ The British and US newspapers estimated that between 450 and 2,000 people from East Germany and the other people’s democracies asked for asylum in West Germany during the Berlin gathering, but apparently these figures were exaggerated.¹³²

The hardest measures were utilized at the end of the festival, on 15 August, when West Berlin mayor Ernst Reuter specially invited festival guests to the West. Erich Honecker and the FDJ cadres, who had failed to halt East Germans on their own side, orchestrated “a peaceful demonstration”, which at the right moment turned into a fight between the FDJ and West German police.¹³³ The Soviet version of the events told that festival delegates who had peacefully passed the border were harshly beaten by the police, resulting in arrests and more than 400 wounded. This, the report stated, more than anything, demonstrated that while the East Berlin authorities put much effort into peace work, West Berlin had instead turned into a police state. For the FDJ and the festival organization, this not so spontaneous clash was a necessary incident for propaganda purposes, and it provoked a massive media campaign in East German newspapers.¹³⁴ To

129 Krekola, “Kuumia tunteita”, 263, 267; Kotek, “Youth organizations”, 179.

130 Waterman, Peter, “Hopeful Traveller: The Itinerary of an internationalist”, *History Workshop Journal*, 35, 1993, 173.

131 *The New York Times*, 13 August 1951, 3, Kathleen McLaughlin, “3 East Zone Boys Like West Berlin”.

132 *The Manchester Guardian*, 11 August 1951, 5, “Excitement of Berlin begins to pall” (450 asylum seekers); *The New York Times*, 11 August 1951, 1, Drew Middleton, “Berlin Reds Curb Youth Trips West” (1,100 asylum seekers); *The New York Times*, 14 August 1951, 8, “Berlin Youth Rally Exposes Soviet Strength, Weakness” (2,000 asylum seekers). Reijo Viitanen estimates that only 81 people defected during the Berlin festival. Viitanen, *SDNL* 50, 216.

133 Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 197–198.

134 RGASPI, f. 17, op. 137, d. 643, l. 84–117. TsK VKP(b) tov. Grigorianu, nachal’nik otdela informatsii SKK v Germanii, pol’kovnik Kiiatkin, 21.8.1951. A later report informed that 800 were hurt in the conflict between participants and West German police, of which 150 seriously. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 137, d. 643, l. 121. TsK VKP(b) tov. Simnovu, podpol’kovnik Liul’ka, 5.9.1951; Rossow, “. . . alles nett”, 31–32; Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 197–198; Krekola, “Kuumia tunteita”, 266–267.

boost their narrative, the organizers arranged foreign festival youth visits to the hospital, where the wounded were kept. Anni Mikkola was among the visitors and wrote a heart-wrenching entry to her diary about this horrendous clash, which, in her view, was orchestrated by the enemies in West Berlin and which was directly linked to the Cold War between the US and the USSR. “We could not help weeping, even if gritting one’s teeth, when thinking about the brutality of American gangsters. This visit was the most memorable and a living proof of Truman’s love for peace”.¹³⁵ According to another eye-witness, US participant Vincent Tortora, the clash between East German youth and West German police was less dramatic and the number of wounded exaggerated.¹³⁶

In comparison with its predecessors, the Berlin festival received much publicity in international media. Western non-communist newspapers dug up every little unpleasant detail about the gathering, which was referred to as “a grandiose propaganda brawl”, “reds’ youth festival” and “a mammoth communist rally”.¹³⁷ According to *Time*, festival guests were offered rancid food and “a red commissary officer was jailed for allowing 380 tons of meat to rot”.¹³⁸ While Western newspapers were unanimous on the need to provide alternatives to communist sponsored youth activities, they were divided on the question of methods. *The Manchester Guardian* pondered whether it was worth fighting communism “in such a negative way” by preventing people from attending the festival. “To erect barriers against free movement goes against liberal principles. It augers a distrust in the majority of our own people. And it is no substitute, especially in dealing with German youth, for providing an attractive alternative to the Communist allure.”¹³⁹

Contemporary accounts and oral history show that the anti-festival measures proved to be counterproductive. Young workers from capitalist countries, who ate well at the festival canteens and did not witness any large epidemics, were angry at non-communist press for their unfair coverage. Free and democratic societies were expected not to employ oppressive methods, but fully to support

135 Mikkola’s diary.

136 Tortora, Vincent R., *Communist Close-up. A Roving Reporter Behind the Iron Curtain* (New York: Exposition Press, 1954), 118–121.

137 *Time*, 13 August 1951, 58, Issue 7, 36, “The Doves of Berlin”; *The New York Times*, 4 August 1951, 3, “Erecting Stadium for Reds’ Youth Festival in Berlin”; *The New York Times*, 14 August 1951, 8, Drew Middleton, “Berlin Youth Rally Exposes Soviet Strength, Weakness”; *The New York Times*, 13 August 1951, 1, Drew Middleton, “Million red youth parade for ‘peace’ in Eastern Berlin”; *The Manchester Guardian*, 20 August 1951, 4, “The Berlin Youth Festival. ‘Why We Believe In This’”.

138 *Time*, 20 August 1951, 32, “The Blueshirts”.

139 *The Manchester Guardian*, 7 August 1951, 4, “Youth in Berlin”.

individual freedoms. Therefore, using exactly these means seemed to confirm the story that Soviet propaganda repeatedly told about suppressive Western governments. According to Jan Myrdal (1927–2020), Swedish communist and journalist of the French edition of *World Youth*, the picture that Swedish correspondents disseminated about the festival, for example about a cholera epidemic and disputes inside the Swedish delegation, was simply “one big lie”.¹⁴⁰ Anni Mikkola laughed at the claims made by Finnish newspapers about rotten meat and noted having shaken her fist to an American helicopter that flew over the sky during a mass demonstration, joining the chant of the festival crowd: “ami go home”.¹⁴¹



Fig. 5: “Ami go home” was a common response to anti-festival activities at the Berlin festival in 1951.

Source: The Finnish Labour Museum Werstas.

The Soviet report paid much attention to the festival’s impact on local youth. According to the report, the festival had aroused feelings of pride, stimulated productivity among workers in the GDR, and cultivated “love towards Stalin” among German youth.¹⁴² The festival itself drew about two million young Germans, and it

¹⁴⁰ Myrdal, *Maj. En Kärlek*, 30.

¹⁴¹ Mikkola’s diary.

¹⁴² RGASPI, f. 17, op. 137, d. 643, ll. 122–133. TsK VKP(b) tov. Simnovu podpol’kovnik Liul’ka, 5.9.1951.

was highlighted that 25 percent of these people did not belong to the FDJ, indicating that young people from different backgrounds, not only the official youth, were interested in the event. In addition, 25,000 West Berlin youths visited East Berlin during the festival, which was, however, far from the estimated 100,000 visitors.¹⁴³

Typically for Cold War propaganda rhetoric, both sides claimed they had won the battle in Berlin.¹⁴⁴ The West focused on counting how many East Germans had defected and how many festival participants and locals had visited West Berlin, implying that instead of socialist propaganda, the youth of the world was more fascinated by capitalist prosperity. The large Western media coverage devoted to the event, nevertheless, implied that the World Youth Festival was not at all insignificant in the eyes of the Western political leaders. The Soviet side had indeed managed to create an appealing enterprise, a powerful tool to mobilize young people that could not be just ignored. As long as the West could not offer anything similar, its main weapon in the fight for young minds was trying to struggle against the success of the festival. The Western anti-festival tactics could not put an end to the celebration; they only managed to push the event into the socialist orbit. The festival continued as the largest international youth event also after Berlin, and the WFDY and the IUS remained the biggest organizations in their respective fields. In fact, the largest and the most spectacular instances of the festivals were about to come.

A New Event in the Socialist Celebration Calendar

During the early Cold War, the World Youth Festival evolved into a well-known cultural brand and a mass movement among communist and socialist youth in Europe. For Eastern Europeans, the festival came along with the process of cultural sovietization that exported Soviet cultural values, symbols, rituals and the socialist celebration calendar to people's democracies. Since 1947, in addition to May Day, the October Revolution Anniversary and Victory Day, the World Youth Festival became part of a common shared experience and cultural tradition.¹⁴⁵ The festival primarily targeted young people, but its high visibility, with decorations, posters of political leaders and slogans of the peace movement

¹⁴³ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 137, d. 643, ll. 118–133; RGASPI, f. 17, op. 137, d. 234, l. 204. Tov. Malenkovu, ot N. Mikhailov. 30.12.1950.

¹⁴⁴ Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 199.

¹⁴⁵ Rees, E. A., "Introduction. The Sovietization of Eastern Europe", in *The Sovietization of Eastern Europe. New Perspectives on the Postwar Period*, edited by Balazs Apor, Peter Apor and E. A. Rees (Washington: New Academia Publishing, 2008), 16.

seen on the streets, in public places, and in host countries' media, assured the public that the whole society was aware of the celebration. Furthermore, the impact of a World Youth Festival did not vanish after the festival was over but, especially during the post-war years, the youth festivals left tangible cultural imprints in local architecture and city landscapes, with newly built stadiums, concert halls and other public buildings.

Outside the socialist bloc countries, the youth festival became a new form of activity for leftist youths. The festival as a movement with a message and a goal united young people who had lived through the war, who were motivated by the need to contribute to securing the world peace and who saw the Soviet Union and its social system as a solution for the future of the mankind. The ideological foundation was not all that mattered, however. The secret ingredient of the World Youth Festival was that it offered something that working-class youth could not get elsewhere: an easy and inexpensive way of travelling abroad at a time when mass tourism had not yet brought cheap holidays within everybody's reach. The Komsomol together with the WFDY and IUS made sure that the festival trips were affordable, and local youth organizations took care of travel arrangements. All a young person had to do was sign up for a local festival delegation, obtaining travel documents and collecting some money for the trip. Another key reason why the World Youth Festivals became so popular among young Europeans was that in contrast to the usual meetings in the local youth association, with their endless political campaigns, the festival promised something very different: unforgettable cultural spectacles, massive parades, new friends from the other side of the globe and a chance to witness real, functioning socialist societies. The World Youth Festival thus gave a forum for those who were not interested in ordinary political activity, like British folk singer Ewan MacColl, who never used to work in the cultural committees of the Communist Party, but took part in several World Youth Festivals, since the idea of peace and friendship was so dear to him.¹⁴⁶

Festival participants' narratives often stressed the importance of the World Youth Festivals as a place where young leftist people could openly support communist and socialist ideology without the fear of being disgraced because of their political convictions. In Western and Northern European countries, communist views could make life difficult in the early years of the Cold War. Denis Hill recalled the 1950s as a time when Cold War tensions sharpened and "the communists were hounded. Many lost their jobs, others found their records marked and,

¹⁴⁶ Harker, Ben, *Class Act. The Cultural and Political Life of Ewan MacColl* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 109.

forever after, lost any prospect of promotion”.¹⁴⁷ Likewise, some of the Finnish interviewees considered that losing their job sometime after a festival trip must have had something to do with participating in a communist event.¹⁴⁸ In socialist countries, Western youths were warmly welcomed and, like the fellow travellers in the 1930s, they were pampered in luxurious settings, fed well and sometimes accommodated even in fabulous hotels.¹⁴⁹ Western delegations were received like special guests by hooraying crowds of local people, brass bands playing marches and folk dancing groups entertaining.¹⁵⁰ Experiences of being united for a common cause crystallized in mass gatherings, where the crowd of young peace enthusiasts multilingually chanted peace and friendship and sang the songs of the workers’ and communist movements. As Peter Waterman put it: “I might have been English, Jewish and middle-class but I was also a member of an international community of classes, nationalities and races.”¹⁵¹

Personal narratives, while emphasising the peaceful aspects of the youth festivals, are often silent about the relation to Stalinism, although it was hardly possible not to notice the omnipresence of the Soviet dictator. Some say they did not understand the propagandistic nature of these events or that they did not carry Stalin’s posters themselves. The overwhelming hospitality could be one reason for the silence concerning the negative aspects of socialist societies that young visitors witnessed during their journeys. Contemporary observations reveal an almost entire lack of criticism for the socialist system. For example, Anni Mikkola’s diary dogmatically followed the Soviet narrative of peace forces fighting against imperialist warmongers.¹⁵² Post-Cold War memoirs and interviews more often reflect upon perceptions of the darker sides of socialism. Peter Waterman reminisced that it was hard to express one’s negative feelings towards the socialist system. For him, the Berlin 1951 festival “was a unique and confusing experience, though in those days of cast-iron certainties, *confusion* was something Communists did not discuss or even admit to themselves.”¹⁵³ Denis Hill portrays a similar kind of self-censorship that made it difficult to realize what was happening around him. “The truth is that I did not detect such. I cannot pretend that it did not exist. I can record only the impressions which I had at the time. It is usually the case that the individual sees what he wants to see. The ideologically-committed person has a

147 Hill, *Seeing Red*, 197.

148 Interview with Finnish delegates, 16 March 2006.

149 Stern, *Western Intellectuals*, 121–122, passim.; David-Fox, *Showcasing*, 207–246.

150 Interview with Finnish delegates, 16 March 2006; Mikkola’s diary.

151 Waterman, autobiography, Chapter 1, 35.

152 Mikkola’s diary.

153 Waterman, autobiography, Chapter 1, 32–33.

sort of in-built censoring mechanism.”¹⁵⁴ The lack of criticism towards the socialist system in contemporary accounts can also be explained by the fact that the polarized Cold War world forced people to take sides. Young festival delegates might have felt that travelling almost for free was such a great opportunity that ignoring a few negatives would be a small price to pay in return, and obviously they did not wish to do the capitalists’ job for them by criticizing the very system that they supported. In a divided world, finding an acceptable third path between communism and capitalism was not an easy task. Another reason could be that processing one’s own Stalinist past is far too difficult, and therefore many have chosen to emphasize the peace-work aspect the event, thus enabling one to construct an acceptable narrative of one’s past.

For portions of the Western youths, the festival journeys were perceived as ideologically-flavoured tourist trips that were often more about having a fun time abroad than representing one’s delegation. In fact, many Western communists and leftist young people became so enthusiastic about the possibilities of these trips that they ended up attending the World Youth Festivals several times. This phenomenon was so widespread that we can talk about youth festival participation as tourism. “Youth festival tourism” refers to those young people for whom the festival trips became a way of touring around East European capitals with low costs and high-quality entertainment without any specific duty within one’s delegation. The idea of youth festival tourism comes close to the concept of “event tourism” – a form of traveling where a location is marketed with a special event, such as the Olympic Games, World’s Fair, or a religious carnival like Mardi Gras, famously celebrated in Rio de Janeiro and New Orleans.¹⁵⁵ Similarly, the World Youth Festival functioned as a way of attracting travellers to festival locations and formed a travel network with communist and socialist youth organizations. By employing the festival for tourism, young people adapted the event for their own needs, in contrast to the organizers’ ideal of representing the best talents of each country for the world.

In terms of cultural Cold War, the USSR was quicker to realize the potential of global youth and student activities than the West. Together with the WFDY and the IUS, the Komsomol created a wide network of national and local organizations, a control tool that gave the USSR a great advantage in global youth

¹⁵⁴ Hill, *Seeing Red*, 211.

¹⁵⁵ On event tourism, see Connell, Joanne and Page, Stephen, “Introduction. Progress and Prospects – An Overview of Event Tourism”, 1–18; Getz, Donald, “Event Tourism. Definition, Evolution, and Research”, 21–69, both in *Event Tourism. Critical Concepts in Tourism. Volume I: The Evolution of Event Tourism: Concepts and Approaches*, edited by Joanne Connell and Stephen Page (London: Routledge, 2010).

affairs in the early Cold War. At the time it seemed as if the USSR had gained the upper hand in global youth movement, especially as the anti-communist policies of Senator McCarthy in the US refused to employ methods that required facing and talking with communist organizations. Therefore, non-communist rival organizations, the IUSY and the ISC were covertly financed by the CIA, and the WAY was supported by the British foreign office.¹⁵⁶ Despite the polarization of the youth and student world, the international youth and student arenas were still dominated by the Soviets and the Eastern bloc until the early 1950s.¹⁵⁷ The WFDY and the IUS remained the only such organizations recognized by United Nations agencies until early 1952, and actually, even as late as 1949 the WFDY was granted consultative status B by UNESCO, which gave it an officially sanctioned mandate to speak for world youth.¹⁵⁸

It may seem paradoxical that the xenophobic and anti-cosmopolitan Stalinist dictatorship began to organize such an international and multicultural event. At the same time, as the World Youth Festivals promoted unity among young people in the name of peace and friendship, the Soviet press saw articles on Soviet patriotism and the superiority of the USSR proliferate. It was also a time of when the majority of Soviet citizens were denied access to any concrete forms of internationalism, such as travelling abroad or contact with foreigners, and even those who could travel were hardly allowed free face-to-face contact with their foreign peers. Instead of being an exception, the existence of these two incompatible dimensions, internationalism and suspicion of foreigners, was and had been characteristic of the USSR already since the 1930s and continued to be throughout the existence of the country.¹⁵⁹

The central role of internationalism in the project of building socialism in the USSR and in Eastern Europe enabled limited international mobility even in the first decades of Cold War. Therefore, in spite of restrictions on travelling and international encounters in Soviet controlled Eastern Europe, the early World Youth Festivals stimulated global communication within the socialist world, thereby constituting an exception to Akira Iriye's claim that the Cold War period marked a break in the globalization trend that had begun in the 18th Century.¹⁶⁰ Before the

156 Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 73, 107–108, 168–173; Paget, “From Stockholm”, 136–137.

157 Kotek, “Youth organizations”, 169.

158 Cornell, *Youth and Communism*, 114–115; Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 189; van Maanen, *The International Student*, 121.

159 Gilburd, Eleonory, *To See Paris and Die. The Soviet Lives of Western Culture* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 5–6.

160 Iriye, Akira, “Global History”, in *Palgrave Advances in International History*, edited by P. Finney (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), 331.

appearance of a television in every household, as Maurice Roche has argued, international mega-events served as forums of cultural globalization “in terms of the exchange, transfer and diffusion of information, values and technologies”.¹⁶¹ The World Youth Festival can also be seen in this framework, as a socialist mega-event, which fostered internationalism in concrete ways despite numerous restrictions on mobility imposed by the governments on both sides of the Cold War conflict. During the early Cold War years, the World Youth Festival became a shared collective tradition, a socialist jamboree or Interrail, where European communist and leftist youth experienced new cultures, met with foreign peers, exchanged gifts and views and simply had fun, performing their own versions of peace and friendship.

161 Roche, *Mega-events and Modernity*, 7.

2 De-Stalinizing the Festival

The death of Stalin in March 1953 marked a shift in Soviet foreign relations. The new leadership began to ease tensions between the USSR and the West and Soviet authorities increased cultural and scientific exchanges, re-launched international tourism and welcomed international exhibitions and cultural events in Moscow and Leningrad.¹ The new political climate also influenced Soviet cultural diplomacy and Komsomol's international activities. Komsomol chief Aleksander Shelepin began to reform the WFDY, the IUS and the World Youth Festival, put more emphasis on grass-roots cultural exchanges and went as far as putting forward an idea of bringing the World Youth Festival to the Soviet capital. Khrushchev's Secret Speech at the 20th Party Congress in 1956 accelerated budding criticism within the WFDY and the IUS and complicated the process of reforming the youth movement. While Shelepin and the Komsomol were ready to critically review Soviet dominance over the WFDY and the IUS, they were not willing to loosen their grip on power completely.

A Stalinist Celebration without Stalin? The Bucharest Festival in 1953

The fourth World Youth Festival was celebrated in Bucharest, Romania, from 2–16 August in 1953, five months after Stalin's death. The atmosphere was expectant. A couple of days before the beginning of the festival, the Korean War came to an end. People felt that the world was going to a more peaceful direction than before. Beating the earlier record of participants (26,000 in Berlin), the Bucharest festival gathered around 30,000 participants from 111 countries, demonstrating that the festival had not lost its popularity among communist and leftist youth and students.² Not only in regard to the number of participants, but also with its wide and glamorous program, the Bucharest gathering continued the tradition of massive and pompous youth festivals begun in Berlin two years earlier. For the Soviet-led socialist youth movement, the Bucharest

1 Fursenko, Aleksandr and Naftali, Timothy, *Khrushchev's Cold War. The Inside Story of an American Adversary* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006), 33–56, 128; Gorsuch, Anne E., *All This Is Your World. Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

2 RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 3, d. 794, l. 2. Ob itogakh IV Vsemirnogo festivalia molodezhi i studentov v Bukhareste, tov. Khrushchevu, sekretno, 19.8.1953.

festival was the first serious test in which the Komsomol and Party leaders could assess the implications of the new Soviet approach to the outside world. What would be the purpose of the World Youth Festival and the socialist youth movement in the new political climate?

For the Party and the Komsomol, the Bucharest festival appeared as a barometer of attitudes towards the USSR in Eastern Europe. Despite some anti-Soviet views that Komsomol officials reported in relation to the festival, Romania appeared a fairly stable Soviet bloc country, especially in comparison with the GDR, where the first major anti-Stalinist riot had already burst out in 1953.³ Another place of turmoil was Poland, which apparently had been scheduled to host the 1953 festival. Jan Myrdal, the Swedish communist within the WFDY apparatus, noted in his memoir that in a meeting held during February 1953, “we decided to locate the festival of the summer in Bucharest because the situation in Poland had become far too strained”.⁴ Similar information was published in *The Manchester Guardian*, which wrote that the festival was taken to Bucharest because it was considered “less dangerous” in terms of Western influences than was Warsaw, which had “many bourgeois traits, and the Polish youth daily, ‘Sztandar Młodych’, regularly draws its readers’ attention to the still prevalent sins of jitterbugging and ‘kowtowing to Western imperialist culture’ in general”.⁵ With the widespread anti-festival opposition at the Berlin festival still in mind, the Komsomol and the Party preferred to organize the festival with a view to avoiding potential confrontation and anti-Soviet activities and switched from the riskier Warsaw to Bucharest, despite Romania’s difficult economic situation.⁶ Just before the beginning of the festival in late June, the battle within the Soviet leadership heated up, as a result of which Lavrentii Beria, one of the possible successors to Stalin, was arrested and shot later the same year. Editor of *Komsomol’skaia Pravda*, Khrushchev’s son-in-law Aleksei Adzhubei, who was at that time visiting Shanghai as part of a Komsomol delegation, recalled that for a moment there was uncertainty about whether the youth festival would go ahead.

³ Tismaneanu, Vladimir, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); McDougal, Alan, *Youth Politics in East Germany. The Free German Youth Movement 1946–1968* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 49–55; Port, Andrew I., *Conflict and Stability in the German Democratic Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 70–94.

⁴ Myrdal, Jan, *Maj. En Kärlek* (Stockholm: En bok för Alla, 1999), 80.

⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, 16 February 1953, 7, “Communist Youth Festival to be held in Bucharest”.

⁶ On Romania, see Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All*.

Romanians who were on the same visit heard the good news the next day from their embassy: “there was no question of cancelling the festival”.⁷

The shift in Soviet political climate had an immediate impact on the festival’s visual language. The enormous posters of Stalin and other political leaders were gone and praise for Stalin omitted from the official speeches, which ended now with hoorays to the friendship among youth of the world.⁸ In the Soviet press, aggressive antagonism toward the Western “warmongers” and “imperialists” was replaced with proclamations of unity among world youth and its striving for a peaceful world.⁹ This change was also remarked upon by *The Manchester Guardian*, according to which the Bucharest gathering was “noticeable for the absence of the overt anti-West slogans that were the main features of its predecessors”.¹⁰ The shift was only partial though and confined to the façade of the festival and did not signal a complete break with the past.¹¹ The memory of Stalin and Stalinism continued to be present, for example, in the form of statues and pieces of fine art, as can be seen in the festival participants’ photographs, like Figure 6. Also, a number of public buildings and awards still carried his name, recalling the legacy he had left behind.

Soviet reporting on the Bucharest festival shows that the Komsomol continued to be convinced about the usefulness of the festival’s concept. Despite the heated and polarized atmosphere at the Berlin festival, the event had not lost its appeal among young people. Moreover, the festival had proved its capability in mobilizing the masses and functioning as an important forum for cultural exchange. “This kind of an event strengthens the role of democratic youth in that it mobilizes thousands of young people”, the festival report noted, and recommended that “it is worth organizing it regularly both on international and

7 Adzhubei, Aleksei, *Pelon hinta* (Helsinki: SN-kirjat, 1988), 76.

8 See e.g. *Za mir i druzhbu! Chetvertyi festival’ molodezhi i studentov* (Moscow: IZOGIZ, 1953); *IV-yi Vsemirnyi festival’ molodezhi i studentov za mir i druzhbu. Bukharest, 2–16 avgusta 1953. Materialy i dokumenty* (Bukharest: Tsentral’nyi komitet soiuza trudiashcheisia molodezhi, 1954), 3–8; *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 4.8.1953, 1; Cornell, Richard, *Youth and Communism. An Historical Analysis of International Communist Youth Movements* (New York: Walker and Company, 1965), 142–143.

9 *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 5.8.1953, 3, A. Adzhubei, B. Strel’nikov, “Nasha druzhba – velikaia sila”; *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 5.8.1953, 3, A. Adzhubei, B. Strel’nikov, “Parad iunosti”; *Pravda*, 3.8.1953, 4, P. Mel’nikov; V. Novoskol’tsev, “Chetvertyi Vsemirnyi festival’ molodezhi i studentov za mir i druzhbu”; *Pravda*, 8.8.1953, 6, “Na Vsemirnomo festivale molodezhi i studentov”; *Pravda*, 17.8.1953, 3, P. Mel’nikov; V. Novoskol’tsev, “Molodezh’ vsego mirea, vpered!”.

10 *The Manchester Guardian*, 8 August 1953, 5, “Youth Junketing at Bucharest”.

11 *The New York Times*, 16 August 1953, E5, John MacCormac, “Communist Rumania Shows Gay Façade to Visitors”.



Fig. 6: Finnish youth choir from Helsinki visiting the Stalin Park (later renamed as Herăstrău Park) in Bucharest in 1953.
Source: People's Archive, Helsinki.

national levels”.¹² In contrast to the late Stalin period, when internationalism had been for Soviet people a rhetorical tool rather than a real practice, the Bucharest festival report listed concrete measures as to how contacts and interaction with foreign countries could be amplified. The report suggested, for example, that meetings between Soviet and foreign youth groups should be increased and more young people should be invited to the USSR from abroad.¹³ This was a clear shift from the Stalin period, when the only foreign groups allowed to visit the Soviet Union were political delegations of communist youth leagues, an indicator that the attitude toward international cultural relations had started to change.

¹² RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 3, d. 794, ll. 9–13. Ob itogakh IV Vsemirnogo festivalia; see also *Komso-mol'skaia pravda*, 23 August 1953, 3, “Edinstvo, mir, druzhba”; *Pravda*, 3.8.1953, 4, P. Mel'nikov; V. Novoskol'tsev, “Chetvertyi Vsemirnyi festival' molodezhi i studentov za mir i druzhbu”.

¹³ RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 3, d. 794, l. 18. Ob itogakh IV Vsemirnogo festivalia.

The suggestion made in the report was soon acted upon. Already after the Bucharest festival hundreds of foreign delegates were offered free visits to Soviet cities. Among those lucky ones were around 2,000 Finnish participants, who received an invitation from the Komsomol and extended their festival journey with extra days in Moscow and Leningrad at the Komsomol's expense.¹⁴ The visit of the Finnish youth to the Soviet Union was somewhat unusual due to the size of the contingent as well as to the fact that foreign tourism to the Soviet Union officially started only two years later, in 1955.¹⁵ The invited group had another unusual quality: in addition to youth league activists, it included ordinary rank-and-file members and young people without any youth league or party affiliation.¹⁶ By way of context, AKSM statistics show that 615 young people from 50 countries visited Soviet Union in 1956 and 677 Soviet youths travelled to 35 different countries.¹⁷ The Finnish delegation was therefore among the first ordinary young tourists to the USSR, a sort of test group for Komsomol officials, who had mostly hosted groups of a strictly political nature. These first cautious steps paved the way for the development of youth tourism, which two decades later had become an integral part of Soviet cultural exchange with special youth hotels and the tourist agency Sputnik.¹⁸

The Soviet festival report also signalled that all was not well in the socialist bloc. The report did not go into detail, but it admitted that Romanian comrades had had some difficulties in arranging the festival. While they had managed to build new infrastructure, including a new stadium for 80,000 spectators and two open-air theatres for 7,000 spectators each, there had been difficulties managing practical matters, such as organizing catering for such a large crowd, delivering tickets to concerts and performances as well as informing participants about the festival program and its details. A more severe problem from the Soviet viewpoint were the anti-Soviet sentiments that were recorded among Romanians. The report

14 RGASPI, f. M-4, op. 1, d. 1688, ll. 100–109. Sekretariu TsK VLKSM tov. Zaluzhnomu V.I., G. Vazhenin, I. Sychenikov, 1.9.53. Spravka o rabote s delegatsiei finskoi molodezhi v period sledovaniia iz Bukharesta s IV Vsemirnogo festivalia molodezhi i studentov na Rodinu.

15 Rentola Kimmo, "From Half-Adversary to Half-Ally: Finland in Soviet Policy, 1953–58", *Cold War History*, 1, No. 1, August 2000, 82.

16 Koivunen, Pia, "A Dream Come True. Finns Visiting the Lands of Socialism at the World Youth Festivals in the 1940s and 1950s", *Twentieth Century Communism*, Vol. 4, 2012, 133–158.

17 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 364, ll. 162, 168, 171. AKSM, spisok delegatsii, kollektivov, otdel'nykh lits, priglashennykh v 1956 godu v Sovetskii soiuz; Kakie strany vyeszhali sovetskie delegatsii v 1955 godu.

18 Moshniaga, V. P., *Molodoe pokolenie internatsionalistov*, Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1972, 86, see also Kozovoi, Andrei, "They Way to a Man's Heart: How the Soviet Travel Agency 'Sputnik' Struggled to Feed Western Tourists", *Journal of Tourism History*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2014, 57–73.

mentioned that Romanian athletes had slandered Soviet sportsmen during the sports matches, and some locals had engaged in anti-Soviet talks with Western festival youths, told them lies about the political system in Romania, and spread provocative leaflets. It was also remarked that some of the capitalist delegations included persons who had attempted to establish contacts with Romanian citizens; however, the report implied that undesirable contacts were marginal, and “in general, the delegates of capitalist countries behaved well”.¹⁹ The earlier Soviet festival reports had marked neither organizational problems nor anti-Soviet sentiments among local population. The situation in Bucharest 1953 was not alarming, but it certainly made the Komsomol and party officials ponder how they would find suitable hosts for the festival in the future.

Western non-communist press paid little attention to the Bucharest festival. The reason could be diminished interest in the festival, especially since it took place so far inside the socialist bloc, but the Romanian authorities also did their best to limit the presence of foreign media. Only a few Western non-communist correspondents were granted visas to the country. *The Manchester Guardian's* correspondents were denied visas, yet, according to *The New York Times*, for the first time in four or five years four US journalists were permitted entrance into Romania.²⁰ Little interested in the festival itself, the Western correspondents exploited the chance to uncover the performance of hiding the difficult economic situation in Romania. A few months prior to the event, *The Manchester Guardian* presumed that valuable resources in Romania, which was suffering from a food shortage at the time, were being preserved for the festival “to impress the foreigners”.²¹ *The New York Times* devoted several pages unveiling “a remarkable cosmetic operation” that was made for the festival by whitewashing the most important places and filling the shops with products that had not been seen for a long time in the city. “Food suddenly became plentiful in the city, though before this conversion of Bucharest into a Potemkin Village housewives had had to line up at 5 A.M. if they wanted to be sure of getting their meagre rations.” Ubiquitous policemen and the lavish treatment of foreign guests caught the eye of Western correspondents and made them wonder whether among the festival guests there were “some with eyes sharp enough to penetrate the facade”.²²

19 RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 3, d. 794, ll. 3, 15–16. Ob itogakh IV Vsemirnogo festivalia.

20 *The Manchester Guardian*, 1 August 1953, 5, “Warming up for youth festival”; *The New York Times*, 31 July 1953, 4, “Rumania admits press”.

21 *The Manchester Guardian*, 21 May 1953, 7, “Window-dressing in Rumania”. See also Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All*, 140. Italian press published similar views on the Bucharest festival.

22 *The New York Times*, 3 August 1953, 4, “Rumania Spotless for ‘Peace’ Rally: Bucharest Dons Liberal Coat of Whitewash for 30,000”; *The New York Times*, 19 August 1953, 13, John

Who would host the next festival?

On 16 April 1954, Aleksander Shelepin approached the CPSU Central Committee with a letter. The Komsomol leader faced a problem he and his successor Nikolai Mikhailov had not encountered before. There was no host for the next World Youth Festival in the horizon. None of the socialist countries that had not yet organized the event, Poland, Bulgaria and Albania, were willing to volunteer. Yugoslavia was still out of the question, since its relations with the Soviet Union had not yet been fully normalized by the time of the decision. Suggesting a venue outside the East European socialist bloc was not a realistic option at that time. Shelepin's letter was not completely hopeless, since he had come up with a solution: the 1955 World Youth Festival could be held in Moscow.²³ Shelepin connected his suggestion to Khrushchev's foreign policy agenda and presented an international festival as a wonderful chance to polish the country's image. In his words, the festival would serve as an excellent way to "attract a new strata of young people to the struggle for peace" and "to propagate abroad the successes of the Soviet Union and its peace-loving politics". He emphasized that a number of foreign youth leaders had been waiting to see Moscow as a festival host for a long time.²⁴ Shelepin's initiative was accepted, but as a slightly revised version: the Komsomol could host a World Youth Festival in Moscow, yet not in 1955, but in 1957.²⁵

The problem of finding the 1955 host for a World Youth Festival is indicative of the broader challenges Soviet officials were facing in Eastern Europe in the post-Stalin era. Before 1954, finding a host for a World Youth Festival had been effortless. Negotiations behind the scenes between the CPSU and the respective communist parties had resulted in a location; officially, one of the delegations from Eastern Europe had stepped up as a volunteer and was then chosen to host the next festival.²⁶ In the immediate postwar years, it had not been difficult to induce Czechoslovakia and Hungary to stage a joyous mass

MacCormac, "Rumania Primps for U.S. Reporters"; *The New York Times*, 16 August 1953, E5, "Communist Rumania Shows Gay Façade to Visitors"; *The New York Times*, 23 August 1953, E8, "Rumanian Façade" (citations).

23 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 81, ll. 66–8. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, 16.4.1954.

24 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 81, ll. 66–8. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, 16.4.1954.

25 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 265, ll. 59–67. Otchet o zasedanii soveta Vsemirnoi federatsii demokraticheskoi molodezhi 9–15 avgusta v Pekine, Sergei Romanovskii; RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 454, l. 9. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, Ob itogakh sessii ispolkoma VFDM sostoiavsheisia 1–4.2.1956 v Helsinki.

26 On behind the scenes machinations within the WFDY and the IUS, see Kotek, Jöel, *Students and the Cold War* (London: Macmillan, 1996), *passim*.

celebration, and the GDR leaders had considered the hosting an honour and a sign of acceptance to the group of fraternal socialist states. By 1954, the political climate had changed to the point that staging a friendship festival did not look very appealing anymore.

Hosting a massive festival that demanded huge financial investment and state commitment was not among the top priorities in the people's democracies, which were suffering from poor economic conditions. In almost ten years, the Soviet model had not brought the promised socialist well-being to Eastern Europe, and thus mass enthusiasm toward the USSR and its system, was petering out, as shown by outbursts of popular unrest in GDR, Poland and Hungary. Furthermore, cultural policies had started to change, too, some countries being more open to new influences, some following the Stalinist model of culture more strictly.²⁷ In this new atmosphere, some of the East European communist youth leaders were more confident in resisting Soviet suggestions than before.

We do not know for sure whether the first youth festival hosts were decided without any arm-twisting; however, in the course of time, it started to look like an obligatory duty of each people's democracy should take, or as Maya Plisetskaya put it: "every two years one or another Eastern European capital city enslaved by Stalin was required to take up the baton of this diabolic charade."²⁸

Once the CPSU Central Committee decided not to host the 1955 festival in Moscow, it was announced that Warsaw would take the baton. The Komsomol and party materials do not shed light on the process of how exactly Warsaw ended up the festival host. Nikolai Diko, a Soviet representative at the IUS in the 1950s, presumed in an interview that the Polish comrades wished to organize the festival in 1955 because, knowing that Moscow would host it in 1957, they did not want to do so after the Komsomol, since "the Moscow gathering was going to be such a big thing". Diko's interview implies, exactly like Plisetskaya's comment, that there was a shared understanding of the socialist countries' responsibility to host the World Youth Festivals in turns. If the Poles had not taken the 1955 festival, they would have been lined up for the one in the future.²⁹ Soviet reports on the preparations for the Warsaw festival imply that the Polish organizers were not at all excited about the festival and were reluctant to spend any more money on it than was

²⁷ Kunakhovich, Kyrill, "In Search of Socialist Culture: Art and Politics in Krakow and Leipzig, 1918–1989", Ph.D. Diss. Princeton University, 2013, 176–179; Babiracki, Patryk, *Soviet Soft Power in Poland. Culture and the Making of Stalin's New Empire, 1943–1957* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 187–189.

²⁸ Plisetskaya, Maya, *I, Maya Plisetskaya* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 95.

²⁹ Interview with Nikolai Diko, 8 June 2008.

necessary, so even if they volunteered in 1954, they probably did it out of the sense of duty rather than of true desire.³⁰

Another curious detail that may have played a role in finding the host for the 1955 festival is that the former Komsomol boss Nikolai Mikhailov served as Soviet ambassador to Poland in 1954–55, exactly the time when the Party and the Komsomol discussed the host issue. Mikhailov knew the festival like the back of his hand and might have utilized it in his endeavour to improve Polish-Soviet relations, the number one mission he pursued in his post as an ambassador. The timing of his recall to Moscow is also intriguing. Mikhailov left his post in Poland to become the Minister of Culture in 1955, exactly when preparations for the Moscow 1957 festival began.³¹

Following the traditional procedure, the WFDY council meeting held in Beijing, China in August 1954, awarded Warsaw the fifth World Youth Festival. At the same meeting, the Soviet delegation suggested holding the sixth one in Moscow in 1957. The final decision on the Moscow festival was made at the WFDY executive committee meeting in February 1956 in Helsinki.³² So, the decision of organizing the World Youth Festival in Moscow in 1957 was made well before the secret speech or the Hungarian rising, which both gave rise to speculation about the motives behind the festival.³³ Moreover, it was not the Kremlin – as the Western press and scholars have often implied – but the Komsomol that initially planned to invite world youth to Moscow in 1957.³⁴

Shelepin's letter and the decision not to host the 1955 festival give rise to a series of questions. Considering the dominance of the Soviet Union within the festival's organizing bodies, it is peculiar that the USSR had not yet brought its most successful international brand home. Why was it, then, that Moscow did not offer to host the event in 1955, but only two years later? Until the death of Stalin, the

30 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 265, ll. 83–84. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, 9.12.1954.

31 Zaleskii, K. A., *Imperiia Stalina. Biograficheskii entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* (Moscow: Veche, 2000), 322; RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 265, l. 88. Mikhailov, N., posol' SSSR v Polshu, v TsK KPSS, 18.12. 1954; Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power*, 218–225.

32 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 265, ll. 83–84. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, 9.12.1954. Preparations for the Warsaw festival started in August 1954. Krzywicki, Andrzej, *Poststalinowski karnawał radości. V Światowy Festival Młodzieży i Studentów o Pokój i Przyjaźń, Warszawa 1955 r.* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2009), 81–83.

33 See e.g. Apeland, Nils M., *Communist Front Youth Organizations* (Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1959), 59.

34 See e.g. *The Observer*, 28 July 1957, 14, Sherman, George, “Moscow All Set for. Fund and Games”; *Life*, August 12, 1957, 22–27, Flora Lewis, “Youth from 102 Lands Swarms over Moscow”; Hixson, Walter L., *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945–1961* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1997), 159.

closed atmosphere of Soviet society had made the idea of hosting an event with tens of thousands of foreigners in Moscow all but impossible. The Soviet press and the vast amount of printed materials on the World Youth Festivals embraced the idea of internationalism and cultural exchange, yet in practice, inviting thousands of foreign participants to the USSR was not in the interests of the Komsomol or the Party during the years of anti-Western campaigns and its prevailing xenophobic atmosphere. Stalin's death opened up the possibility to host a World Youth Festival, and many foreign communists were waiting for it, but it was not the best possible option. Pivotal changes were in process in the leadership and no one knew what was going to happen in the forthcoming years.

Postponing the youth festival to 1957 was at least as much a result of pragmatism as ideological reasoning. First and foremost, organizing such a huge festival demanded a massive construction project. According to the authorities, Moscow needed a new sport stadium for at least 100,000 people, and a little more than a year to build that stadium, as well as to prepare the city for the festival, was simply not enough time.³⁵ The CPSU did not wish to put Moscow on show if it was not at its best. The capital of the first socialist country should be able to represent the strength and power of the Soviet state, and the pilgrimage for world communists should not betray the expectations of its devoted adherents, who craved to see socialist society with their own eyes. The Finnish youth league activist, Ele Alenius, saw the decision to avoid using Moscow as a host city until 1957 in exactly this light. He pointed out that “the Soviets had a necessity to succeed”, adding that it was not considered a possibility that Soviet delegates would return home without medals from a youth festival since “the Soviets were the first among equals.”³⁶ The Soviet superiority complex – the idea of the USSR being superior to the rest of the world – had been an integral part of Stalinism from the mid-1930s.³⁷ Discussions on performing and displaying Soviet culture with regard to the World Youth Festivals, especially at the Moscow 1957 festival, demonstrate that the idea of the USSR's superiority within the socialist bloc, and also vis-à-vis the capitalist West, had by no means died with Stalin.

Another notable reason why no World Youth Festivals had been organized in Moscow before 1957 was related to the wider Soviet goals concerning the

35 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 2, ll. 20–1. N. Bobrovnikov, A. Shelepin, S. Romanovskii, v TsK KPSS, 29.8.1957.

36 Interview with Ele Alenius, 21 November 2007.

37 David-Fox, Michael, “The Iron Curtain as Semi-Permeable Membrane. Origins and Demise of the Stalinist Superiority Complex”, in *Cold War Crossings. Travel and Exchange across the Soviet Bloc*, edited by P. Babiracki and K. Zimmer (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014), 14–39.

event. Initially, the Soviet aim had been to entice more members to the WFDY and IUS with the help of the World Youth Festivals, and disseminating the idea that the Soviet way of building a peaceful world was the right path. Since the main targets of the Soviet Union's aims lay outside its own borders, and Soviet youth functioned merely as messengers of socialism, bringing a World Youth Festival to Moscow was not in the best interest of the Komsomol. In the new political atmosphere, holding the youth gathering in Moscow seemed to offer numerous favourable opportunities in view of the new foreign policy agenda and the country's recent past. After the dark years of Stalinism and isolation, the USSR needed a facelift, but it was also ready to demonstrate to the world that it had recovered from World War II.³⁸

Rethinking the Soviet role within the WFDY and IUS

Finding the 1955 festival host was not the only problem Shelepin and the Komsomol encountered after Stalin's death. During the late 1940s and early 1950s the socialist youth movement had narrowed into a forum of one singular truth, where oppositional voices were labelled as reactionary, fascist and disintegrative, leading to the resignations and expulsions of numerous associations. The death of Stalin opened the floor for previously silenced opinions, which started the process of slowly unravelling the Stalinist characteristics inside the movement. The core of the critique focused on the dilemma between the self-presentation of the WFDY/IUS as universal and representative organizations and their reputation as pro-Soviet and pro-communist fronts.

In the IUS council meeting held in Moscow in August 1954, English, Canadian, Scottish and Australian delegates of their respective student unions complained that the IUS had not changed its orientation since Stalin's death, but continued to be "a communist organization", or "a Cominform branch [. . .] which the communist powers use as a weapon in the 'cold war'". In order to end the separation between communist and non-communist students, the Western representatives suggested cooperation with the ISC/COSEC, in their words, "a truly representative student body".³⁹ Another issue that niggled at relations between the Soviet and the Western student leaders was the treatment of expelled

³⁸ Zubok, Vladislav and Pleshakov, Constantine, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War. From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 76–77; Gerasimova, O. G., "K voprosu ob uchastii Moskovskogo universiteta v podgotovke i provedenii vseirnogo festivalia molodezhi i studentov 1957 g.", *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta*, Seria 8 Istorii, No. 1, 2005, 35.

³⁹ RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 265, ll. 45–46. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, 20.9.1954.

Scandinavian and Yugoslavian youth leagues. Western student activists suggested that the IUS apologize to the Yugoslavian organization and publicly admit that the expulsion of these organizations had been a mistake.⁴⁰ The Komsomol was not ready to re-think its relationship with the largest non-communist student umbrella organization. In his report to the Party Central Committee, Aleksander Shelepin rebuffed the criticism and rejoiced that the representatives of socialist countries and former colonies, as well as the progressive parts of the capitalist delegations, had “proved” these “untruthful statements” wrong “with clear facts”.⁴¹

Contradictory views on the aims and functions of youth and student organizations as well as the festival had complicated the work within the IUS and the WFDY since their inceptions. Two insiders, the Swedish Jan Myrdal and the British Peter Waterman, touched upon these differences in organizational cultures of Soviet and Western communists in their memoirs and autobiographies. London-born Peter Waterman (1936–2017) joined the communist youth league at the age of fifteen and travelled to his first World Youth Festival in 1951. Waterman worked for the IUS magazine *World Student News* in Prague as its English editor-in-chief in 1955–58, and in this capacity attended Warsaw (1955) and Moscow (1957) festivals.⁴² Waterman felt that the IUS was marginalized and self-isolated from students. “The IUS was involved in a ritual that had more to do with bloc politics, communist ideology and institutional self-affirmation than anything out there in the existing world of students.” IUS officials from the communist countries were often in their 30s or 40s, already had their student years behind them and identified themselves with the Party, not with students. This became evident in the process of producing articles for the *World Student News*. Waterman writes that it was practically impossible to change the way the magazine was made, as everything was forced to follow the same old formulations and pathetic slogans of peace and friendship.⁴³

Similar views were expressed by the Swedish communist Jan Myrdal (1927–2020), a leftist writer and son of the well-known Swedish social democrats and Nobel Laureates Alva and Gunnar Myrdal.⁴⁴ Myrdal briefly writes about his experiences as a journalist in a French edition of the WFDY paper *Jeunesse de monde*

40 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 265, ll. 46, 49. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, 20.9.1954.

41 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 265, ll. 45–51. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, 20.9.1954.

42 Waterman, Peter, “Hopeful Traveller: The Itinerary of an internationalist”, *History Workshop Journal*, 35, 1993.

43 Waterman, autobiography, 2. Chapter, 3, 5, 11, 13.

44 Myrdal, *Maj. En Kärlek*, 92.

(*World Youth*)⁴⁵ in 1953 and about his journeys to the Budapest, Berlin, Bucharest, Warsaw and Moscow festivals in an autobiographical novel.⁴⁶ Like Waterman, Myrdal reminisced that the real world of young people was very far from the paper he was working with. Especially the language of *Jeunesse de monde* was not something that would appeal to Swedish young people, but there was nothing he could do, since all the different language versions had to stick to the same formula.⁴⁷

This time Western youth and student leaders had not voiced their criticism in vain. In January 1955, Shelepin sent a long report to the CPSU central committee about the recent history of the WFDY and the IUS. The letter marked a radical turning point in accepting some of the criticism expressed by Western youth leaders. He admitted that since the very beginning the WFDY had struggled with inner disputes, and a number of youth organizations had left the federation at a very early stage. He considered the expulsion of the Scandinavian and Yugoslavian youth organizations an unwise decision, which had further strengthened the impression of the WFDY as a Cominform branch.⁴⁸ In his view, the most serious problems within the WFDY were a lack of non-communist members – a great majority of the 85 million individual members of the WFDY came from communist countries. Shelepin now agreed with the criticism voiced numerous times in the past years that many of the cultural and sporting activities did not interest young people because of their overly politicized and partisan character.⁴⁹

Another serious problem that had been sidelined during Stalin's last years was that of the disproportionate financial responsibility between the WFDY's member organizations. While the Soviet Union and the fraternal socialist countries covered the majority of the costs, the Western and Global South organizations brought to the federation only pennies. The situation was even worse than that, since the capitalist member organizations "not only leave their membership fees unpaid but also make the WFDY pay for their travelling costs to various international events," Shelepin complained.⁵⁰ Despite the ubiquitous power of the Soviets in the federation, the Komsomol had failed to engage the foreign member organizations in terms of economic responsibilities. As a solution, Shelepin

45 *World Youth* was an illustrated monthly published in Paris in English, French, Spanish, German and Russian.

46 Myrdal, *Maj. En Kärlek*.

47 Myrdal, *Maj. En Kärlek*, 107.

48 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, ll. 3–15. O deiatel'nosti Vsemirnogo federatsiia demokraticeskoi molodezhi, A. Shelepin, 18.1.1955.

49 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, ll. 3–15.

50 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, l. 10.

suggested that the federation get rid of its communist label and change its attitude toward the pro-western youth organizations, mainly the WAY and IUSY, and start cooperation afresh, in order to recruit new members from beyond the communist youth circles.⁵¹

The significance of Shelepin's letter is difficult to overemphasize. While it gives little new information on the subject, its importance lies in the fact that it signaled a transformation of discussion about the problems of the democratic youth movement in particular and international cultural relations in general. Shelepin's new narrative of the federation crucially differed from the earlier narratives of Komsomol and party documents prior to 1953. During the Stalin period, even secret Komsomol and party documents held that the WFDY (and the IUS) was a universal youth organization that appealed to young people from various backgrounds. Against this background, Shelepin's letter indicated that a more open way of discussion had become possible in the correspondence between the Komsomol leader and the CPSU CC officials. Another significant change was that Shelepin admitted the need for reforms in order to make the WFDY an organization that appealed to more than just communists by changing the official attitude toward cooperation with competing youth and student organizations.

Shelepin certainly knew what he was talking about, as he had a lengthy experience both in the Komsomol and in the WFDY/IUS. Aleksander Nikolaevich Shelepin, born in Voronezh in 1918, belonged to the generation that was educated during Stalinist terror. Shelepin joined the Komsomol in 1934, moved to Moscow in 1936 and graduated from the Institute of philosophy, history, and literature at the MGU. During World War II, Shelepin organized partisan activities around Moscow against German troops. He was said to be the man who recruited and sent the young partisan girl Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya to the front – the unfortunate girl was tortured and killed by the Germans and became one of the celebrated martyrs of the Great Patriotic War. Stalin himself heard the story and met this brave young Komsomol officer, and thus was Shelepin's career path settled.⁵² When Shelepin was assigned to the post of Komsomol leader in 1952, he had served as vice-president of the IUS already from 1946–53. He also held a post as vice-president of the WFDY in 1953–54 and again in 1957–58. As the head of Komsomol Shelepin ran the Bucharest, Warsaw and Moscow festivals and oversaw the Vienna gathering in 1959 in the capacity of the head of the KGB.

⁵¹ RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, ll. 3–15.

⁵² Mlechin, Leonid, *Shelepin* (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 2009), passim; Medvedev, Fedor, *Prosto Shelepin. Politicheskii roman vek XX* (Moscow: "Kniga i biznes", 2003), passim.

Instead of loosening the Soviet grip on the WFDY and the IUS, Shelepin maintained that the past mistakes resulted from the fact that Soviet representatives had “had not influenced the work of the WFDY actively enough” and had offered “little practical advice and critical comments to the leading bodies of the WFDY”.⁵³ In their letter, V. Stepanov, from the department of foreign communist parties of the CPSU CC, and V. Tereshkin, from the sector of international social organization of the CPSU CC, agreed with Shelepin’s thoughts on the future of the WFDY and equally emphasized the need to get rid of the organization’s overtly communist nature. With regard to the question of Komsomol’s self-criticism on its passivity towards the WFDY, Stepanov and Tereshkin added that the Komsomol CC had failed to follow the instructions of the CPSU, implying that had the Komsomol fulfilled the directives of the Party, the situation would have been different.⁵⁴

Understating the role played by the Komsomol and the AKSM in the decision-making of the WFDY contrasts starkly with the Komsomol and party documents on respective matters during the Stalin period. Reports on the meetings and the youth festivals as well as party instructions and decisions undeniably illustrate that the Komsomol could push through Soviet initiatives and that all the significant questions within the WFDY/IUS were approved of by the CPSU. Why, then, did Shelepin and the CPSU officials now want to portray the Komsomol as a passive player, rather than tearing off the mask completely?

As part of the process of de-Stalinization, this deceptive formulation of the Komsomol’s role can be understood as a strategy to preserve the legitimacy of the Komsomol and safeguard its position at the head of the “democratic youth movement”. Had Shelepin revealed the dominant role of the Komsomol, he would not only have undermined the democratic (as understood by the Soviets) nature of the WFDY, but also the Komsomol’s way of operating on the international stage. Stating that the Komsomol, which was not even the official Soviet representative in the WFDY, had ruled the federation and ignored the democratically elected bodies within it – the council and the executive committee – would have ruined the whole idea of an organization that called itself a federation of *democratic* youth. Therefore, as much as de-Stalinization was about reform, it was about maintaining the prevailing conditions.

The way Shelepin chose to solve the situation within the democratic youth movement did anything but help to alleviate the communist stigma around the Soviet fronts. In February 1955, Shelepin invited a selected group of communist

⁵³ RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, ll. 3–15.

⁵⁴ RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, ll. 29–32. V. Stepanov, V. Tereshkin, v TsK KPSS, (no date).

youth leaders to a secret meeting in Prague, including the heads of the Communist youth organizations from the people's democracies, China, Italy and France as well as the president of WFDY, Bruno Bernini, the general secretary Jacques Denis, and Sergei Romanovskii (AKSM). Shelepin's reasoning for a secret meeting was that the atmosphere inside the executive committee and the council made it "difficult to discuss openly all the questions of the work of the WFDY".⁵⁵ Another secret meeting that discussed the future of the WFDY took place in Moscow in May 1955, with the WFDY heads Bernini and Denis.⁵⁶ As a result of these meetings, it was decided that the WFDY should try to re-establish contacts with the former enemies, the WAY, the IUSY, and the Young Men's and Women's Christian Associations in order to widen its political spectrum and improve the status of the WFDY.⁵⁷ While Komsomol was ready to accept some of this criticism and was willing to reform the federation, the fact that it organized secret meetings to discuss these matters and ignored the official bodies shows, nonetheless, that the Soviets were not ready to loosen their grip on the youth movement, but wanted to ensure it would stay firmly in their hands.

The period between the Bucharest and the Warsaw festivals shows that after the ideologically orientated Stalinist years, the Komsomol and the Party had started to move towards a more pragmatic approach to international youth relations. The need for reforms was understood, yet a problem remained as to how to conduct them so that the legitimacy of the Soviet system and its methods in international cooperation would not completely collapse. On a more general level, Komsomol and party documents on the transformation of the WFDY/IUS in the mid-1950s displayed the kinds of difficulties that institutions and people met when facing up to the Stalinist past. The Komsomol, like so many other Soviet institutions and organizations, had been part of the Stalinist machinery fulfilling party orders and making the system what it was. Therefore, however needed the reforms were after Stalin, the Komsomol could not go from

55 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, l. 2–3; RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, ll. 16–27. O deiatel'nosti VFDM, A. Shelepin, 18.1.1955.

56 RGASPI, f. M-4, op. 1, d. 1923, ll. 39–42. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, 9.5.1955; RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, ll. 50–52. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, 9.5.1955.

57 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, ll. 55–68. Spravka o Vsemirnoi assamble molodezhi; RGANI f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, ll. 84–96. Vsemirnaia assotsiatsiia molodykh khristian, S. Romanovskii v TsK KPSS; Luza, Radomir, *History of the International Socialist Youth Movement* (Leyden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1970), 228; van Maanen, Gert, *The International Student Movement. History and Background* (The Hague: International Documentation and Information Centre, 1967), 123–143; Cornell, *Youth and Communism*, 104, 107.

one extreme to the other without destroying its own legitimacy. While tactics and strategies could be altered, the way the Soviets saw the meaning of democracy, as well as their ways of exercising power, had not seen any real change.

The 1955 Warsaw Festival – A Model for the Soviet Festival Organizers

The fifth World Youth Festival in the capital of Poland was celebrated from 31 July–14 August 1955, soon after the Geneva summit – the first meeting of the USA, Great Britain, France, and the USSR in ten years. In the spirit of the Geneva, *Pravda* told the Soviet audience that the meetings of young people from the five great nations, “the USSR, China, the USA, England and France, as well as youth from Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America” had demonstrated the unity of young people. In describing national exhibitions at the festival, *Pravda* mentioned the US section, which displayed a highly symbolic photograph of the moment when Soviet and American soldiers meet on the Elbe in the final stages of World War II.⁵⁸ Despite the easing of tensions in world politics, the festival rhetoric could not help criticising Western military alignment. The official slogan “For Peace and Friendship – against the aggressive imperialist military pacts”, referred to West Germany’s accession to NATO in May 1955. What the festival publications forgot to mention was the fact that the Soviet bloc had founded its own military organization, the Warsaw pact, also in May 1955.⁵⁹ Just like the previous festivals, the Warsaw gathering was closely linked to the Soviet-led peace movement. Widely known cultural figures, or fellow travellers, such as French writer Jean-Paul Sartre, German writer Thomas Mann and Spanish painter Pablo Picasso were recruited to publicize the event, and young people in the participating countries were mobilized to collect signatures for the

58 *Pravda*, 3 August 1955, 4. A. Lukovets, V. Novoskol’tsev, “Molodezh’ v bor’be za mir”; *Pravda*, 15 August 1955, 3. “Na piatom Vsemirnom festivale molodezhi i studentov”; 12 August 1955, 4. “Na piatom Vsemirnom festivale molodezhi i studentov”; *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 31 July 1955, 1, “Varshava podnimaet flag festivalia”, *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 31 July 1955, 2, Shelepin, A., “Pust’ iarko goriat nashei družby ogni”; *Smena*, 1955, No. 15, 2–3; Romanovskii, S., “Za mir i družbu”.

59 *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 31 July 1955, 1, “Varshava podnimaet flag festivalia”; Ob uchastii sovetskoi molodezhi v V Vsemirnom festivale molodezhi i studentov v Varshave, in *My – internationalisty. Dokumenty i materialy s’ezdov, konferentsii i TsK VLKSM, AKSM i KMO SSSR ob internatsionalnykh svyaziakh sovetskoi molodezhi i mezhdunarodnom molodezhnom dvizhenii (1918–1971 gg.)*, Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1972, 174.

World Peace Council's appeal to ban atomic weapons, during the run-up to the festival.⁶⁰

Given the turbulent times within the Soviet-led youth movement, the leadership of the WFDY and the IUS as well as the Komsomol were pleased with the turnout of over 26,000 participants from 115 countries. They happily welcomed some new organizations and new countries, which accepted the invitation to the festival for the first time. These included the Young Men's Christian Association, the International Citizen Service and the International League of Young Muslims as well as UNESCO, which had decided to send its representative to the festival for the first time since Prague 1947.⁶¹ The "Western" rivals, the IUSY and the WAY declined invitations on the grounds that taking part in communist activities, no matter how superficially, would mean supporting the communist line and strengthening the status of the WFDY and the IUS as the main international youth and student organizations.⁶² Reconciliation with the Yugoslav youth organization also failed. Despite an apology from the WFDY, Yugoslavs refused the invitation to Warsaw because they did not believe any real change had occurred in the WFDY and the IUS and they regarded the festival as a political manifestation of the Soviet bloc.⁶³ The failure to restore relations between Yugoslavs and the WFDY/IUS mirrored the results of the Soviet leadership's visit to Belgrade in May-June 1955, which had succeeded in economic and state-to-state issues but failed in political reconciliation.⁶⁴

60 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 265, ll. 90–92. Otchet ob itogakh zasedaniia mezhdunarodnogo podgotovitel'nogo komiteta V Vsemirnogo festivalia molodezhi i studentov za mir i druzhbu, Vienna December 17–18, 1954, V. Semichastnyi; RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, l. 103. V TsK KPSS, o nekotorykh voprosakh, svyazannykh s podgotovkoi k festivaliu v Varshave 1955; Ob uchastii komsomol'skikh organizatsii v kampanii po provedeniiu sbora podpisei pod obrashcheniem Vsemirnogo soveta mira protiv podgotovki atomnoi voyni, 22 marta 1955 g., in *My – internationalisty*, 1972, 176–178.

61 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, ll. 142–144. A. Shelepin, N. Romanov, S. Romanovskii, M. Khaldeev v TsK KPSS, 25.8.1955.

62 Luza, *History of*, 228–229.

63 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 265, l. 113. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, 25.12.1954; RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 265, l. 114–116. Bruno Bernini v Narodnoi molodezhi Iugoslavii; *The New York Times*, 25 July 1953, 2, "Belgrade Rejects a Bid"; RGASPI, f. M-4, op. 1, d. 1923, ll. 61–62. Jacques Denis i Bruno Bernini v Milian Neorich, 15.6.1955; RGASPI, f. M-4, op. 1, d. 1923, ll. 66–67. V. Nikitin v TsK KPSS i AKSM, 17.6.1955; RGASPI, f. M-4, op. 1, d. 1923, l. 84. TsK Narodnoi molodezhi Iugoslavii v TsK KPSS, 19.7.1955; RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, l. 137–140. Podgotovki k V Vsemirnomu festivaliu molodezhi i studentov, V. Nikitin, 15.7.1955.

64 Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, 31; Zubok, Vladislav, *A Failed Empire. The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 99–103.

Since Prague 1947, the World Youth Festival publications had emphasized the global and all-encompassing nature of the event. In reality, however, Global South countries had received only little attention and only a marginal number of young people from Latin America, Africa, and Asia had been able to attend. The WFDY and the IUS had organized some regional conferences, festivals and other events in the late 1940s and early 1950s, but the WFDY/IUS and the World Youth Festival had mostly operated in Europe.⁶⁵ The minor role of Global South countries was partly due to the lack of resources for travelling as well as to protracted distances, but also to the fact that the Soviet attitude toward the area was passive, even negative during the Stalin years.⁶⁶ On the eve of the Warsaw festival, Komsomol turned its eyes towards the Global South, admitting that it had “rather important political significance”.⁶⁷ This shift resulted in new countries contributing to the festival numbers, including Egypt, Kuwait, Somalia, Afghanistan, Barbados, Gambia, Liberia and Mauritania. Still, the fifth festival was, like its predecessors, predominated by Europeans, who made up nearly 83 percent of the total amount of participants, while the share of Africans (3.5) and Latin Americans (2.1) remained very low (see Table 3). Only Asians, with 11 percent, got somewhat closer to the European share.⁶⁸

Western non-communist newspapers continued to show declining interest in writing about the World Youth Festival in general.⁶⁹ While *The Manchester Guardian* mentioned the Warsaw festival only briefly in a short piece that focused on cultural exchanges generally, *The New York Times* confined its festival reporting to the sporting events and their results.⁷⁰ It seems that in the new relaxed atmosphere where the Soviets had shown an interest in reconciliation with the West, a massive

65 On the WFDY's and IUS's activities in Global South countries, see Cornell, *Youth and Communism*, 96, 116–123, 143; Altbach, Philip G. and Uphoff, Norman T., *The Student Internationals* (Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, 1973), 27.

66 See e.g. Kanet, Roger E. (ed.), *The Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) and Westad, Odd Arne, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

67 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, ll. 74–79; 101–108. Podgotovki k V Vsemirnomu festivaliu molodezhi i studentov.

68 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, ll. 182–207. P. Ponomarenko v TsK KPSS, 6.10.1955.

69 *The New York Times* mentioned the Prague festival in 1947 in 7 articles, the Budapest festival in 5, the Berlin festival in 24, the Bucharest festival in 8, and the Warsaw in 5 articles.

70 *The Manchester Guardian*, 14 February 1955, 4, “Russian Ban on Student Visits: N.U.S. ‘Not Satisfied’”; *The New York Times*, 10 August 1955, 32, “Russian Athlete Better World Weight-Lift Mark”; *The New York Times*, 6 August 1955, 11, “Russian Sets Walk Record”; *The New York Times*, 3 August 1955, 19, “Zatopek Takes Warsaw Run”; *The New York Times*, 7 August 1955, S10, “Zatopek 6th at 5,000 Meters”.

Tab. 3: Continental Representation at the Warsaw World Youth Festival in 1955.

Continent	Participants	%	Countries	%
Europe	21,621	82.9	29	25.9
East	8,403	32.2	7	6.2
West	13,218	50.7	22	19.6
North America	85	0.3	2	1.8
Latin America	550	2.1	26	23.2
Asia	2,836	10.9	23	20.5
Africa	921	3.5	30	26.8
Australia and Oceania	50	0.2	2	1.8
Total	26,063	100	112	100

Source: RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, ll. 182–184. (O khode festivalia v Varshave, TsK KPSS, 6.10.1955, P. Ponomarenko). For a comparison, see the slightly different figures compiled by Polish organizers in Krzywicki, Andrzej, *Poststalinowski karnawał radości. V Światowy Festival Młodzieży i Studentów o Półkój I Przyjaźń, Warszawa 1955 r.*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2009, 63.



Fig. 7: Dancing at the evening party in the Warsaw festival.
 Photographer: Yrjö Lintunen.
 Source: People's Archive, Helsinki.

youth gathering that had already existed for the best part of ten years would begin to look more threatening, particularly as the festival organizers now sought a wider audience beyond leftist youths. Therefore, it was in the interest of non-communist

circles in the West not to give more publicity to Soviet efforts in the realm of international cultural exchange.⁷¹

For Polish society, the Warsaw festival appeared as a similar kind of opening up to what Soviet people would experience two years later, marking one of the highlights of the Thaw and the new post-Stalin era. Initially meant as a facelift to the Polish communist regime and socialist system, the Warsaw gathering turned out to be an empowering moment for Polish youth, who met for the first time with the outside world, experiencing a flow of new cultures, artistic styles, fashion, ideas, and peers from around the world. The Warsaw festival meant a revival not only for youth but also society writ large. The encounter with the outside world clashed with the picture that the political establishment and media had provided and generated hope for a real societal change in the future.⁷² One of the preconditions that made such an open and relaxed celebration possible was that the Thaw had begun in Poland much earlier than in the USSR. By the summer of 1955, Polish authorities were ready to push the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and cultural and artistic trends and tolerate a wider spectrum of discussions than had been allowed during the Stalin era.⁷³ Tensions between the Polish organizers and Soviet officials appear in Soviet reporting on the Warsaw festival. These materials tell a story of disparity in different ways of understanding the purpose of the celebration and in the varying levels of commitment to the arrangements.

For the Komsomol and the CPSU, the Warsaw festival was of particular significance. In addition to their institutional interest in the development of the World Youth Festival in general, the Warsaw edition served as a model for the forthcoming Moscow gathering and a barometer of the general atmosphere within young people from Western and Eastern Europe. In order to learn how a World Youth Festival was arranged, the Komsomol had sent a Soviet representative to Warsaw six months prior to the spectacle to work with Polish festival organizers and the international preparatory committee.⁷⁴ The Soviet evaluation of the Warsaw gathering was mixed. On one hand, the new approach of the WFDY and the IUS had helped to mobilize new people and groups to the festival, and surprisingly many embassies in Warsaw, including those of the USA, Italy and the Netherlands, had

71 Cornell, *Youth and Communism*, 193.

72 Krzywicki, *Poststalinowski karnawał*, 301–302; Oseka, Piotr, “Święto Inne niż Wszystkie. Propaganda i Rzeczywistość V Światowego Festiwalu Młodzieży i Studentów w Warszawie”, in *Komunizm. Ideologia, System, Ludzie*, edited by T. Szarota, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton Instytut Historii PAN, 2001), 352–65.

73 Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power*, 187–189, 224–225.

74 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 265, l. 95. Zaveduiushchii sektorom otdela TsK KPSS, 31.12.1954.

taken part in the festival events in one way or another.⁷⁵ On the other hand, monitoring reports on the Polish organizers, the moods of local people and a variety of questionable activities among the foreign festival crowd exposed what a relaxed atmosphere and more open participation could bring about.

In their assessments, the Soviet ambassador to Poland, Panteleimon Ponomarenko (1902–1984), a member of Stalinist cadres, and Komsomol officials were disappointed with the lack of commitment and passiveness of their Polish comrades. They had started the preparations too late, had spread too little propaganda on the festival and had not made enough effort to widen the event's scope beyond the traditional target group of the festival.⁷⁶ The Soviets criticized in particular the Polish youth organization, the Union of Polish Youth (*Związek Młodzieży Polskiej*, ZMP), which according to ambassador Ponomarenko was too heavily influenced by the Catholic Church. In Ponomarenko's evaluation, over 70 percent of the ZMP members were religious and participated in ideological and political education very idly.⁷⁷ The ZMP, which was responsible for the organization of the Warsaw festival, was, in fact, on the brink of an organizational crisis because of a huge gap between the leadership's and the rank-and-file members' conceptions of youth organization. Moreover, the ZMP proved unable to use the festival to show itself capable of fulfilling the tasks given to it by the ruling Polish United Workers' Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, PZPR).⁷⁸

Another eye-opener was local resistance, which Soviet officials reported for the first time in such a scale. Rumours spread among Polish people that living standards would decline because of the festival and a card rationing system for food would be re-established. Trains carrying foreign delegates, and later the places where they subsequently stayed, were stoned by local "hooligans", who shouted anti-Soviet slogans and even beat up some Chinese and African delegates. West German youths met with the most fervent disrespect. One report mentioned several incidents where local people showed disgust toward their western neighbours. Germans were called Fascists, water was added to the fuel

75 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, ll. 142–144. For a short description of locals' responses, see Applebaum, Anne, *Iron Curtain. The Crushing of Eastern Europe 1944–56* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), 474–476.

76 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 52, ll. 19–28. TsK VLKSM, AKSM, 10.9.1955. Nekotorye vyvody iz podgotovki i provedeniia V Vsemirnogo festivalia molodezhi i studentov za mir i druzhbu i nekotorye predlozheniia po VI festivale v Moskve. V. Nikitin.

77 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 266, ll. 243–249. O polozhenii del v soiuzie pol'skoi molodezhi, 16.10.1954. On the local organization and role of the Polish youth league see Krzywicki, *Post-stalinowski karnawał* and Junes, Tom, *Student Politics in Communist Poland. Generations of Consent and Dissent* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 37–38.

78 Junes, *Student Politics*, 37–38.

tanks of their vehicles and, after mugging a German delegate, one of the locals had shouted: “this is to you for everything”, apparently referring to the German occupation of Poland during World War II. The report also stated that a group of West German delegates had found graves of German soldiers while visiting a wartime cemetery. When they asked about the graves, the Poles replied: “We do not know. We were in Auschwitz at that time.” A couple of minutes later, some Polish women came to the Germans shouting: “How dare you come here, get out of here, immediately”.⁷⁹

In visual terms, the Warsaw festival curiously illustrates the tensions between the Poles and the Soviets, their asynchronous Thaws and the controversial signs of sovietization. Among numerous other things, Soviet officials made a fuss about the festival decorations, which, in their view had been too “formalist” and scarce. The local organizers had sparingly used fireworks and other light effects, and compared to Bucharest, where the authorities had mobilized locals through a competition for the most finely decorated house, Poles had shown a lack of enthusiasm towards the festival. In the words of ambassador Ponomarenko, the Western tone of the decorations was one of the worst mistakes of the arrangements, having spoiled the essence of Warsaw’s architecture.⁸⁰ Speaking of architecture, Poles had more far-reaching reasons to worry about the cityscape of Warsaw. Just before the start of the festival a massive Stalinist-style skyscraper, the Josef Stalin Palace of Culture and Science (in Polish *Pałac Kultury i Nauki imienia Józefa Stalina*) was finished at the centre of Warsaw. The building, which was 231-metres high, had 42 floors and over 3,000 rooms, was presented as a Soviet gift to socialist Poland in 1952. Designed by the Soviet architect Lev Rudnev (1885–1956) and constructed by Soviet workers, the palace was not only made by the Soviets but it also had an explicit connection to Moscow’s famous series of skyscrapers, known as the seven sisters (*sem’ sester*), Stalin’s fingers or Stalinist high-rises (*stalinskie vysokiki*) built between 1948 and 1953.⁸¹ Poles hated the palace, which architecturally, politically and culturally reminded about an era that was gradually stepping aside.⁸² As a venue for a number of festival events, the Stalin palace became a central spot

79 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, ll. 198–200. P. Ponomarenko v TsK KPSS, 6.10.1955.

80 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 52, ll. 25–28. TsK VLKSM, AKSM, 10.9.1955; RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, l. 191. P. Ponomarenko v TsK KPSS, 6.10.1955; Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power*, 216.

81 Czepczyński, Mariusz, *Cultural Landscapes of Post-Socialist Cities: Representation of Powers and Needs* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008), 130; Zaborowska, Magdalena J., “The Height of (Architectural) Seduction: Reading the ‘Changes’ through Stalin’s Palace in Warsaw, Poland”, *Journal of Architectural Education*, 54, No. 4, 2001, 205–217; Dorrian, Mark, “Falling upon Warsaw: the Shadow of the Palace of Culture”, *The Journal of Architecture*, 15, No. 1, 2010, 87–103.

82 Dorrian, “Falling upon Warsaw”, 91; Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power*, 2–5, 210–211.

during the Warsaw festival (see Figure 8). A British participant, songwriter and author of children’s books, Leon Rosselson (1934–) recalls that local people did not seem to be very grateful for the gift from the Eastern neighbour. In fact, a local joke circulated among the festival youth, telling that “the best view of Warsaw was from the Palace of Culture because it was the only place in the city from where you couldn’t see the Palace of Culture.”⁸³ The controversial Stalinist monument tellingly exemplifies the dilemmas of de-Stalinization in Eastern Europe. Although the Warsaw festival, just like Bucharest one two years earlier, visually represented the post-Stalin era, free from the imagery of political leaders, the existing visual forms in public spaces, such as paintings, statues, buildings and now the Stalin palace, told their own story of the continuation of Soviet power in Poland and across Eastern Europe.



Fig. 8: Palace of Culture and Science served as the central venue for the Warsaw festival. Photographer: Pekka Luodes.

Source: The Finnish Labour Museum Werstas.

Perhaps the most useful lesson that the Warsaw festival taught Soviet officials in thinking of the forthcoming domestic festival was the effect of opening the World Youth Festival to people coming from a broader variety of political orientations. Never before had Soviet reports entailed such distrust among festival guests, not to mention remarks on anti-Soviet talks and activities. Ambassador Ponomarenko

83 Interview with Leon Rosselson, 13 April 2018.

began his criticism with the least of his worries: Western delegates who took part neither in cultural performances nor in sports competitions, but instead only sat and watched others performing. A much more severe problem, however, was constituted by the “bourgeois, even anti-Soviet elements” identified in capitalist delegations. The report lamented that almost the entire Norwegian delegation consisted of “the sons of kulaks and entrepreneurs”, and the bourgeois elements in the Finnish delegation behaved dreadfully, turning their backs to young pioneers who had come to bring them flowers. British, US and West German delegates were reported to have photographed buildings that were in bad condition to show the worst aspects of the country. They had even thrown candies and tobacco onto the streets and then photographed locals picking them up from the ground. Some of the most active provocateurs had been a group of Zionists who actively sought to meet local Jews to network and gather information about their living conditions. The report also mentioned a West German delegate who had been planning to write a letter to the Soviet ambassador on behalf of the whole German delegation, demanding that the 400,000 German POWs who were still being kept in the Soviet Union be freed. In another case, English delegates were reported to have organized an informal meeting with local Catholic youths, where, among other things, they discussed the Soviet attack on Poland in 1939. In conclusion of his report, Ponomarenko estimated that at least 50 spies had infiltrated the foreign delegations.⁸⁴

On a positive note, Ponomarenko estimated that the festival had managed to transform inaccurate conceptions of Poland. He based this interpretation on letters and postcards that foreign delegates had sent to relatives and friends abroad. According to the report, 90 percent of the letters and cards sent to France said positive things about Poland, and the figures for other countries were as impressive: Great Britain 72 percent positive, East Germany, 44, West Germany, 60, Belgium 100, Austria 97, Italy 90 and Switzerland 90. One delegate was reported to have written that “from the moment of crossing the Iron Curtain, I saw only two Russian officers. All the adults and children look fine, so they are a long way off dying from hunger or fear”. Another penned that “I got the impression that people are happy with the ‘regime’”.⁸⁵ While we cannot take the report as an accurate picture of what foreign guests thought about Poland, it is very telling as to the Soviet way of using such monitored feedback materials as proof of positive public perception. Moreover, the fact that the Soviet ambassador had seen letters and cards sent by foreign guests reveals how widespread the Soviet monitoring system was, even outside the Soviet borders.

⁸⁴ RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, ll. 182–207. P. Ponomarenko v TsK KPSS, 6.10.1955.

⁸⁵ RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, ll. 200–206. P. Ponomarenko v TsK KPSS, 6.10.1955.

The Soviet involvement in the Warsaw festival was thorough and productive. Although the World Youth Festival institution was controlled by the USSR and influenced by Soviet celebration traditions, the fact remained that the festival, or any event with such a large number of foreign guests, had never been arranged in Moscow before. Moreover, the monitoring of the moods and behaviour of local and foreign young people revealed unexpected and unwanted activities that the Soviet authorities could expect to face in Moscow, thereby providing important information for Soviet festival organizers on how to prepare for their own the festival over the next two years.

The Notorious 1956

Nikita Khrushchev's epoch-making speech at the 20th Party Congress in February 1956 marked the peak of the de-Stalinization process, both inside Soviet society and within the international communist movement. In his speech, Khrushchev attacked the personality cult of Stalin, criticized the errors he had made and described Stalin's personal guilt in the Great Terror. The revelations about the Stalinist past that Khrushchev's speech brought into the open turned out to be a particularly contentious, and responses to the speech often controversial. Many people felt simultaneously relieved that the Party had admitted Stalin's sins, yet the fact that these things had happened at all caused anger and shock.⁸⁶ In spite of the fact that more open discussion on the Stalinist past was allowed in the aftermath of the Secret Speech, it did not mean that absolutely anything could be stated publicly. Quite the contrary, the Party had not given away its authority in managing public opinion. While clear boundaries of what it was acceptable to say, and how to interpret and discuss the cult of Stalin and the terror, were blurred, the Party still had a monopoly on the "correct" way to view the past. So even if Khrushchev criticized Stalin, he did not denounce him as a leader, but rather attacked the cult that he had fostered around him and lambasted his role in groundless political repression. Most importantly, the criticism was not directed against the Party, even though Khrushchev

⁸⁶ Jones, Polly, *Myth, Memory, Trauma. Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union, 1953–70* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 17–50; Jones, Polly, "From the Secret Speech to the burial of Stalin. Real and Ideal responses to de-Stalinization", in *Dilemmas of de-Stalinization. Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era*, edited by Polly Jones (London: Routledge, 2006), 42–43; on the Secret Speech and the Party elite, see Aksiu-tin, Iurii, *Khrushchevskaia "ottepel'" i obshchestvennye nastroyeniia v SSSR v 1953–1964 gg* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), 154–171.

himself, and many others among the top leadership, had made the Stalin cult possible by their actions.⁸⁷

At the time of the 20th Party Congress, some leaders of fraternal communist parties were allowed to see the speech or parts of it. Unlike during the Stalin period, they were left without guidelines on the right way to read this important political statement.⁸⁸ The speech quickly reached the Western media, meaning that foreign communists and communist sympathizers received information about Stalin's crimes. As an immediate result of this, communist parties across Western Europe in particular lost members.⁸⁹ A number of fellow travellers began to reconsider their relationship with the USSR and with communism more widely, turning their eyes to the new socialist experiments in China and Cuba.⁹⁰ More serious for the world communist movement, though, was the fact that after the shock of Khrushchev's revelations some foreign communist parties began to question the legitimacy of Soviet hegemony. Conversely, others, such as Mao's China, refused to abandon Stalinist policies out of fear at disrupting their own domestic stability.⁹¹

The impact of the Secret Speech upon the democratic youth movement was close to lethal. The criticism that had begun after Stalin's death intensified. In addition to earlier demands to mould the communist image of both organizations and increase cooperation with pro-western organizations, Western and now also Chinese and Latin American activists voiced more clearly than before their insistence that the WFDY and IUS should become entirely independent from the Soviet Union. In a meeting of the executive committee of the IUS in Prague in June 1956, British, Italian and Chinese representatives attacked the principle of democratic centralism that had until now characterized the IUS and suggested that the post of general secretary be terminated because it above all symbolized a centralized type of decision-making, and Western activists urged that the publication of critical views on the USSR be allowed.⁹² The WFDY council meeting in August 1956

87 Jones, "From the Secret Speech", 41–63, and Schattenberg, Susanne, "'Democracy' or 'despotism'? How the Secret Speech Was Translated into Everyday Life", in *Dilemmas of de-Stalinization. Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era*, edited by Polly Jones (London: Routledge, 2006), 64–79.

88 Lovell, Stephen, *The Shadow of the War. Russia and the USSR, 1941 to the present* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 42.

89 Service, Robert, *Comrades. Communism: A World History* (London: Macmillan, 2007), 315.

90 Caute, *The Fellow-travellers*, 340–342.

91 Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All*, 136–167; Lüthi, Lorenz M. *The Sino-Soviet Split. Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 46–79.

92 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 454, ll. 49–53. Otchet zasedanii ispolkoma MSS v Prage v iunee 1956, Z. Tumanov, N. Diko.

went even further, displaying bolder and more open criticism than ever before. British, Italian, Brazilian and Polish representatives saw no reason for continuing the work of the WFDY under the new conditions. In their opinion, the international arena of the youth and students was clearly divided between East and West and this prevented, rather than assisted, the work for world peace among young people. The opinion was expressed that “if the WFDY ceases to exist it will help the integration of international cooperation between young people”.⁹³ Furthermore, the delegates presented their thoughts on why the WFDY did not need a fixed headquarters, but could base its work on national organizations, or as a Polish delegate mentioned, the WFDY could cease to be an active organization for youth and be transformed into an information centre.⁹⁴

According to Shelepin, these views signaled a spirit of liquidation (*likvidatoriskie nastroyeniia*), and he regarded Khrushchev’s speech and discussions on the personality cult as the main reasons for these views. Shelepin failed to understand, or was unable to admit, that Khrushchev’s speech had only strengthened the criticism that had been voiced within the WFDY already since 1947. Instead, he took a defensive position and assured in his report that in spite of “the spirit of liquidation”, the majority of the council delegates supported the strengthening of the WFDY, primarily meaning a deepening of Soviet influence within the federation. Shelepin, nevertheless, agreed that the organization’s constitution needed tweaking in order to recognize the new world situation, taking into account the different social systems, and promised that in the future the federation would not interfere with its member organizations’ business. In response to calls to disband the WFDY, Shelepin concluded by insisting that in spite of the organization’s past mistakes, which according to him had been caused by “the circumstances of the Cold War” (*obstanovki “kholodnoi voiny”*), the WFDY still conducted important work among youth and the right thing to do was to continue with this work.⁹⁵

Discussions within the WFDY and the IUS in 1956 aptly illustrated where the limits of de-Stalinization stood in the international communist youth and student community. Where questions involved merely tampering with the WFDY or the IUS, for example by deciding their constitutions, policy or customs, the Soviets were willing to accept reforms. But as soon as questions touched upon cooperation with or integration into Western based youth and student organizations, not to mention the suggestion of closing down the WFDY, the borders of acceptable had

⁹³ RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 454, ll. 95–100. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, 7.9.1956.

⁹⁴ RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 454, ll. 95–98. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, 7.9.1956.

⁹⁵ RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 454, ll. 96–99. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, 7.9.1956.

been crossed. While Shelepin and the Komsomol were ready to de-Stalinize the WFDY and the IUS, they were not willing to diminish Soviet domination of those bodies. Consequently, Shelepin's report meant that the embryonic freedom that had emerged following the death of Stalin suddenly came to an end when the Komsomol defeated the critics of Soviet influence, forcing the WFDY and IUS even more deeply under the control of the Soviet Union. Khrushchev pointed out in his memoirs that the fear of what would happen if Soviet society was completely opened up prevailed during those years. "We were afraid the thaw might unleash a flood, which we wouldn't be able to control and which would drown us."⁹⁶ A similar fear of losing the leadership of the communist world, and of key international organizations, now seemed to possess the minds of Shelepin and other Soviet officials involved in youth and student affairs.

The disciplined and bureaucratic culture within the CPSU and Komsomol set fairly tight limits as to what an individual official could say or do. Yet individual agency should not be completely overlooked even in the Soviet system, and therefore we should take a look at Shelepin's political thinking and its role in this process. As a product and admirer of the Stalinist system, Shelepin certainly mastered the art of "speaking Bolshevik" and well understood the rules of the power game within the Communist Party. Given the atmosphere of liberalization and Khrushchev's talk of peaceful co-existence, the political climate would have been supportive for Shelepin to push the WFDY and the IUS in a more liberal and tolerant direction had he desired to do so. But as a Stalinist-minded head of the Komsomol, "a bastion of conservatism", Shelepin pursued a less-than-liberal political line in regard to the Soviet youth and student fronts.⁹⁷ This neo-Stalinist Komsomol boss, nicknamed Iron Shurik (*zheleznyi Shurik*), did not accept mass terror and was against the cult of personality, but he admired Stalin for the Soviet victory in World War II and shared his dogmatic way of interpreting ideology.⁹⁸ After Stalin's death in 1953, Shelepin suggested renaming the youth league the All Union Lenin-Stalin Communist Youth League and *Komsomol'skaya Pravda* as *Stalin's Generation*.⁹⁹ He was, however, an intelligent and ambitious careerist who knew to put his most apparent Stalinist views aside until he had climbed high enough in the party hierarchy.

⁹⁶ Khrushchev, Nikita, *Khrushchev Remembers: the Last Testament* (Boston: Little Brown, 1974), 79; see also Taubman, William, *Khrushchev. The Man and His Era* (London: Free Press, 2003), 242.

⁹⁷ O'Connor, Kevin, *Intellectuals and Apparatchiks: Russian Nationalism and the Gorbachev Revolution* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), 52.

⁹⁸ Mlechin, Shelepin, 316–317; Medvedev, *Prosto Shelepin*, passim.

⁹⁹ Zezina, M. R., *Sovetskaia khudozhestvennaia intelligentsiia i vlast' v 1950-e–60-e gody* (Moscow: Dialog-MGU, 1999), 120–121; Zhukov, Iurii, *Stalin: Tainy vlasti*, (Moscow: Vagrius, 2005), 638.



Fig. 9: Aleksandr Shelepin giving speech at the Bucharest festival in 1953.
Source: The Finnish Labour Museum, Werstas.

While the de-Stalinization process and the reorganization of the WFDY and the IUS had been confined to a fairly small group of people in the communist world, the latter half of 1956 witnessed three conflicts that proved devastating for the Soviet Union's attempts to be viewed as a peace-loving nation. Uprisings in Poland and Hungary brought the Soviet Union's peaceful intentions into question, giving rise to a new set of circumstances in which to organize the youth festival in 1957.¹⁰⁰ While in Poland a peaceful solution could be found, the Hungarians' resistance was suppressed brutally by the Red Army. By disseminating information about de-Stalinization, Soviet leaders had opened a Pandora's Box for foreign communists to reshape their relationship with the Soviet Union. While discussions on the terror and the leader cult could be managed to some extent inside the Soviet Union, letting Eastern Europeans question Stalin's policies beyond Soviet borders ultimately shook the foundations of the Soviet bloc. The crises in Poland and Hungary showed the risks that de-Stalinization entailed in Eastern Europe. There was a danger that these local crises would spread to other members of the bloc and eventually lead to the collapse of the whole socialist system. The problem, as seen by the Soviets, was that Khrushchev had not guided his colleagues in the fraternal communist parties on how they should react to his re-evaluation of Stalin. Besides fears of the disintegration of the socialist bloc, the Soviet leadership also fretted

100 On the crises in Poland, Hungary and Egypt, see Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, 83–137.

about a possible spill-over of anti-Soviet attitudes and rebellion from Poland and Hungary to the Soviet Union.¹⁰¹

The period between Stalin's death in March 1953 and 1956 marked a pivotal time for Soviet relations with the outside world and its cultural diplomacy. Following the ethos of Khrushchev's new policy of peaceful co-existence, the Komsomol expanded relations to non-communist youth organizations, started to pursue a more deliberate strategy towards the Global South and allowed more face-to-face contact between foreigners and Soviet youth. After a fresh start, the happenings of 1956 brought extra concern to the Komsomol, especially in regard the forthcoming World Youth Festival in Moscow.¹⁰² While the Secret Speech no doubt had the most enduring impact on the socialist youth movement, the conflicts in Poland and Hungary damaged the image of the Soviet Union among foreign communist youth and students, as numerous questions addressed to Soviet people during the Moscow youth festival the following summer showed. The revelations about the Soviet past and the explosive foreign conflicts made many foreign communists and sympathizers rethink their attitudes toward the Soviet Union and to communist ideology. At the beginning of 1957, rumours about postponing or transferring the festival to another time ended up in official CIA reports.¹⁰³

Postponing the festival to the summer of 1958 was indeed discussed in the Komsomol headquarters. The events in Hungary had made prominent cultural figures leave Soviet friendship societies, and many foreign friends of the USSR, like the French singer Yves Montand, considered cancelling their journeys to the country. This all raised fears that non-communist youths would have second thoughts and withdraw from participation. Moreover, fundraising in capitalist countries would be very difficult in the aftermath of Hungary. The document pondering the various possibilities maintained that postponing the festival might be read to suggest that the USSR was preparing for a war or that the USSR and communists did feel strongly enough about the event's importance, and that as a result enemies might carry out the plans of an alternative youth event arranged

101 For an analysis of the Soviet leadership's thinking on the crises in Poland and Hungary, see Kramer, Mark, "The Soviet Union and the 1956 Crises in Hungary and Poland: Reassessments and New Findings", *Journal of Contemporary History* 33, No. 2, 1998, 163–214. See also Gati, Charles, *Failed Illusions. Moscow, Washington, Budapest, and the 1956 Hungarian Revolt* (Stanford: Stanford university Press, 2006).

102 See also Cornell, *Youth and Communism*, 144.

103 Central CIA records, CIA-RDP80-01445R0001000500001-2, International Communism and Youth: The Challenge of the 1957 Moscow Festival, 6 June 1957, 10; *Courtship of Young Minds. A Case Study of the Moscow Youth Festival* (New York: East European Student and Youth Service, 1959), 39.

by NATO forces. In the end, the arguments in support of continuing as planned won. Hosting the youth festival would demonstrate the strength of the democratic youth movement and the USSR, and it was by no means the first time, the document emphasized, that a World Youth Festival was celebrated in turbulent political circumstances.¹⁰⁴ Holding a youth gathering that manifested peaceful ideas could hardly make things any worse. In fact, something as positive as a youth festival was needed more than ever.

104 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 266, ll. 7–12. For Montand's journey to the Soviet Union, see Oiva, Mila, Salmi, Hannu and Johnson, Bruce, *Yves Montand in the USSR. Cultural Diplomacy and Mixed Messages* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

**Part II: Showcasing Khrushchev's USSR:
The Moscow 1957 Festival**

3 Making of the Moscow Spectacle

In April 1957, Komsomol chief Aleksander Shelepin reminded the members of the Soviet preparatory committee that the sixth World Youth Festival was going to take place in one of the leading powers in the world and therefore that preparations for the festival had “to be done well, with a great artistic taste.”¹ Hosting thousands of foreigners from around the world represented a new form of Soviet cultural diplomacy. Earlier the USSR had welcomed and sent abroad selected cultural, political and sports delegations, but now the whole world was invited to meet Soviet people face to face on the streets of Moscow. Welcoming the world for a visit fit Khrushchev’s foreign policy aims beautifully, epitomizing the desire to demonstrate that the talks about peaceful coexistence with the capitalist world was “not only words, but also the deeds of the Soviet government.”² The Komsomol and the Party spent months preparing Soviet people for contact with foreigners and potential exposure to information and habits that were not in agreement with the party line. Notwithstanding this political education, Soviet authorities took a conscious risk, balancing between a level of openness intended for foreign visitors and the need to control the potential consequences that the temporal openness might cause to Soviet society.

Shelepin’s Team

The Moscow celebration was by far the most important of the World Youth Festivals for the Soviet government. Never before and never since was a World Youth Festival planned so vigorously so as to attain the goals of the Kremlin’s leaders. But as much as the Moscow festival favored Khrushchev’s political agenda, the project provided a unique chance for Aleksander Shelepin to demonstrate his skills in managing such a huge international undertaking. Shelepin had been involved with the organization of the festivals since Bucharest and certainly knew how to run a world youth gathering. Khrushchev trusted his expertise and let Shelepin with his team lead the orchestra, despite the grown interest of the Soviet leadership in the festival. Vladimir Semichastnyi, Shepin’s

1 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 12, l. 130. Stenograficheskie otchet 9.4.1957; Hazan, Baruch, *Olympic Sports and Propaganda Games. Moscow 1980* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1982), 84–122.

2 Aksiutin, Iurii, *Khrushchevskaia “otpepel” i obshchestvennye nastroyeniia v SSSR v 1953–1964 gg* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), 257.

successor as the head of the Komsomol and the KGB, reminisced in his memoirs that “no governmental commission for organizing the festival was formed – everything was decided by the Komsomol Central Committee. There was only the organizing committee headed by A. N. Shelepin, and all of the ministries we needed were at our disposal.”³ In addition to Shelepin, the “leading troika” of the festival organization included Sergei Romanovskii, head of the Committee of Soviet Youth Organizations (KMO), and Nikolai Bobrovnikov, head of the Moscow city administration (Mossovet).

Giving a free hand to Shelepin and his crew did not mean, however, that the CPSU was completely detached from the organization of the festival. As Shelepin pointed out in his letter to the Party Central Committee in 1955, there were a lot of practical matters on which the Komsomol was not able to decide alone.⁴ Some of these issues were discussed in a meeting between the Party Central Committee, the KGB and the Komsomol in May 1957.⁵ The meeting focused on the public image of the festival, control over foreign guests and security issues. The list of topics included, e.g., invitations to governmental leaders and the heads of foreign communist parties; a letter to fraternal communist parties about the festival, the overall amount of foreign visitors, a meeting of young Christians, and censorship of foreign journalists during the festival.⁶ As long as the Soviet Union was presented in the right way, and when it was known who and how many foreigners would be coming over, the Komsomol was free to organize a celebration according to its own taste.

The practical work was in the hands of two preparatory bodies: the Soviet Preparatory Committee and the International Preparatory Committee. These two committees’ work was in theory divided so that the Soviet Preparatory Committee took care of practical matters in Moscow and the International Committee focused upon international matters and the festival program.⁷ In practice, the division was not so clear, and nothing was decided against the wishes of the Komsomol and the

³ Semichastnyi, Vladimir, *Bespokoinoe serdtse* (Moscow: Varius, 2002), 67–69. See also Mlechin, Leonid, *Shelepin* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 2009), 120.

⁴ RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 2, ll. 26–27. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, (no date).

⁵ RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 93. Spisok tovarishchei, priglashaemykh k sekretariu TsK KPSS tovarishchu Shepilovu po voprosam festivalia. In addition to Shelepin, Romanovskii and Bobrovnikov, the participants included CPSU Central Committee secretary I. V. Shikin, and K. F. Lunev from the KGB.

⁶ RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 92. Voprosy dlia rassmotreniia u sekretaria TsK KPSS tovarishcha Shepilova.

⁷ See e.g. *VI Vsemirnyi festival’ molodezhi i studentov. Sbornik materialov* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1958), 17–19.

Party Central Committees. The Soviet Preparatory Committee (*sovetskii podgotovitel'nyi komitet*), which started its work in October 1955, consisted of workers from the Komsomol Central Committee, the Moscow City Committee of the Komsomol, KMO, the Ministry of Culture, the Committee of Physical Culture, Mossovet, the Ministry of Transportation, the KGB, and correspondents from *Pravda* and *Komsomol'skaia pravda*.⁸ Ministries, institutions and other state and party bodies took care of their respective practical matters; for example the Ministry of Transportation organized the trains, boats and airplanes that transported festival guests from the Soviet border to Moscow and public transportation for guests inside the USSR, and the Ministry of Trade made sure that city centre shops had enough consumer goods to sell. The KGB and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MID) dealt with visa issues and controlled who could enter the country. The Moscow City Committee of the Party (*gorkom KPSS*) and the Komsomol took care of the ideological education of Soviet youth and citizens.

The International Preparatory Committee (IPC) started its work in August 1956. The IPC decided on the date, the name and the program of the festival, on the rules of the cultural and sporting competitions, the means of publicity and information, the finances and transportation.⁹ The core group consisted of Shelepin and Romanovskii as well as the leadership from the WFDY and the IUS: WFDY president Bruno Bernini (1919–2013), general secretary Jacques Denis and IUS president Jiří Pelikán (1923–99). The rest of the 155 members represented communist or democratic youth and student organizations, journalists, leftist politicians, writers and internationally respected cultural figures, such as Soviet ballerina Galina Ulanova, Soviet violinist David Oistrakh, Argentinean composer Ariel Ramirez and a British jazz musician Bruce Turner.¹⁰ For international media, the IPC was displayed as *the* festival organizing body, but according to one of the members – the

8 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 20, ll. 21–22. O podgotovitel'nykh organakh VI Vsemirnogo festivalia molodezhi i studentov, 9.5.1956; RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 5, ll. 14–16. O zavoze i razvedenii v Moskve golubei k VI Vsemirnoi festivalu, N. Bobrovnikov, Z. Mironova.

9 *Council of the World Federation of Democratic Youth: XI meeting*, Sofia, 20–23 August 1956, 12–13, 14. The International preparatory committee consisted of a presidium (made up of the WFDY and IUS presidents, representatives of the sporting competitions, representatives of the AKSM and the Komsomol Central Committee), departments of contacts (26 workers), the department for work with foreign delegations (66 workers), the department of press and information (88 workers), editorial staff of the Festival magazine (46 workers), the department of the festival programme (136 workers), the general department (177), the organizational committee of the international friendship games (25–30 workers). RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 20, ll. 1–7. Predlozheniia (no date); RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 90, ll. 32–38. Zasedanie mezhdunarodnogo podgotovitel'nogo komiteta festivalia. Moskva 14.8.1956 i 15.8.1956.

10 *Le VIe Festival Mondial de la Jeunesse et des Etudiants* (Moscow: WFDY, 1957), 204–209.

head of the Finnish festival delegation to Moscow, Ele Alenius – the IPC did not possess any real power.¹¹

Dressing Moscow in a Festival Outfit

Organizing an international event like the World Youth Festival was a grandiose enterprise, which demanded gigantic state commitment, resources and money. Around 34,000 festival delegates and an estimated 120,000 Soviet tourists and foreign journalists needed to be catered to during the two-week celebration. The festival's cultural program required fourteen theatres, five concert halls, forty clubs and seventeen open air theatres. Furthermore, museums and other tourist attractions were renovated, central streets repaired, new hotels built, and old ones reconstructed. Foreign participants were accommodated in seven hotels near the Exhibition of the Achievements of the National Economy (VDNKh) in the Ostankino district in the Northern part of the city.¹² The largest individual building project, the Lenin stadium in the Luzhniki district, began in October 1954. After the festival the stadium functioned as a venue for numerous sports events, including the Olympic Games in 1980 and a home arena for the Spartak football team.¹³

Besides the facilities for the festival, vast sums were spent on the lavish program and hosting the guests. The Soviet organizers paid for practically everything once foreign guests had crossed the border: accommodation, food, transportation, visits to nearby towns and a top-quality program of ballet, fine arts and classical music – registration fees only covered a marginal share of these costs.¹⁴ Foreign

11 Interview with Ele Alenius, 21 November 2007.

12 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 454, ll. 76–78. N. Bobrovnikov v TsK KPSS, 1.9.1956. *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 2 July 1957, 1, “Zhdem vas dorogie gosti”. For a comparison with the preparations for the Moscow Olympic Games in 1980, see Hazan, *Olympic Sports*, 106–108; Young, Simon, *Playing to Win. A Political history of the Moscow Olympic Games, 1975–1980* (Ph.D. diss., University of Winchester, 2015) and Orlov, I. B. and Popov, A. D., *Olimpiiskii perepolokh. Zabytaia sovetskaia modernizatsiia* (Moscow: Izdatel'skii dom “Vysshei shkoly ekonomiki”, 2020), 215–259.

13 TsAOPIM, f. 635, op. 13, d. 404, ll. 3, 26. Stenogramma sobranie molodezhi stolitsy, posviashchennogo stroitelstvu bol'shogo Moskovskogo stadiona v Luzhnikakh ot 20.5.1955 g; *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 26 July 1957, 3, S. Soloveichik, “Kak Genka stroil stadion”. On the construction of the Luzhniki district, see Köhring, Alexandra, “‘Sporting Moscow’: Stadia Buildings and the Challenging of Public Space in the Post-war Soviet Union”, *Urban History*, 37, No. 2, 2010, 253–271.

14 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 454, ll. 76–78. N. Bobrovnikov v TsK KPSS, 1.9.1956; RGANI, f. 5, 28, d. 454, ll. 79–92. Postanovlenie SSSR Sovet Ministrov o podgotovku k Vsemirnoi festivaliu

guests could use special food, healthcare and cleaning services provided by the hosts. These included 180 special restaurants, forty-two repair shops for clothes and shoes and fifteen for cameras and wrist watches, ninety-one places for laundry and sixty-seven medical points.¹⁵ The festival preparations also included extensive printing of various information sheets, materials on the country and Moscow, as well as souvenirs and gifts to be handed to the foreign guests.¹⁶ Practically the whole infrastructure of Moscow was available for the festival. The importance of state support in terms of infrastructure was seen at the festivals in Vienna (1959) and Helsinki (1962), where local officials refused cooperation with the festival organizers, which made for severe difficulties in finding accommodation and venues for festival events. In Vienna, hotels, concert halls and even schools were suddenly booked for the period of the festival and the majority of the participants spent their nights in tents under the open sky. In Helsinki, the organizers managed to book some schools and a few hotel rooms for honored guests, however, some 1,300 socialist delegates stayed in the ships that had transported them to Helsinki.¹⁷

Muscovites could hardly avoid the event, which was seen, heard and experienced all-around the city. Even those who did not live in or visit Moscow during the festival period encountered the preparations in media and the Festival of Youth of the USSR (*Vsesoiuznyi festival' molodezhi*), a Soviet replica festival held in different parts of the country during May 1957. According to the organizers' reports, the Moscow festival employed around one million people. Around 30,000 people worked in city centre restaurants, cafes and shops, and 1,500 workers and 3,300 interpreters were employed for the hotels.¹⁸ The Komsomol also provided special cadres (*obshchestvennye kadry*) from the ranks of the youth league and the Moscow City Committee of the CPSU to work with foreigners in hotels, restaurants and other public places, as well as 504 activists who worked as guides and interpreters for the national delegations.¹⁹ The largest group involved in the arrangements was a voluntary crop of over one million people, mostly Komsomol

molodezhi i studentov; RGALI, f. 2329, op. 3, d. 592, ll. 2–12. Ministerstvo kultury SSSR v sviazi s podgotovkoi k festivaliu, N. Pavlovskii, 13.2.1957.

15 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 179. N. Bobrovnikov, A. Shelepin, S. Romanovskii v TsK KPSS, 30.8.1957.

16 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 84, ll. 110–118. L. Sav'ialova, (no date).

17 Krekola, Joni, *Maaailma kylässä 1962. Helsingin nuorisofestivaali* (Helsinki: Like, 2012), 181–182; Hautmann, Hans, “Die Weltjugendfestspiele 1959 in Wien”, *Mitteilungen der Alfred Klahr Gesellschaft*, Jahrgang 1999, [http://www.klahrgesellschaft.at/Mitteilungen/Hautmann_3_99.html] (Accessed 19 February 2008).

18 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, ll. 178, 180. N. Bobrovnikov, A. Shelepin, S. Romanovskii v TsK KPSS, 30.8.1957.

19 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 84, ll. 110–118.

members, who decorated the city.²⁰ According to the general plan, all residential buildings in the city centre were to be decorated with posters, flowers and other festival emblems. A selection of 61 different posters was printed in an excess of 990,000 copies. Added to this were 250,000 bouquets of flowers and 2.3 million other decorative details. The grand designer of the decorations was the Soviet painter Mikhail Ladur, an experienced choreographer of mass festivals.²¹

As had been the case with the earlier festivals in the people's democracies, the organizers used the decorating process as a way to mobilize locals in the preparatory work. In the centre of Moscow, citizens were expected to embellish the facades and balconies of their apartments. The organizers provided "Mosknigotorg" shops with the decorations and expected that people would voluntarily buy them. Some did, but apparently many Muscovites were not interested in the decoration project.²² Discontent at the request to decorate residential buildings were not reported to authorities; what was reported, however, were rumors claiming that because of the festival services for ordinary Muscovites would deteriorate, epidemics would be unavoidable, and that most students would be forced to leave Moscow for the period of the festival.²³ Similar fears had been reported on the eve of the Warsaw festival. The Poles, too, had been scared that the Warsaw festival would decrease their standard of living. Moscow was indeed not the first socialist country to undergo such a huge build-up for a World Youth Festival. Virtually every festival host prior to Moscow had built something new or, during the late 1940s, reconstructed what the war had destroyed. As with Berlin in 1951, the whole state and society were involved in the process. For the Soviet Union the task was, however, somewhat easier than it had been for Hungary or East Germany, which in 1948 and 1951 had to dress up their capital so soon after they had been ruined in the war.²⁴ Moscow was allowed a longer time to recover and, unlike the other socialist countries, the Soviet organizers could choose a suitable time for holding the festival.

20 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 177. N. Bobrovnikov, A. Shelepin, S. Romanovskii v TsK KPSS, 30.8.1957.

21 GARF, f. 5446, op. 91, d. 299, ll. 18–20. Lozungi dlia oformleniia g. Moskvy (no date). On the decoration project see also *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 1 February 1957, 4, S. Startseva, "Paskaz o nedalekom budushchem".

22 TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 113, d. 23, ll. 107–109. O massovom oformlenii dlia okon i balkonov.

23 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 88. O nekotorykh voprosakh VI Vsemirnogo festivala molodezhi i studentov, 31.5.1957.

24 RGASPI, f. 17, op. 137, d. 546, l. 13. Tov. Grigor'ian v TsK VKP(b), 12.4.1951; Rossow, Ina, "' . . . alles nett, schön und gefühlsbetont, mit viel Absicht'. Die III. Weltfestspiele der Jugend und Studenten 1951 im Kalten Krieg", in *Fortschritt, Norm und Eigensinn. Erkundungen im Alltag der DDR* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 1999), 22.

Moscow at the time of the festival looked flamboyant indeed; but whom did the Soviet authorities wish to impress? A central goal in making Moscow an attractive venue for an international gathering was to demonstrate to Western and Global South visitors that the socialist system was capable of generating as good a life as capitalism, and thus could offer a competitive alternative to the capitalist lifestyle.²⁵ The festival gave the authorities a chance to prove that some impressions that foreigners seemed to have about the country were wrong. For example, at the Warsaw 1955 youth festival, an American youngster had asked where Soviet youth bought their clothes, because according to his local newspaper, Russians “are only able to make bear skin boots and vodka”.²⁶ To react and amend stereotypical images of this kind, the Soviet organizers craved to show that the Soviet Union was neither the backward Tsarist Russia nor the self-isolated and hostile dictatorship of Stalin, but a modern, technically advanced and culturally appealing country – a socialist option for a modern citizen.

In making Moscow an appealing city by foreign standards, Soviet organizers paid special attention to “cultured service” (*kul'turnoe obsluzhivanie gostei*). Culturedness in services and trade was not a new phenomenon. As Julie Hessler has shown, culturedness was linked with the idea of socialist modernity and was discussed among trade managers already in the 1930s and again after post-war reconstruction.²⁷ Cultured service was not precisely defined in the context of the Moscow festival, but it clearly meant more than just being helpful and friendly toward customers. One speaker in a meeting of the Moscow City Committees of the Komsomol, the Party and the trade unions maintained that customer service at the time of the festival had to be at the same level as anywhere else in the world. He gave an example that a hairstylist had to be prepared to make a haircut like his or her foreign colleagues. Another important element in preparing cultured service was learning foreign languages, although, as one speaker commented, it was already too late to try to study a new language in such a short

25 On Soviet and East European consumer culture, see Crowley, David and Reid, Susan E., “Introduction: Pleasures in Socialism?”, in *Pleasures in Socialism. Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc*, edited by David Crowley and Susan E. Reid (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 3–51; Stitzel, Judd, *Fashioning Socialism. Clothing, Politics, and Consumer Culture in East Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 22–25, 66–67; Bren, Paulina and Neuberger, Mary (eds), *Communism Unwrapped. Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

26 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 265, l. 87. V pomoshch propagandistu, lektoru, dokladchiku i agitatoru VI Vsemirnogo festivalia molodezhi i studentov za mir i druzhbu.

27 Hessler, Julie, “Postwar Normalisation and its Limits in the USSR: The Case of Trade”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 53, No. 3, 2001, 457–463.

time.²⁸ Furthermore, an idea was expressed that people working in cafeterias should learn how to make good coffee and that meat, fresh fruits and vegetables should be on display during the festival.²⁹ Moreover, *Komsomol'skaia pravda* told that book stores offered phrasebooks in various languages as well as classics of Russian literature in English translation.³⁰ The efforts seemed to be worthwhile. On the first day of the festival, *The New York Times* paid attention to the selection of foreign papers, noting that *The New York Times*, *The Times* and *The Daily Herald* were on display at the festival headquarters in the hotel Moskva.³¹ The Soviet festival organizers wished to show Moscow as being just as well provided for as other major European cities. Even though they knew the Soviet Union and even Moscow lagged behind the West in terms of consumer goods and service culture, they attempted to offer their foreign guests services that were comparable to those provided by the capitalist metropolises.

The project of polishing the socialist capital for the festival also entailed a cleansing of “undesirable social elements” from the streets since they broke with the idealized picture of socialist society. Months before the festival started, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) cleared Moscow and its surrounding regions of hooligans, gypsies, prostitutes, waifs and thieves.³² These people, branded “anti-social, parasitical elements”, stood in stark contrast to the idea of the loyal and hard-working new Soviet person and gave a distorted picture of a socialist society, where such problems as criminality, unemployment and prostitution were not supposed to exist anymore.³³

As a result of the campaign against undesirable social elements in the spring of 1957, crime diminished by 8.4 percent compared to the same period in 1956, and hooliganism too went down. Between 15 March and 1 June, altogether 16,104 people were deported from Moscow and 6,300 people were deported

28 TSAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 7, ll. 111–113. Stenogramma soveshchaniia partiinogo, khoziastvennogo, profsoiuznogo i komsomol'skogo aktiva goroda Moskvyy, 20.6.1957.

29 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 13, ll. 112, 122–123. Stenogramma sovet'skogo podgotovitel'nogo komiteta, 18.6.1957.

30 *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 19 July 1957, 3, “Khoroshii podarok”.

31 *The New York Times*, 28 July 1957, 3, “The Times in Moscow. Edition First Put on Sale at Youth Festival Office”.

32 GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, ll. 150–155. Dudorov, MVD, v otdel administrativnykh organov TsK KPSS, tov. Zootukhinu 8.7.1957.

33 On parasitical elements in Soviet society, see Fitzpatrick, Sheila, “Social Parasites. How Tramps, idle youth, and busy entrepreneurs impeded the soviet march to communism”, *Cahiers du monde russe*, 47, No. 1, 2006, 377–408; and on hooligans see LaPierre, Brian, *Hooligans in Khrushchev's Russia, Defining, Policing, and Producing Deviance during the Thaw* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012).

from Moscow oblast. Furthermore, almost 70,000 people were apprehended by the police. Most of them were detained in prisons and children's homes, or else listed for follow-up talks.³⁴ For example, prostitutes were exiled from Moscow and, like many other undesired people, they were not allowed to come closer than 100 km to the capital. Many ended up in communities 101 km from Moscow, but some also moved farther from the capital. This was not the whole picture, though. According to Mark Popovskii, at the same time that the Party asked the militia to clean the city of potential prostitutes, the KGB established a brothel in a quiet suburb to provide services for foreign business visitors. Anatolii Rubinov also links the festival to the emergence of prostitution, which, according to him, did not officially exist in the USSR in 1957, but which everyone knew about after the festival.³⁵ Soviet Ukrainian writer Vasili Grossman described the cleansing before the festival in his short story "Eternal rest". In the story, the Vagankovo cemetery, which was going to be visited by some foreign Christians was cleared of people whom, in the authorities' view, would have harmed the picture of Moscow.

The people who suffered most were the beggars: the hunch-backed, those who sang, those who whispered, those who shook, disabled veterans from the Great Patriotic War, the blind, the retarded. They were taken straight from the cemetery and packed off in lorries. Anyone who came into the cemetery office during this period was told, "Come back again once the festival's over".³⁶

In order to keep the streets safe and clean during the festival, MVD put thousands of officers to work. Altogether approximately 60,000 people took care of public order and social control.³⁷ These included 11,275 militiamen, 8,589 officers from the MVD, 32,000 members of voluntary "police-assistance brigades" (BSM), 6,000 caretakers (*dvornikov*), 4,000 students from militia schools in other cities, and around 16,500 Komsomol volunteers. Militiamen received special training for their jobs, as well as – and this was apparently part of the campaign for "cultured service" – upgrading the outward appearance of their officers.³⁸

³⁴ GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, ll. 150–155. Dudorov, MVD, v otdel administrativnykh organov TsK KPSS, tov. Zootukhinu V. V., 8.7.1957.

³⁵ Popovskii, Mark, *Tretii lishnii* (London: Overseas Publications, 1985), 309–311, 332. Rubinov, Anatolii, *Intimnaia zhizn Moskvy* (Moscow: "Ekonomika", 1991), 224–225.

³⁶ Grossman, Vasili, *The Road* (London: MacLehose Press, 2011).

³⁷ GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, ll. 427, 429. Dudorov, 17.8.1957.

³⁸ GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, ll. 153–154. Dudorov, MVD, v otdel administrativnykh organov TsK KPSS, tov. Zootukhinu V. V., 8.7.1957; GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, ll. 427, 429. Dudorov, 17.8.1957.

Cleansing public spaces of undesired elements was not an uncommon practice in the Soviet Union. Already in the 1930s, socially alien groups were removed from city centres during times of public celebration.³⁹ Similar methods were employed in the preparations for the Moscow Olympic Games in 1980, when Soviet officials removed thousands of drunks and troublemakers to the suburbs. Contrary to 1957, when the dissident movement had not yet emerged, in 1980 the most famous non-conformists, physicist Andrei Sakharov among them, were also exiled for the duration of the games.⁴⁰

In Western non-communist accounts on the Moscow festival, and among the memoirs of contemporary observers, there was a tendency to underline the face-lifting that took place for the World Youth Festivals. An American diplomat, Raymond Garthoff, who was able to follow the repair work before the festival, stated that the beautification was undoubtedly “required by the normally incredibly sad state of perpetual disrepair that cloaked a picturesque city in ragged drabness.” In his words, “goods were withheld from the stores for a number of weeks and then released immediately prior to the festival, so that the shelves would be stocked and people would freely spend the money that they hadn’t been able to spend whilst there were few goods available.”⁴¹

Did these preparations amount to some sort of Potemkin village, an oft-employed metaphor for Soviet methods of impressing visitors by selecting, hiding and staging propitious scenes for visitors? Was the Moscow festival a Khrushchevian Potemkin village made to fool foreign youngsters about the “true face” of the country? In the 1920s, Soviet propagandists developed very particular ways to receive visitors and to showcase the great socialist experiment, including pre-arranged schedules, selected places to visit and careful guidance for the visitors.⁴² The festival preparations bear some resemblance to these methods, but as we shall see later, Soviet organizers allowed visitors and locals much freer access and possibilities to take a glimpse behind the scenes

39 Rolf, Malte, “Working Towards the Centre: Leader Cults and Spatial Politics in Pre-war Stalinism”, in *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships. Stalin and the Eastern Bloc*, edited by Balazs Apor; Jan C. Behrends, Polly Jones and E. A. Rees (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 147.

40 Caraccioli, Jerry and Caraccioli, Tom, *Boycott: Stolen Dreams of the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games* (Washington D.C.: New Chapter Press, 2008), 172; Hazan, *Olympic Sports*, 200.

41 Garthoff, Raymond, *Journey through the Cold War: A Memoir of Containment & Coexistence* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 34.

42 For a discussion on the Potemkin village in relation to Western visitors to the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s, see David-Fox, Michael, *Showcasing the Great Experiment. Cultural Diplomacy & Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921–1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 7–8, 102–103, 126–127, 141, 183.

than had been allowed before. Therefore, even if some parts of the arrangements might have come close to the methods used for the visits of Western fellow travellers to the country in the 1920s and 1930s, Khrushchevian staging was to some extent different from Stalinist performances.

Financing the Festival

The Moscow festival was an extremely expensive enterprise. According to the financial reports, organizing the festival events and providing for the stay of foreign delegates came to almost 200 million roubles.⁴³ The cost was much more than the Soviet Union had paid for the earlier youth festivals (Prague 2.1 million roubles, Budapest 3.8, Berlin 5.9, Bucharest 2.6 and Warsaw 2.6), four times as much as Moscow's 800-year anniversary celebration in 1947 (49 million roubles), and more than twice as much as the Spartakiad of the Peoples (91.6 million roubles).⁴⁴ If the costs for the festival's cultural program, which came from the budget of the Ministry of Culture (38 million roubles) and the investment in buildings and renovations (around 400 million roubles) are taken into account, the final sum comes to at least 638 million roubles.⁴⁵ Contemporary Western estimates were quite right in declaring that the festival was enormously expensive, but calculating the costs at between \$100 and \$200 million, they shot much too low.⁴⁶

43 Festival costs included the maintenance of the delegates (travel in the Soviet Union, food, accommodation), transportation in Moscow, events of the festival, decoration of the city, printed materials, sports games, preparations of cadres, the Soviet contribution toward the international solidary fund, and the costs of the Soviet preparatory committee. RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 241, l. 142. Svodka raskhodov, 6.1.1958.

44 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 241, ll. 12–24. Predsedateliu gosekonomkomissii SSSR tov. Pervuhinu, M. G. 14.2.1957, Postanovlenie Soveta ministrov SSSR 17.11.1956, no 1487, S. Romanovskii.

45 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 241, ll. 12–24. Predsedateliu gosekonomkomissii SSSR tov. Pervuhinu, M. G. 14.2.1957, Postanovlenie Soveta ministrov SSSR 17.11.1956, no 1487, S. Romanovskii; RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 241, ll. 131–49. Svodka raskhodov, 6.1.1958; RGALI, f. 2329, op. 3, d. 592, l. 6. Ministerstvu kul'tury SSSR N. Mikhailovu. Dokladnaia zapiska o khode vypolneniia prikazov Ministerstva kul'tury no. 520, 642, 677 po voprosam podgotovki k festivaliu, 12.2.1957, I. Pavlovskii. The overall cost of the festival is difficult to calculate because the money used for reconstruction, renovation and repairs of the city cannot easily be tabulated. Different documents gave sums which were allocated or used but it is difficult to know if the numbers given in different documents overlap with each other and whether they were, in the end, the final sums for putting on the festival. The total introduced here is therefore only suggestive.

46 Barghoorn, Frederick C., *Soviet Foreign Propaganda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 261; Clews, John C., *Communist Propaganda Techniques* (London: Methuen & Co, 1964), 142; Apeland, Nils M., *Communist Front Youth Organizations* (Bombay: Popular Book Depot),

While funds for renovation and buildings came from state resources, the expenses for carrying out the festival (around 200 million roubles) were covered by a national lottery organized by the Komsomol. In the lottery, one could win a trip to the Moscow festival, a camera, an alarm clock, a bicycle, clothes or even a television.⁴⁷ One of the festival organizers, V. F. Stukalin, recalled in a round-table discussion, organized as a part of the 50th anniversary celebration of the 1957 festival, that the lottery had enjoyed “vast popularity among Soviet citizens.”⁴⁸ A Soviet Karelian Finn shared quite a different recollection in an interview. With a hint of irony in his voice, he commented that “this event was paid for by Soviet people, as with many other events before and after”.⁴⁹ Another grass-roots perspective from a Soviet citizen shared much the same position, commenting that “the government was bankrupt, that’s all there is to it. They couldn’t even afford the festival – the people had to pay.”⁵⁰ The idea of the Moscow festival being a government sponsored show made a reporter of *The New York Times* refuse to believe in the national lottery as a fundraising method. “The subterfuge that funds were raised by means of a lottery among Soviet young people, as is claimed officially, will not fool anyone.”⁵¹ A financial report on the festival’s direct costs – excluding the resources employed for the infrastructure and other external expenses – shows that the expense was indeed covered by the national lottery. In fact, the lottery did so well that a significant sum was still left over to be used by the Komsomol.

Part of the festival costs, \$480,500, were covered by the International Solidarity Fund. The main idea of the fund, which was a joint body of the WFDY member organizations, was to help participants from colonies and post-colonial countries

1959, 52–53. According to a 1959 American study, the exchange rate was four roubles to the dollar. *Courtship of Young Minds. A Case Study of the Moscow Youth Festival* (New York: East European Student and Youth Service, 1959), 12–14; see also Kotek, Jöel, *Students and the Cold War* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 212.

47 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 241, ll. 12–24, 131–49. For an overview of what one could win in the lottery, see the list of winning tickets on one of the lottery rounds, *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 2 July 1957, 4, “Prover’, vygral li ty. Denezhno-veshchevaia loteriia, ‘Vsesoiuznyi festival’ molodezhi”. *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 25 June 1957, 3, V. Kitain, V. Peskov, “Kogda zavertelos’ tirazhnoe koleso”.

48 “V Federatsii mira i soglasiia proshel Mezhdunarodnyi ‘kruglyi stol’, posviashchennyi 50-letiiu VI Vsemirnogo festivalia molodezhi i studentov 1957 goda v Moskve”, [http://www.moskvai.mir.mos.ru/ru/c/events/index.php?id_4=2590&god=2007&mes=07] (Accessed 11 January 2012).

49 Interview with a Soviet Karelian Finnish man, 24 July 2007.

50 Belfrage, Sally, *A Room in Moscow* (London: Pan Books Ltd, 1959), 44.

51 *The New York Times*, 30 July 1957, 22, “Moscow’s Youth Festival”.

to travel to the festival. From the Soviet perspective, the solidarity fund showed that the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries were not the only financial backers of the festivals. Information given in public about this fund was, however, misleading. Table 4, on payments to the solidarity fund with regard to the Warsaw and Moscow youth festivals, indicates that the socialist countries, after all, paid most of the costs for this joint effort. While the socialist countries (Eastern Europe, China and Mongolia) paid \$430,500, the share of the capitalist countries was a humble \$50,000.⁵² Another document, dated 30 August 1957, claimed that the total sum of the International Solidarity Fund will have been \$435,000 and the capitalist countries paid \$100,000 toward the fund. The total sum is smaller than in the earlier document, yet the contribution of the capitalist countries is doubled. Given that the figures tended to increase as information reached the upper echelons of the party apparatus, it seems that this modification was made in order to give the Central Committee a picture that capitalist countries had contributed a greater proportion of the money than they really did.⁵³ Socialist countries were in a very different position than the capitalist and Global South countries, since they received the money for the festival trips and arrangements from the state, whilst other countries depended on their youth organization members' willingness and ability to collect money. Yet, the fact that the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries provided the great majority of the festival finances was clearly a big failure for the Komsomol, whose goal had been to widen the influence of the WFDY, the IUS and the festival around the world. Against this backdrop, it is easy understand the frustration felt within the Komsomol and the Party as to the unequal financial situation in the WFDY (and the IUS).⁵⁴

Despite the huge financial commitment by the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, participation in the Moscow festival was not completely free. The sums were, however, marginal, and again, the socialist countries were the biggest payers. While the representatives of the people's democracies had to cough up \$4 per day, and thus \$60 for 15 days, young people from the capitalist countries paid only half of that (\$2 per person per day, or \$30 for 15 days). The costs of the youth from the Global South were covered by the solidarity fund and the Soviet state, and thus they were free from any payment.⁵⁵ For the money (\$4, \$2 or \$0 per day), every delegate got full board service and was

52 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 36, l. 65. *Finansovye voprosy festivalia*.

53 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 157. N. Bobrovnikov, A. Shelepin, S. Romanovskii v TsK KPSS, 30.8.1957.

54 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, l. 10. *O deiatel'nosti VFDM*. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, 18.1.1955.

55 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 36, ll. 63–65. *Finansovye voprosy festivalia*.

Tab. 4: Payments to the International Solidarity Fund.

Country	Warsaw Festival 1955	Moscow Festival 1957
<i>Socialist countries</i>	Payments (\$)	Payments (\$)
Bulgaria	5,000	20,000
Hungary	7,500	20,000
GDR	10,000	30,000
China	85,000	120,000
Mongolia	10,000	10,000
Poland	62,700	50,000
Romania	15,000	30,000
USSR	90,000	120,000
Czechoslovakia	10,000	30,000
Albania	–	5,000
Total	285,200	430,500
<i>Capitalist countries</i>		
Australia	1,000	4,500
Great Britain	2,000	6,000
Belgium	500	1,500
Netherlands	500	1,500
Denmark	1,500	3,000
Iceland	500	1,000
Italy	3,500	5,000
Canada	1,000	2,000
Luxemburg	100	500
Norway	1,000	3,000
USA	1,000	4,500
Finland	1,500	4,000
France	4,000	6,500
Switzerland	500	1,000
Sweden	1,000	3,500
Total	20,000	50,000
Overall Total	305,200	480,500

Source: RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 36, l. 65. Finansovye voprosy festivalia.

allowed to use public transportation for free during the festival. This price also included free entrance to museums, parks and exhibitions.⁵⁶ Australian delegate Charles Bresland recalled in his travel account that “the Participant’s Card entitled the owner to free transport anywhere in Moscow. The books of tickets covered three meals per day [. . .] And a buffet ticket which entitled the owner

⁵⁶ RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 7, l. 156. Reshenie ob ustanovlenii besplatnogo vkhoda v parki, muzei i na vystavki dlia uchastnikov VI Vsemirnogo festivalia molodezhi i studentov, 12.7.1957.

to two packages of ‘Prima’ cigarettes a day, or the equivalent at the buffet in sweets or a bottle of beer.”⁵⁷ The Soviet state provided foreign visitors with luxury service in comparison to the next two festivals in capitalist countries. Participants in the Vienna and Helsinki festivals got austere facilities and less services for costlier fees. This was simply because the Austrian and Finnish governments refused to have anything to do with the event.⁵⁸

The Promulgation of Openness

The key concept of the Moscow youth festival was a new kind of openness, which was repeated in the Soviet media, international festival publications and local leftist and communist newspapers around the world. Since 1947, the WFDY had proclaimed that participation in the World Youth Festivals was open to all, irrespective of political, ideological, religious or ethnic roots. The reality during the earlier festivals had been quite different, however, and by declaring at the council meeting in August 1956 that *now in Moscow* the World Youth Festival would be truly open, the WFDY indirectly admitted that events in the past had not been such.⁵⁹

The rationale behind the openness policy was the wish to show the Soviet Union in a new light in accordance with Khrushchev’s thinking on peaceful co-existence, especially after the secret speech earlier the same year. In contrast to the Stalinist image of an isolated and xenophobic country, the Komsomol and the Party now strove to depict a peace-loving and tolerant Soviet Union, which was no longer hostile to others and allowed basic freedoms for its citizens. Criticism of Soviet hegemony and its undemocratic way of managing the WFDY and the IUS voiced inside these organizations also pushed the Komsomol to demonstrate in practice that times had changed.

The new openness was manifested by granting access to everyone who wanted to take part in the festival planning. In August 1956, the WFDY council sent the message that times had changed and that now everyone was welcome to be part of the International Preparatory Committee to influence the way the Moscow gathering was organized. The message highlighted that many crucial issues had still not been decided, although it admitted that they had already sketched a draft programme for the festival and decided about the rules for

⁵⁷ Bresland, Charles, *Moscow Turned it on! Story of Australians at 6th World Youth Festival* (Sydney: Coronation Press, 1957), 5.

⁵⁸ Krekola, *Maailma kylässä*, 62–66.

⁵⁹ *Council of the World Federation of Democratic Youth*, 1956, 30.

cultural competitions.⁶⁰ The WFDY actively tried to encourage new organizations to join in, extending invitations to the festival for the first time to organizations such as the International Federation of Catholic Youth, Young Christian Workers and the World Federation of Liberal and Radical Youth, the International Students' Movement of the United Nations, the Junior Red Cross and the Service Civil International.⁶¹ In a meeting of the Soviet preparatory committee, Shelepin accentuated that the best strategy to get maximum attention for the Moscow festival would be to ignore direct criticism and to strive for influencing wide masses of young people, particularly in the colonies and ex-colonies. Managing to appeal to a traditionally difficult target group, social democrats, would be a great advantage, as would be influencing the Catholic youth, especially now that the Vatican was openly opposing the festival.⁶² In the long run, attempting to reach a wider audience aimed at spreading Soviet peace work into new areas and finding new potential affiliates for the WFDY and the IUS, since by the early 1950s they consisted mainly of communist and socialist organizations.⁶³

The most important non-communist rivals, World Assembly of Youth, International Student Congress and the International Union of Socialist Youth did not believe the WFDY's new policy and continued to boycott the festival. They had argued of the previous festivals that the arrangements and all meaningful decisions had been made by a small group and they remained doubtful as to whether any real change had taken place in this respect. And they were right: the most important decisions were still made within the Komsomol and the Party, and the International Preparatory Committee had very limited room for action.⁶⁴ Sending Soviet tanks to Budapest worsened the situation ever more. In May 1957, *The New York Times* reported that two leading US youth organizations, the National Student Association and the Young Adult Council of the National Social Welfare Assembly, had refused invitations to the festival because of ethical concerns about participating in a Soviet-sponsored festival in the aftermath of what had happened in Hungary.⁶⁵

60 *Council of the World Federation of Democratic Youth*, 1956, 12–13.

61 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 12, l. 131. Stenogramma zasedaniia komiteta podgotovlenii i provedenii VI VFMS, 9.4.1957.

62 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 12, l. 131. Stenogramma zasedaniia komiteta podgotovlenii i provedenii VI VFMS, 9.4.1957.

63 Cornell, Richard, *Youth and Communism. An Historical Analysis of International Communist Youth Movements* (New York: Walker and Company, 1965), 86–95.

64 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 9, l. 3. Zadachi festivalia, TsK VLKSM.

65 *The New York Times*, 25 May 1957, 10, "U.S. Youth Groups Spurn Soviet Bid".

In addition to widening the membership base of the WFDY and the IUS, new non-communist youth and student organizations were needed for demonstrating that the World Youth Festival was not only a communist gathering. One of the ways to decrease communist participation was an agreement made between the fraternal communist parties to the effect that the Moscow festival should, in comparison with earlier festivals, feature fewer communists and should welcome as many “decent and honest non-conformists (*inakomyshliashchii*)” as possible in national delegations.⁶⁶ The document, mentioning this agreement, does not elaborate upon the word non-conformist, but in view of the still prevailing fear and skepticism about foreigners, the word probably referred to non-communist, leftist youths sympathetic to the Soviet Union and its ideology. This strategy, however, involved risks that the authorities were aware of. In the eyes of the Soviet authorities, the line between a non-conformist and an anti-Soviet or anti-communist was very thin. This was indicated by the way that Soviet reports evaluated comments by some foreign visitors and branded people anti-Soviet for certain political views or simply for making negative comments about the USSR. By accepting non-conformists within national delegations, communist youth leaders might open the door to anti-communist elements.

The strategy of openness also included allowing the international media to report from the festival. In a letter to Dmitri Shepilov on 13 June 1957, Minister of defense Georgi Zhukov explained that censorship should not be imposed because this was an international event and because that had not been applied at the previous festivals. Zhukov reminded that censorship had been similarly suspended for the meeting of the council of foreign ministers and during the visits of various international delegations, implying that the Soviet authorities were capable of handling an international event with the increased risks that unfettered communication with the outside world might bring. The letter also suggested that foreign television companies, radio stations and print media should be allowed to send their correspondents to the festival.⁶⁷ American correspondent Max Frankel commented on this situation on the eve of the youth gathering, stating that for the first time since World War II foreign newspapers were allowed to report from the USSR without censorship.⁶⁸ Another US correspondent, Daniel Schorr, representing the Columbia Broadcasting System, also noted the improved media environment. Schorr and his crew were provided with a new radio studio and were allowed to film at the festival without censorship. The other side of the coin was

66 TsAOPIM, f. 478, op. 1, d. 685, l. 47. Protokol zasedaniia plenuma partiinogo komiteta MGU ot 17 apreia 1957 goda.

67 RGANI, f. 5, op. 33, d. 31, ll. 45–46. Tov. Shepilovu D. T., G. Zhukov, 13.6.1957.

68 *The New York Times*, 28 July 1957, 7, Max Frankel, “Youngsters Fill Moscow for Fete”.

that Schorr was watched the whole time, and later the Soviet authorities accused him of trying to slander the festival because he interviewed American participants who had plans to tour China in defiance of the ban from the US home office.⁶⁹

The openness was also spatial and visual. During the festivities, visitors were given access to numerous places that until quite recently had allowed limited access to foreigners. The symbolic places of Soviet power, the Kremlin and the Lenin-Stalin mausoleum on Red Square, opened their doors to foreigners, as did churches and synagogues, as if to prove that religious practice was free in Soviet society.⁷⁰ “Kremlin excursions! Stalin must be whirling clockwise in his tomb”, an American reporter Harrison Salisbury commented at the time.⁷¹ Showing the Kremlin to foreigners was not such a big deal, but allowing people to visit churches and organizing meetings between local and foreign religious youth groups made party officials nervous. Some CPSU Central Committee members strongly opposed religious meetings and even those who supported these kinds of activities stressed that it had to be made sure that such “meetings would not grow into mass events”.⁷²

Carnavalesque colors, flags, slogans, festival emblems and peace doves replaced the omnipresent portraits of Stalin and local political leaders which had dominated the visual imagery at previous festivals. The emblem of the Moscow festival, a five-petal daisy with a miniature globe at its core, was designed by Soviet artist Konstantin Kuzginov, who won a special competition to design a new logo. In an article published in *Vecherniaia Moskva*, Kuzginov told that he had chosen a flower as the basis because it symbolized the spring – the youth. Kuzginov had wanted to design a simple and easily understandable logo, which would symbolize the unity of young people of the world.⁷³ Slogans, too, were designed in a way that all guests might find them acceptable.⁷⁴ “For peace and Friendship” – “Mir i

69 Schorr, Daniel, *Staying Tuned. A Life in Journalism* (New York: Pocket Books, 2001), 104–105.

70 Ardamatskii, V., *Piat' lepestok: reportazh o VI Vsemirnom festivale molodezhi i studentov v Moskve* (Moscow: Detiz, 1958), 66–67; Bresslein, Erwin, *Drushba! Freundschaft? Von der Kommunistischen Jugendinternationale zu den Weltjugendfestspielen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fisher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1973), 104.

71 Salisbury, Harrison E., *And Beyond. A Reporter's Narrative* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 11, 28.

72 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 86. O nekotorykh voprosakh VI Vsemirnogo festivalia molodezhi i studentov, 31.5.1957.

73 *Vecherniaia Moskva*, 6 July 1957, 3, “Emblema vsemirnogo”, G. Senichakova.

74 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 12, l. 131. Stenogramma zasedaniia komiteta po organizatsii i provod. VI VFMS 9.4.1957.

Druzhiba” – was certainly a motto anyone could associate with. This was more neutral than earlier and later slogans with their overtly political meanings (see Table 5). In Warsaw 1955, the slogan proclaimed “for peaceful coexistence and for international friendship, against the preparation of nuclear war”, and in Vienna 1959, young people celebrated “peace, friendship and peaceful coexistence”.⁷⁵ Besides the official slogan, city centre houses and the venues of the festival programme were decorated with phrases like “Peace to the World” (*Miru-mir!*), “Youth is against the war!” (*Molodezh’ protiv voiny!*) and “All nations have the right to national independence!” (*Vse narody imeiut pravo na national’noi nezavisimost’!*).⁷⁶ Soviet officials considered slogans very important, and based

Tab. 5: World Youth Festival Slogans 1947–1989.

I Prague 1947	Youth unite, for a lasting peace
II Budapest 1949	Youth unite forward for a lasting peace, democracy, national independence and a better future for the peoples
III Berlin 1951	For peace and friendship – against nuclear weapons
IV Bucharest 1953	For peace and friendship
V Warsaw 1955	For peace and friendship – against the aggressive imperialist military pacts
VI Moscow 1957	For peace and friendship
VII Vienna 1959	For peace and friendship and peaceful coexistence
VIII Helsinki 1962	For peace and friendship
IX Sofia 1968	For solidarity, peace and friendship
X East Berlin 1973	For anti-imperialist solidarity, peace and friendship
XI Havana 1978	For anti-imperialist solidarity, peace and friendship
XII Moscow 1985	For anti-imperialist solidarity, peace and friendship
XIII Pyongyang 1989	For anti-imperialist solidarity, peace and friendship

Source: [www.wfdy.org] (Accessed 5 October 2010).

⁷⁵ *VIIth World Festival of Youth and Students, Vienna 1959*, Prague: IUS, 1959; The WFDY website, Festivals [www.wfdy.org] (Accessed 29 November 2011).

⁷⁶ GARF, f. 5446, op. 91, d. 299, ll. 18–20. Lozungi dlia oformleniia g. Moskvyy (no date).

on oral history accounts they were certainly right that slogans were an efficacious method of leaving a positive memory of the Soviet peace agenda. Almost every memoirist and interviewee recalled the magical words “peace and friendship” that had enabled communication even between those who did not have a common language.⁷⁷ “Tiresome and banal though they may be, the slogans are effective in getting across to a vast audience the really significant elements of their [Soviets] propaganda line”, noticed a CIA report on the eve of the festival, which went on to remind that the slogans should be taken seriously. “They are not, as some observers in the free world are wont to believe, mere catchwords or ballyhoo phrases. They are carefully thought-out, semantically worked-over statements of International Communist policy”.⁷⁸

An Event of Great Political Significance

Allowing Soviet youth to mingle with foreign guests was part of the openness strategy, though it entailed the risk that unpleasant topics and disconcerting versions of recent history might be spread to Soviet people. It was one thing to show foreigners the new Soviet Union, which accepted non-communists and allowed visitors to walk freely in the city centre. It was another thing to ensure that Soviet people would take the right stance on a number of issues that foreign festival participants and visitors might bring to Moscow. Prior experiences of such encounters abroad, most recently with the Warsaw youth festival, had exemplified what increased openness might bring in, and therefore much effort was put into preparing Soviet youth, and the Soviet people more generally, for the contact with the outside world.

For the Komsomol, the forthcoming youth festival was a serious business. As Aleksandr Shelepin stressed at the plenum of the Komsomol Central Committee in February 1957: “It is wrong to view the festival as an entertaining event, as many comrades have understood it”; on the contrary, “the festival is an event of great political significance.”⁷⁹ The political importance of the festival was equally emphasized by Sergei Romanovskii, who explained for members of the Soviet

⁷⁷ Bresland, *Moscow Turned it*, 12; Chernin, Kim, *In My Mother's House. A Daughter's Story* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1994), 270, 277; Interview with Finnish participants, 16 March 2006.

⁷⁸ CIA archives, Central CIA records, Job no. 80-01445R, Box no. 1, folder no. 5, International Communism and Youth: the Challenge of the 1957 Moscow Festival, 6 June 1957, 17.

⁷⁹ RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 53. Ob uluchenii ideino-vospitatel'noi raboty komsomol'skikh organizatsii sredi molodezhi, 25.2.1957. A speech to be presented at the Plenum of the TsK VLKSM.

preparatory committee that “30,000 foreigners will come here and they will talk with Muscovites about everything. [. . .] We need to conduct a huge job and clarify what the festival is all about and explain how our people should represent our country and themselves among these 30,000 people.”⁸⁰ First and foremost, Soviet youth needed to show that they stood by the Soviet system. Therefore, the Komsomol expected every exemplary young person to show pride in his or her homeland by talking about the successes of the socialist system, the 40 years of building socialism, the high morals and political unity of Soviet youth, friendship toward fraternal countries and the superiority of socialist culture over capitalist culture.⁸¹ Being able to project the correct image of the country and, if necessary, to amend the erroneous perceptions of their visitors was crucial also because Soviet authorities held that truthful news about the country only rarely circulated in foreign media. “Therefore”, *Komsomol'skaia pravda* advised, “do not be surprised about the questions you will be asked; you need to be ready to answer them.”⁸²

Although the most important thing was to be able to promote the homeland, it was almost as important to know about and be able to respond to information that foreign guests might share with Soviet citizens. Coping with a broad range of foreign visitors demanded a level of cultural knowledge, such as knowing about the relationship between Algeria and France – at this time Algeria was a French colony, and the organizers struggled over whether to use the Algerian flag at the festival – or knowing about cultural traditions, such as Scottish men and their traditional kilts.⁸³ Besides the less controversial topics, part of the Soviet youth needed to be informed about a number of politically and culturally sensitive issues. As a speaker at a meeting of Party, Komsomol and trade union city committees reminded those present, among foreign guests there would also be enemies who would try to lure Soviet youth into decadent Western music, such as rock and roll, or teach them bourgeois democracy.⁸⁴ In order to respond to these possible provocations, Soviet youth had to know about such issues as “the personality cult, ‘the cold war’, the counterrevolutionary rising in Hungary,

80 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 35, ll. 2–5. Stenogramma i zasedaniia sovetskogo podgotovitel'nogo komiteta ot 24.12.1956.

81 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 1, ll. 35, 38. Postanovlenie TsK KPSS 16.4.1957; RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 12, l. 131. Stenogramma Sovetskoi podgotovitel'nogo komiteta 9.4.1957.

82 *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 3 February 1957, 1, “Shestoi vseмирnyi”.

83 TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 7, ll. 82, 105, 111–13, 126–7. Stenogramma soveshchaniia partii-nogo, khoziastvennogo, profsoiuznogo i komsomolskogo aktiva goroda Moskvy, 20.6.1957.

84 TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 7, ll. 108, 126. Stenogramma, 20.6.1957.

imperialist aggression in Egypt and the ideological struggle between imperialist reactionaries and the countries of the socialist camp”.⁸⁵ Some Komsomol activists were even provided with lists of political questions for their meetings with certain delegations. In a diary entry, Veljko Mićunović (1916–82), Yugoslav ambassador to the USSR in 1956–58, marked some of the questions Soviet youth had posed to Yugoslav delegates, like: “Why do you permit a flood of American films in Yugoslavia? Why does Yugoslavia not join the socialist camp? Why do you permit the cult of Tito in Yugoslavia?”⁸⁶

Being able to respond to the attacks of those who were viewed as enemies did not, however, equal aggression toward those people. During the meetings of the bodies organizing the festival, an idea was constantly repeated that instead of attacking them, discordant views should be tolerated. A guidebook for propagandists, lecturers and agitators underlined this idea by pointing out that “our duty is neither to disappoint our friends nor to give weapons to our enemies.”⁸⁷ In effect, it was preferable to treat enemies like potential friends so that they would not get the impression that they were unwelcome in the Soviet Union. “The main goal [. . .] is that all guests should leave the country as friends.”⁸⁸ Tolerating enemies was a new and a radical idea, as the times when people were put in jail for contact with foreigners were not very far past. This soft approach to enemies and different opinions can be seen as part of the discursive change that took place after the death of Stalin. Ted Hopf called the new public way of speaking a “discourse of difference”, which allowed both leaders and common people more ways to express their identities and errors, even though the idea of the Soviet Union “as atop a hierarchy of modernity” remained a constitutive part of discourse and Soviet official identity.⁸⁹ In a similar fashion, it was now acceptable to contact and converse with foreign citizens, including those who held opposing political views.

Given that the Moscow festival was framed as a significant political event, delicate political issues and young people’s political views were elaborated and

85 TsAOPIM, f. 635, op. 13, d. 546, l. 10. Stenogramma sobraniia aktiva MGK, ob itogakh raboty VII plenuma TsK VLKSM, 6.3.1957; TsAOPIM, f. 635, op. 13, d. 525, l. 26. Protokol nro 5 plenuma MGK VLKSM 26.3.1957; RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, ll. 101–105. Perechen’ nekotorykh voprosov, zadannykh tov. Mikhailovu N. A. 11 iulija 1957 g. na seminare predstavitelei sovet-skogo podgotovitel’nogo komiteta.

86 Mićunović, Veljko, *Moscow Diary* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1980), 293–294.

87 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 265, ll. 86, 88. V pomoshch propagandistu, lektoru, dokladchiku i agitatoru VI VFMS za mir i druzhbu.

88 TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 7, ll. 108, 126. Stenogramma, 20.6.1957.

89 Hopf, Ted, *Reconstructing the Cold War. The Early Years, 1945–1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 146–147.

discussed within the Komsomol and other preparatory organizations surprisingly little. Instead, much more time and space seem to have been devoted to contemplating the potential harmful influence of Western “decadent” culture on Soviet youth. Evaluating by the mere share of each topic addressed in archival documents would allow an interpretation that Soviet authorities were more concerned about the cultural than the political views of Soviet young people. It is more likely, however, that the majority of political issues were so delicate that they simply could not be discussed very broadly within the Komsomol bodies and preparatory committees. While political taboos remained largely untouched, cultural tastes and appropriate genres of popular music were widely treated within the Komsomol as well as within cultural and artistic institutions.

Debating Jazz and Cultural Tastes

The Komsomol leadership began to pay attention to harmful Western cultural influences in the latter half of 1956. Fighting the decadent and harmful Western cultural impact had been one of central elements of Soviet cultural policy from the 1920s, and especially since establishing socialist realism as the official style in arts. Exactly what was regarded as decadent and harmful in Western culture varied from time to time, but there was a continuous tendency to regard Soviet (Russian) culture as superior to Western bourgeois culture and to fight against “banality” (*poshlost'*), meaning everything between vulgarity, lack of spirituality, triviality and bad taste.⁹⁰ The conception of the superiority of Soviet culture and aversion to “bad taste” were the key words also in discussions of the cultural risks stemming from the Moscow youth festival.⁹¹

One of the catalysts for tightening control over youth behavior was the picture of Soviet youth being spread abroad. A case in point was an article published in *the Observer* in September 1956. Titled “Spivs and Hooligans”, the piece spoke about a minority of disoriented Soviet youth: “Broadway boys” who imitated Western lifestyles, “Business boys” engaged in obtaining Western goods from foreign

⁹⁰ Boym, Svetlana, *Common Places. Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 41.

⁹¹ Fürst, Juliane, *Stalin's Last Generation. Soviet Post-war Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), passim; Tshipursky, Gleb, *Socialist Fun: Youth, Consumption, & State-Sponsored Popular Culture in the Soviet Union, 1945–1970* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016), 136.

visitors, and hooligans.⁹² A similar case of bad publicity took place in May 1957, when the French *Le Monde*, Australian *Forum* and Radio Free Europe discussed student riots at Moscow State University.⁹³ Articles about activities that questioned the “official” image of Soviet youth and students as loyal citizens certainly fed Western readers’ curiosity and were exceedingly embarrassing for the Soviet leadership, which put vast funds and effort into managing the image of the Soviet system. With the forthcoming Moscow festival in mind, the Ministry of Internal Affairs advised the Komsomol to deal with these kinds of problems in order to prevent such articles in the future.⁹⁴

Interest in “everything Western” was not a new problem. Already since the late 1940s a small core of Soviet youth had been enthusiastic about Western music, fashion and lifestyles. Nicknamed *stiliagi* by an article published in *Krokodil* in 1949, these young people (mostly young, middle-class men) led a hedonistic lifestyle, sharing an obsession with Western fashion and music as well as a reluctance toward political activism. Their individualistic way of living represented the antithesis of a model Soviet youth, the loyal builder of socialist society devoted to the collective good instead of individual pleasure.⁹⁵ *Stiliagi*, as well as other youth subcultures that developed towards the end of the 1950s, such as *bitniki* (beatniks, enthusiasts of beat music and poetry) and *shtatniki* (admirers of American culture) presented alternatives to the official culture of the Komsomol.⁹⁶

The fight against Western influences intensified especially after the Komsomol Central Committee plenum in February 1957. The plenum reacted to growing and

⁹² *The Observer*, 30 September 1956, 7, William C. Jest, “The Young People of Russia 2, Spivs and Hooligans”. The piece was part of a series of four articles on young people in Russia, published in September and October of 1956, written under a pseudonym by a Russian-speaking British student who had recently studied in the Soviet Union.

⁹³ RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, 233, l. 75. Tovarishchu Shepilovu, I. Tugarinov, zamestitel’ predsedateilia komiteta informatsii pri MID SSSR, 15 May 1957.

⁹⁴ RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 179, l. 87. Tov. Pospelovu P. N., S. Rumiantsev, chlen komiteta informatsii pri MID SSSR, 7.12.1956.

⁹⁵ For *stiliaga* culture, see Starr, S. Frederick, *Red and Hot. The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union, 1917–1980* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 240–243; Edele, Mark, “Strange Young Men in Stalin’s Moscow: The Birth and Life of the Stiliagi, 1945–1953”, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 50, No. 1, 2002, 37–61; Fürst, Juliane, “The Arrival of Spring? Changes and Continuities in Soviet Youth culture and policy between Stalin and Khrushchev”, in *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization. Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era*, edited by Polly Jones (London: Routledge, 2006), 138; Troitskii, Artemi, *Back in the USSR* (Sankt-Peterburg: Amfora, 2007), 15–24.

⁹⁶ Fürst, Juliane, “The Importance of Being Stylish. Youth, Culture and Identity in the Late Stalinism”, in *Late Stalinist Russia. Society between Reconstruction and Reinvention*, edited by J. Fürst (London: Routledge, 2006), 210.

excessive interest in Western cultural trends stemming from the cultural liberalism of the Thaw, the forthcoming youth festival and Western Cold War propaganda, by launching “an aesthetic upbringing campaign”.⁹⁷ Proclaiming that “we need to act forcefully against attempts to bring to the festival all kinds of trash (*khaltura*) and vulgarity”, Shelepin signaled that allowing contact with the West did not automatically mean embracing all aspects of it.⁹⁸ Indeed, Shelepin stated that “under the influence of the West, many young men, and women in particular, have started to invent the devil knows what kind of hairdos (*chort znaet kakie pricheski*)”. He clarified that Soviet youth should follow the fashion but “with moderation and good taste”.⁹⁹ The plenum speech emphasized that Komsomol organizations should take new measures in the artistic and cultural education of young people and children, including discussions on good taste and programs for teaching Soviet citizens to value the products of fine art, sculpture, literature and music of their motherland.¹⁰⁰

The relationship with Western popular culture was not only a matter for youth; it touched upon a larger question about the development of Soviet culture and the mobilization of youth for the benefit of the Soviet project. Questions about what constituted the right attitude toward Western popular culture, such as jazz, divided Soviet institutions and authorities into conservatives and reformists. With regard to the youth festival, a telling example was a clash between the Komsomol and the Composers Union and the CPSU Central Committee on jazz.

In April 1957, the Union of Soviet Composers, with its head Tikhon Khrennikov, attacked Komsomol leadership by accusing them of having been too supportive of Western popular culture, namely jazz. The problem was that the number of jazz orchestras had substantially increased during the preparatory period for the festival and that workers in the Komsomol Central Committee had been involved in these orchestras. “What astonishes here”, Khrennikov said, “is that our youth, even the most developed and cultured part of it, expresses unforgivable ignorance and fairly poor taste in the field of music.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Tsipursky, *Socialist Fun*, 134–139.

⁹⁸ RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 53. Ob uluchenii ideino-vospitatel'noi raboty komsomol'skikh organizatsii sredi molodezhi, 25 February 1957, to be presented at the Plenum of the TsK VLKSM, see also Shelepin, Aleksandr, *Ob uluchenii ideino-vospitatel'noi raboty komsomol'skikh organizatsii sredi molodezhi* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1957), 7–9, 45–48.

⁹⁹ RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 56. Ob uluchenii.

¹⁰⁰ RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 57. Ob uluchenii. See also TsAOPIM, f. 635, op. 13, d. 546, ll. 49–50. Stenogramma sobraniia aktiva MGK komsomola, 6.3.1957.

¹⁰¹ RGANI, f. 5, op. 36, d. 46, l. 51. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, 12.4.1957. For a discussion on the transformation of attitudes towards jazz within the Soviet cultural elite, see also Starr, *Red and Hot*, 245, 248–249.

Shelepin answered Khrennikov's criticism by noting that the Komsomol Central Committee had clearly announced its attitude toward the dangers of light music. He admitted that a portion of the Soviet youth preferred light music and had poor taste, but insisted that the great majority "knows, loves and honors good music and deeply respects its creators". Shelepin felt sufficiently annoyed to ask the CPSU Central Committee permission to write a reply to Khrennikov's accusations in *Pravda*, *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, *Trud* and *Sovetskaia kul'tura*.¹⁰²

The question was then handled within the cultural department of the CPSU Central Committee, where, in fact, the criticism initially originated. In reply to Shelepin, the literary critic Boris S. Riurikov and musicologist Boris M. Iarustovskii, both workers in the CPSU cultural department, agreed with Khrennikov's statement about the harmfulness of jazz music and its increased popularity. According to Riurikov and Iarustovskii, the bureau of the Komsomol Central Committee had approved the rules and categories for the festival of the youth of the USSR in January 1956 – one of the categories being jazz orchestras (*estradnye orkestry*). This had stimulated the widespread cultivation of bourgeois jazz, such that by late May 1957, in Moscow alone there existed over 100 jazz bands. As the organizing body of the domestic festival, Riurikov and Iarustovskii held the Komsomol guilty for the massive increase in the number of jazz orchestras. To resolve the problem, they suggested that central newspapers publish articles on good quality music and against the "wrong tendencies".¹⁰³ The main concern was not actually jazz as a genre but rather the way it was performed. Riurikov and Iarustovskii were principally aggrieved that the majority of new jazz bands seemed to be interested in the Americanized form of Western jazz and that many songs were performed in English, Spanish or other foreign languages. Riurikov and Iarustovskii found the repertoires of these kinds of bands harmful to the artistic development of young people's musical tastes and thought that the emergence of jazz bands had negatively affected the development of folk ensembles, choirs, and brass and folk bands.¹⁰⁴

While *stiliagi* had been a marginal phenomenon during the 1940s and early 1950s, the Komsomol and cultural institutions like the Union of Composers feared that at the festival, with the presence of thousands of foreign youths, enthusiasm for the things that Western young people admired might become a mass phenomenon. Another fundamental fear was that embracing an excessive amount of foreign cultural elements might overrun one's own national cultural traditions. This fear was clearly seen in documents dealing with the festival

102 RGANI, f. 5, op. 36, d. 46, l. 52. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, 12.4.1957.

103 RGANI, f. 5, op. 36, d. 46, ll. 54–56. B. Riurikov i B. Iarustovskii v TsK KPSS, 22.5.1957.

104 RGANI, f. 5, op. 36, d. 46, ll. 54–56. B. Riurikov i B. Iarustovskii v TsK KPSS, 22.5.1957.

preparations as well as in media coverage of the festival. New styles, genres or fashionable clothes were not questioned in principle, but the point was that the cultural choices of Soviet youth should go hand in hand with socialist values and aesthetical norms.¹⁰⁵

The problem of cultural tastes was related to a larger question about Soviet society and the cultural Cold War. Socialist culture was an essential part of the Soviet project and, eventually, after socialism had beaten capitalism, it was to constitute the future world. Young people's cultural tastes and priorities were particularly important because they were seen as the hope for the future, the builders of the socialist system, those who would finally see the envisioned communist society completed. If young people were not interested in the project of constructing a new society, if they were keener on enjoying the products of the capitalist system than fighting capitalism, then who would complete the project?

Notwithstanding the criticisms about jazz and other Western cultural influences, it was surprising that Komsomol records mentioned only one attempt to cancel performances of Western groups. According to a report written on the eve of the festival, the leader of the British delegation, Malcolm Nixon, was asked to cancel the concerts of British rock and roll groups scheduled to play at the festival. Nixon, a Scottish musician and a promoter of skiffle and blues bands, had told the Soviet authorities that "we cannot dictate to our youth what to perform." Nixon was, in fact, the wrong person to ask to cancel performances of British rock groups. Even though he was a member of the communist youth league, he did not take politics too seriously and, after the Moscow festival, he set up the Malcolm Nixon Agency and started performing together with Ewan MacColl in their Ballads and Blues ensemble.¹⁰⁶ Whether by coincidence or on purpose, *Molodoi Kommunist*, a paper for Komsomol activists, published an article on the British delegation, which included a paragraph on the jazz groups of Jeff Ellison and Bruce Turner, who were scheduled to perform in Moscow.¹⁰⁷

Preparing Soviet youth for the festival and managing the image of young people as loyal builders of socialism was a serious matter for the Komsomol and

105 TsAOPIM, f. 635, op. 13, d. 546, ll. 49–50. Stenogramma sobraniia aktiva MG komsomola, 6.3.1957. On socialist values and aesthetical norms, see Hoffmann, David L., *Stalinist Values. The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917–1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

106 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 197, l. 85. Informatsiia 2, 21.7.1957; Harker, Ben, *Class Act. The Cultural and Political Life of Ewan MacColl* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 121, 126. Soviet authorities also carried out measures to prevent some of the concerts of the Israeli delegation, however, this was for political, not cultural reasons. Kostyrchenko, G. V., *Tainaia politika Khrushcheva. Vlast', intelligentsia, evreiskii vopros* (Moscow: "Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia", 2012), 275–276.

107 *Molodoi Kommunist*, 7/1957, 34–35, Jennifer Mary Warren, "Molodye anglichane i festival' v Moskve".

the Party. This can be seen in a response to *The New York Times* correspondent Max Frankel's article discussing Soviet preparations for the festival. Frankel's text, published in late May 1957, focused on the guidance given to Soviet youth. Referring to an article published in *Moskovskii komsomolets*, Frankel maintained, with a hint of sarcasm, that young people were encouraged to restrain from sighing for such Western items as cigarette lighters, women's jewelry, cufflinks or colorful clothes. The Soviet response in *Moskovskii komsomolets* came on 23 July. It lashed out at Frankel for missing the main point of the article – educating young people to be proud of their home country as well as the idea of bringing people closer by means of a peace festival – and underlined some minor factual mistakes and typos made by Frankel. The article ended by asking, whether or not “everyone, including, we hope, Mr. Frankel, too, usually tries to put his house in order when he expects guests”. The Soviet reaction demonstrated how seriously the organizers took the Moscow festival, and moreover, how important it was for the Soviet Union to be respected, not mocked, even by its superpower rival. This was also mentioned in internal correspondence between *The New York Times* staff. It was stated that the Soviet response to the NYT article amounted to a “wounded reaction”, behind which was “extreme sensitivity about the festival and their self-consciousness about the elaborate preparations”.¹⁰⁸

These two articles aptly illustrated what the cultural Cold War was all about: trying to undermine the cultural successes of the other side when they seemed to threaten one's own plans. In the end, it was not devastating if a few individuals were interested in jazz and jeans, but if the general impression of Soviet youth as a collective entity was based on a picture of young people obsessed with all things Western, the credibility of the whole Soviet project was brought into question. Soviet culture and arts constituted an essential part of the Soviet cultural diplomacy that was actively promoted to other countries. Therefore, the view that Soviet youth, who were apparently the most progressive and avant-garde, preferred to enjoy the culture of the enemy severely harmed the image of the Soviet project.

108 A letter from William J. Jorde to Emanuel Freedman on 24 July 1957 (which included a translation of the article published in *Moskovskii komsomolets*), New York Times Company records, Foreign desk records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations, box 34, folder 8. I am indebted to Dina Fainberg for sharing this source with me. *The New York Times*, 28 May 1957, 9, Max Frankel, “Moscow Readies Youths as Hosts”; *Moskovskii komsomolets*, 27 May 1957 and 23 July 1957.

Popularizing the Festival in Soviet Media

On 5 January 1957, an article titled “Towards the Festival” in *Komsomol’skaia Pravda* started a massive campaign of popularizing the forthcoming festival among the Soviet population. Hundreds of articles in *Molodaia Gvardiia*, *Molodoi Kommunist*, *Smena*, *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, *Ogonek*, *Novyi mir*, *Sovetskii sport*, and *Krokodil* familiarized Soviet readers with the ideas of the World Youth Festival, told how individuals in different parts of the world prepared for the event, and repeatedly recalled the role that Soviet youth was going to play at the peace and friendship gathering.¹⁰⁹ Foreign youth were targeted through a special publication, named *Festival*, which was released in several languages and with special issues of the WFDY’s *World Youth* and the IUS’s *World Student News*.¹¹⁰ Weekly radio broadcasts were delivered in Moscow, Beijing, Berlin, Sofia, Prague, Bucharest, Budapest and Warsaw in 33 languages between January and July 1957.¹¹¹ The publishing houses *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, *IZOGIZ*, *Sovetskii Kompozitor*, *Iskusstvo* and *MUZGIZ* printed 50 million copies of 947 different titles, including festival guidebooks, photo albums, songbooks and Moscow city guides, in Russian, French, English, German, Spanish, Arabian, Hindi, Chinese, Korean, Mongolian, Norwegian, Finnish and Flemish.¹¹² Typical of the Soviet propaganda system, the festival campaign was more focused on volume than content. This was illuminated in reports dealing with festival propaganda that more often than not suggested increasing the volume of propaganda to better put across the message of peace and friendship through the international media. What Vladimir Pechatnov pointed out about Soviet propaganda during the early Cold War was also applicable to festival propaganda in 1957: it suffered from a fixation on quantity and a lack of target-specific orientation.¹¹³

109 On plans for publicising the festival see RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 84, l. 106. L. Sav’ialova.

110 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 52, ll. 173–174. Predlozhenie po gazete “Festival”, tov. Vdovin; RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 270–279. Russian, English, Spanish, German and French versions of *The Festival*.

111 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 52, ll. 1–8. VLKSM, AKSM. Nekotorye predlosheniia po organizatsii podgotovki i provedeniiu VI Vsemirnogo Festivalia, 26.9.1955, peredal Nikitin, prinial Kuz’menko; RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 84, ll. 99, 102. L. Sav’ialova.

112 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 152. N. Mihailov v TsK KPSS, 16.8.1957; RGANI, f. 5, op. 33, d. 38, ll. 92–94. A. Romanov, K. Bogoliubov (otdel agitpropa) v TsK KPSS, 16.5.1957.

113 RGANI, f. 5, op. 33, d. 31, ll. 18–22. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, 13.3.1957; see also Pechatnov, V., “Exercise in Frustration: Soviet Foreign Propaganda in the Early Cold War, 1945–1947”, *Cold War History*, 1, No. 2, 2001, 1–27. See also Kenez, Peter, *The Birth of the Propaganda State. Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917–1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 13.

The massive media campaign was an excellent forum to shape the understanding of the outside world. With their illustrated stories from different corners of the world, magazines like *Ogonek*, *Smena* and *Krokodil* provided their readers a miniature encyclopedia of the world. One could read about distant countries such as Uganda and Sierra-Leone, wonder at Indonesian celebration practices on Bali, read a reportage of Czechoslovakian runner Emil Zátopek, who was to compete in the friendly games of the festival, or ponder the thoughts of foreign members of the International Preparatory Committee, who visited Moscow before the start of the festival.¹¹⁴ Through these numerous stories the Soviet print media showed what potential festival guests looked like and what they thought about the Soviet Union. Reporting on how prospective attendees prepared for the festival elsewhere, the Soviet media attempted to familiarize people with the variety of cultures and multi-ethnic crowds that the festival was going to introduce.¹¹⁵

Although the tone was milder in 1957 than earlier, the festival narrative was still very much framed by the Cold War. The Soviet Union was shown as the source of a good life for all peoples and as the leader of the “progressive camp”, which fought against the development of nuclear weapons and international pacts like NATO.¹¹⁶ The Western governments were depicted as “enemies of the festival”, who attempted to harm young people’s festival trips in capitalist countries. *Molodoi Kommunist* offered an explanation, according to which the enemies saw the youth festival as a threat. “The imperialist masters are afraid that having travelled to Moscow, world youth can see our country with their own eyes and will start to believe how false and dirty imperialist propaganda is”.¹¹⁷ A similar agenda was embedded in a short story published in a special festival issue of the satirical magazine *Krokodil*, which emphasized the uniqueness of state support for such a festival and hinted that providing the infrastructure for the use of such a youth celebration was only possible within a socialist system. In a fictitious conversation, an American youngster asked permission to use the streets, squares, restaurants, hotels, theatres, stadia and clubs of New York for a similar youth festival. “Are you out of your mind?”, replies the mayor, “we cannot offer you anything.

114 *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 11 June 1957, 3, “Otkuda priedut na festival”; *Ogonek*, 30/1957; *Ogonek*, 31/1957; *Smena*, 13/1957, 22–23, “Anketa Smeny”.

115 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 84, ll. 99, 102, 106. L. Sav'ialova.

116 *Molodoi Kommunist*, 8/1957, 65–78, “Molodezh' mira – protiv ugrozy atomnoi boiny”, V. Vdovin; *Molodoi Kommunist*, 10/1957, 114–118, “Sovetskoi strane prinadlezhit budushchee”, N. Nikolaev. For the history of peace in Soviet foreign policy, see Barghoorn, *Soviet Foreign Propaganda*, 80–121; Johnston, Timothy, *Being Soviet. Identity, Rumour, and Everyday Life under Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 5–11, 142–65.

117 *Molodoi Kommunist*, 5/1957, 103–108 (quote on page 104). “Gotov li ty k festivaliu?”.

Hotels and restaurants, theatres and stadia – all belong to private owners, to capitalists. They ask such money that you will not be having fun but weeping”. “And who are you inviting? Soviet youth, Chinese? The State department hardly lets them in?”, the mayor continues. So the youth understood how silly his question was. “No, it is impossible, such a picture is absurd! And everybody knows it. The whole world sees it. Try to convince even one honest person that the USA is a democracy, and that in the USSR there is an iron curtain.”¹¹⁸

One of the most compelling individual stories of repressive measures in the capitalist world was Barbara Perry’s case. Inspired by President Eisenhower’s speech on the importance of person-to-person contacts, Barbara Perry, a 23-year-old former dancer from the University of Chicago, had decided to put together the first US preparatory committee for a World Youth Festival. To her disappointment, Perry found that the US government did not encourage, but rather forbade US citizens from travelling to the festival.¹¹⁹ Despite the difficulties that she faced, Perry, with her parents and some 140 fellow Americans, eventually travelled to Moscow.¹²⁰ *Komsomolskaia pravda* closely followed Perry’s attempts to get to Moscow. Its readers sent her good luck wishes and were fascinated by her courageous fight against the US authorities.¹²¹ Perry’s case proved extremely propitious for Soviet propaganda efforts to reinforce the picture of the USA’s attitude towards the festival and the communist world more widely. Soviet readers were offered a story of an American youth that had to fight the capitalist bureaucrats to be able to take part in a peace festival. Perry, the heroine of the story, was easily linked with images of class struggle, as a socially conscious young communist who fought against the bourgeois government and showed an example of youth elsewhere struggling with similar problems. The question arose: what kind of a country bans its youth from participating in a peace festival? In the Cold War world, usefulness was evanescent, as Perry would come to realize. Two years later,

118 *Krokodil*, 21/1957, 2, “Molodym vezde u nas doroga”.

119 *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, March 1957; *The New Republic*, July 1957; *The New York Times*, 19 July 1957, A6, “Pro-Reds Recruit U.S. Youths to Attend ‘Festival’ in Moscow”. According to *the New York Times*, her real name was Perlman.

120 The figure for US participation varies depending on the source. According to the organizers’ statistics, the US delegation had 141 members; Max Frankel writes about 160 US citizens who attended the festival, but these probably included tourists and observers. *Le VIe Festival Mondial de la Jeunesse et des Etudiants*, 1957; *The New York Times*, 11 August 1957, 169, Max Frankel, “Voices of America in Moscow”.

121 *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 13 March 1957, 4, “Moskovskii festival i volneniia v belom dome”; *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 16 March 1957, 3, “My verim, chto vstremitisia na festival”; *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 17 March 1957, 3, “Molodye amerikantsy khotiat priekhat’ na vsemirnyi festival”.

the American peace fighter had apparently ceased to be useful for Soviet aims, as she refused to acknowledge the Komsomol supported New York preparatory committee for the Vienna festival as the leading national committee.¹²²

In accordance with Khrushchev's ideas on opening up the Soviet Union and coexisting with the capitalist system in a peaceful manner, the festival reportage proclaimed a new kind of relationship with the outside world – a new type of internationalism, which went beyond official delegations, party meetings and diplomatic relations. The media promoted an idea of international culture, where the Soviet Union was viewed as an integrated part of the world in which communication with other countries was encouraged, not punished as it had been during the Stalin period. In *Ogonek*, Ivan Melekhov, a turner in a car factory, boasted of his language skills, "I already know fifty English words. It is, of course, little, but one can use gesture language, mimics, the language of the heart, and I am sure I will find new friends".¹²³ Interest in learning about others was also noted by foreign observers, like *World Student News* editor Ricardo Ramirez, who visited Moscow during the preparatory period. "There seems to be a mass movement to learn languages, to study the history, social life and culture of the participating countries", remarked Ramirez.¹²⁴ Another way of reshaping the relationship with the outside world was conducted through the discussion of Soviet culture. Besides introducing readers to the most prominent part of the Soviet cultural canon, including the acceptable parts of Tsarist Russian culture, texts and illustrations linked Soviet culture to "classic works of world culture", as viewed by the Soviet cultural establishment. While *Krokodil* welcomed old friends to Moscow, including the good soldier Svejik, Jonathan Swift's Gulliver, Rabelais's Gargantua, Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer, Cervantes's Don Quixote and Rudolph Raspe's baron Münchhausen, a cartoon published in *Smena* pictured how some of these "heroes of world literature", including Svejik and Don Quixote, alongside a domestic hero in the form of Khletaskov from Gogol's *Government Inspector (Revisor)*, might have celebrated in *festival'naia Moskva*.¹²⁵

On 27 July – a day before the start of the Moscow festival – *Komsomol'skaia pravda* published an article, "Our Soviet culture" (*Nasha sovetskaia kul'tura*). The article, which was written by the Minister of Culture, Nikolai Mikhailov, was part of a series of educational texts that offered concrete facts and arguments on Soviet culture for use in potentially provocative conversations with

122 RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 4c, d. 416, l. 2. Informatsiia o khode podgotovki k VII Vsemirnomu festivaliu molodezhi i studentov v Vene.

123 *Ogonek*, 30/1957, E. Riabchikov, "Idet festival".

124 *World Student News*, 5/1957, 6–10. Ricardo Ramirez, "Moscow Festival".

125 *Smena*, 14/1957, 8, "Geroi mirovoi literature na festivale"; *Krokodil*, 21/1957, 8–9.

foreign guests. One of the key themes of the article was to defend socialist realism as an art genre. Mikhailov wrote that socialist realism was born as a method to demonstrate the new revolutionary relationship with reality, stating that it was a product of the change that had occurred in living conditions. Mikhailov pointed out that, contrary to the usual conceptions in the West, socialist realism was in no way prescribed. Moreover, he criticized the view that Soviet artists were not interested in contemporary art and culture. Lastly, Mikhailov summarized the official Soviet conception of culture as a combination of different cultural traditions: “we want to take the best parts of foreign cultures and to develop our Soviet socialist culture”.¹²⁶

Another Western argument on Soviet culture that Mikhailov criticized was the supposed existence of a “cultural iron curtain”. With figures on the amount of translated and exported book titles, as well as Soviet mobility abroad (according to the article 4,280 different titles were translated in 1955, while in the USA the number was only 800), Mikhailov ridiculed the idea of cultural isolation. “How can we talk of an iron curtain, when the Soviet Union is the world leader in importing literature from other countries”, he asked.¹²⁷ Most importantly, Mikhailov praised Soviet culture and the educational system that was free for everybody. He encouraged young people to “propagandize the love and respect for the first country of workers and peasants” and reminded them that the World Youth Festival was going to be “a celebration of socialist culture”.¹²⁸ The implicit aim of this discussion was to show that Soviet culture was not isolated from the cultural trends of the outside world, but it was a part of what the Soviet cultural elite called “world culture”. Culture, cultured education and tastes were also discussed in numerous readers’ letters in *Komsomol’skaia pravda* during the run-up to the festival. There was, for example, discussion on what a cultured person should know about various forms of art, how to dress and dance aesthetically and whether ball room dancing belonged in a museum or an archive, rather than in the leisure activities of a modern young person.¹²⁹

Thousands of pages and hours of broadcasts covering the youth festival not only popularized the event to Soviet youths, but also enabled young people to

126 *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 27 July 1957, 2, N. Mikhailov, “Nasha sovetskaia kul’tura”.

127 For translations of foreign literature in the 1930s, see Clark, Katerina, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome. Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931–1941* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 16–20.

128 *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 27 July 1957, 2, N. Mikhailov, “Nasha sovetskaia kul’tura”.

129 *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 27 June 1957, 2, “Razgovor nachistatu prodalzaetsia”. Answers from readers to an article written by V. Ivanov and published by *Komsomol’skaia pravda* on 31 May 1957.

sense the multi-cultured atmosphere of the festival and, more importantly, mobilized them for service to the motherland. While the World Youth Festival could accommodate only a handful of Soviet young people, anyone could take part in the preparatory events, in local and regional festivals, volunteer work and creative production – all traditional forms of Soviet mass mobilization. According to stories published in the press, young people from Leningrad to Vladivostok took part in the preparations by producing gifts for foreign delegates or organizing local get-togethers, balls, evenings and even small festivals in honor of the World Youth Festival.¹³⁰ The international tone was embedded in an article that recounted the correspondence between the young workers of the Likhachev car factory in Moscow and those of the Csepel car factory in Budapest. According to the article, the young Hungarians were working extra hours to finish a milling machine for use in the festival. At the end, the hardest working of them would win tickets granting them access to the Moscow festival.¹³¹ Stories like that of the Likhachev factory workers created the feeling that although only a small minority of Soviet youth could be in Moscow in July-August, by engaging in the preparations, correspondence with foreign youths, or miniature youth festivals one could be part of something bigger and could contribute to the cause of peace. Besides mobilizing young people for the purposes of the festival, the implicit aim of the media coverage was to activate young people to work more efficiently for the socialist motherland.¹³²

Besides print media and radio, one could follow the youth festival through a fresh medium: television. With more than 200 hours of live coverage, the youth festival represented the first time in the history of Soviet television that ordinary people were seen on screen dancing and celebrating. Broadcasting the festival demonstrated the potential of television and gave a boost to its further development in the Soviet Union.¹³³ Like the print press and radio, television engaged Soviet people throughout the country by showing programs whose primary function was to educate citizens on the themes of the festival and to teach them foreign languages. Live broadcasts not only told of what was happening in Moscow but sought to engage people in other parts of the country with the

130 *Smena*, 13/1957, 15, K. Musiev, “Trud, mir, druzhba”.

131 *Ogonek*, 28/1957, 24, “Chepel’ – festivaliu”.

132 *Molodoi Kommunist*, 2/1957, 102, “Navstrechu festival’iu”; *Molodoi Kommunist*, 5/1957, 105, “Gotov li ty k festivaliu?”; *Council of the World Federation of Democratic Youth*, 1956, 13.

133 Roth-Ey, Kristin, *Moscow Prime Time. How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire That Lost the Cultural Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 238–239, 246.

festival in a way that print media and radio were unable to – as eyewitnesses.¹³⁴ In *Krokodil's* terms, spectators were “remote participants” in the festival, who, without being on the spot in Moscow, could see what was happening there and be a part of an international celebration.¹³⁵ As the American journalist Irvine Levine put it: “if by the time the festival actually got under way the populace of Moscow was *not* fully festival-minded, it was not the fault of television”, or of any other medium for that matter.¹³⁶

Western Reactions

Western governments, intelligence, and media had followed the World Youth Festival more or less since its beginning. They had taken advantage of various counter measures against the festival, most notably in a divided Berlin in 1951, but had shown declined interest in the Bucharest and Warsaw festivals. If they had not yet understood the potential danger of the Soviet-sponsored youth gathering, this became evident when Moscow was announced the host of the next celebration. Khrushchev's secret speech and the uprising in Hungary that shook the socialist bloc from within further increased Western interest in influencing young people in Eastern Europe. The West was certainly late in realizing the importance of this cultural exchange; however, Western authorities and political leaders were not so ignorant and passive as has been argued before.¹³⁷

A perspicacious report by CIA officers of 6 June 1957 paid attention to the advertised openness and inclusion of previously ignored international associations and assessed that organizing the festival as scheduled in the aftermath of Hungary “must have been regarded by the Kremlin as a calculated risk”. The CIA estimated that the purpose of the festival was to stabilize international communism after de-Stalinization had started; intensify Soviet influence on the Global South; and take

134 Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time*, 238–239, 246; Roth-Ey, Kristin, “‘Loose Girls’ on the Loose?: Sex, Propaganda and the 1957 Youth Festival”, in *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, edited by Melanie Ilic, Susan E. Reid, and Lynne Attwood (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 92–93.

135 *Krokodil*, 21/1957, 6, “FEK (Festival'naia entsiklopediia Krokodila)”, M. Vaiasbord, Ia. Dymskoi. On the experience of watching television, see e.g. Raleigh, Donald. J. *Soviet Baby Boomers. An Oral History of Russia's Cold War Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 59.

136 Levine, Irvine, *Main Street U.S.S.R* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1959), 161.

137 Barghoorn, Frederick, C., *The Soviet Cultural Offensive. The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 25–26; Hixson, Walter L., *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945–1961* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1997), 159–160, 223; see also Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 113.

tighter control over youth in socialist countries. The report considered the festival a major challenge to the US, “both a danger to be averted and an opportunity to be exploited”. Aware of the limited chances of conducting open propaganda inside the USSR, the intelligence officers thought they should try to exploit the budding disagreement within the communist countries and to influence educated Soviet youth who were starting to be curious about the world outside the Soviet borders. Based on the assessment of previous festivals, the report supposed there would be only limited opportunity for voicing dissent in Moscow; however, it believed a few Western participants would look for possibilities to express non-communist views on recent events.¹³⁸ In order to utilize these chances, the CIA covertly resourced the National Student Association, whose student activists flew to the USSR to spread alternative information among local people and to listen out for signs of the public mood via person-to-person contacts.¹³⁹

The possibilities for using the Moscow festival were discussed also within NATO member countries. The opportunity to conduct propaganda in Moscow was tempting, but the environment was not easy, as the materials from the NATO online archive demonstrate. There was a high risk that any official delegation from the West could be interpreted as a support for the festival’s idea and more broadly for the USSR and the socialist system. In August 1956, the Canadian delegation shared their authorities’ evaluation, according to which a single Western “official” delegation could not operate effectively at the festival but would need support from others. They maintained that a possible delegation should be strictly non-political, well-briefed, led by people who would communicate with their respective governments and embassies and who would absolutely not get involved in any discussions on organizational relationships with the WFDY and the IUS. Western cooperation apparently did not find support from the other countries, as the UK delegation related in a meeting in March 1957 that their government had decided not to send its own people but to rely on non-communist youth who were anyway going to Moscow and who had no illusions about the nature of festival. If briefed and organized, these young people could “voice Western views effectively”, the British thought.¹⁴⁰

138 CIA Archive, Central CIA records, Job no. 80–01445R, Box no. 1, folder no. 5, International Communism and Youth: The Challenge of the 1957 Moscow Festival, 6 June 1957, vi, 1–77.

139 Stern, Sydney Ladensohn, *Gloria Steinem. Her Passions, Politics, and Mystique* (Secaucus: Carol Publishing Group, 1997), 111–112; for CIA-funded student activities see also Wilford, Hugh, *The Mighty Wurlitzer. How the CIA Played America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 123–148.

140 NATO Archive, NATO confidential document AC/52-D/232, Committee on information and cultural relations, Sixth World Youth Festival, Note by the United Kingdom delegation, 26 March 1957; NATO Archive, AC/52-D/181, Committee on information and cultural relations, World Youth Festival – Moscow 1957, Note by the Canadian delegation, 14 August 1956.

Besides exploiting the Moscow festival for advancing Western agendas, the idea of organizing a NATO youth festival in the summer of 1957 was on the table in 1956. A document sketching this Western alternative to the Moscow gathering reveals that it would have been fully funded by NATO and was planned only for the young people of member countries. In terms of the programme, it would have been quite close to the World Youth Festivals, including cultural, artistic and sporting activities as well as performances and exhibitions by national delegations.¹⁴¹

While the discussion did not explicitly mention the World Youth Festival as the reason for planning a NATO youth festival, it underlined the fact that interest in cultural exchanges had increased enormously over the past few years and that therefore NATO should also answer that call.¹⁴² The documents from the NATO online archive do not reveal the origins or designer of the idea of a NATO festival or the reasons why it did not materialize. News of the plans, however, reached Moscow and, according to Soviet records, it would have been the Danish foreign minister who suggested organizing an alternative youth event.¹⁴³ When it was clear that the NATO festival would not be held, WFDY president Jacques Denis mocked the plan in *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, explaining that the whole thing had faded away “because youth did not support” such a “military festival”.¹⁴⁴ Based on Soviet monitoring reports, the Catholic Church and Pope Pius XII, one of the most fervent anti-Communist Cold Warriors, were also planning a competing event. According to Sergei Romanovskii, Pius XII advised Catholic youth to attend an event organized by the Vatican that ran simultaneously with the Moscow youth festival, proclaiming that “those who are with Christ travel to Rome, but those who are with the Anti-Christ travel to the festival in Moscow”.¹⁴⁵

141 NATO Archive, AC/52(CE)D9, NATO confidential document, Ad hoc meeting of senior officers of NATO countries concerned with government-sponsored cultural activities, 4 July 1956.

142 NATO Archive, AC/52(CE)D9, NATO confidential document, Ad hoc meeting of senior officers of NATO countries concerned with government-sponsored cultural activities, 4 July 1956.

143 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 454, l. 7. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, 13.2.1956; RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 454, l. 7. Sessiia ispolkoma VFDM, 1.–4.2.1956, A. Shelepin. The possibility of a counter-festival for the NATO countries' youth was still a topical issue in March 1957. RGANI, f. 5, op. 33, d. 31, ll. 18–22. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, 13.3.1957. The discussion on the idea of “a rally of Western European youth” was mentioned in a memorandum of the United States Foreign Office. FRUS, Telegram from the United States delegation at the North Atlantic Council Ministerial meeting to the Department of State, 17 December 1955, 43.

144 *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 28 July 1957, 3, Jacques Denis, “Vernyi kurs”.

145 TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 113, d. 23, ll. 30–31. Sergei Romanovskii. The meeting for youth held in Rome by the Vatican was also mentioned by Carlos Fonseca Amador, a Nicaraguan revolutionary

In the end, the United States chose a path of boycotting the Moscow festival. The US State Department openly discouraged Americans and young people from other NATO countries from attending the Moscow gathering and the largest youth organizations, the US National Union of Students and the Young Men's Christian Association, turned against the festival.¹⁴⁶ The fear was that American participants would be used as tools of Soviet propaganda. "Their pictures would be taken smiling with Russians, and then spread all over the world to show that we approve of what Russia did in Hungary", a State Department official pointed out.¹⁴⁷ Similarly cynical views were echoed in *The New York Times*, which described the festival as "one of Moscow's most expensive propaganda efforts in many years". The article supported exchange of ideas and free spontaneous communication in principle, but it emphasized that the festival was connected to communist propaganda: "it is clear that this huge and expensive spectacle would never have proved possible if the Soviet Government had not felt there were great propaganda dividends to be had". The article, nevertheless, foresaw that besides these gains, the Soviet government might brook propaganda pushback, since "the young people who have gone to Moscow are not blind". Therefore, the question arose: who was going to influence whom more in Moscow?¹⁴⁸

The US government's festival boycott has been viewed as a result of its failure to understand the potential of cultural exchange in the first decades of the Cold War.¹⁴⁹ While this holds true with regard to the concept of the World Youth Festival – the United States and its Western allies never put together anything like it themselves – in terms of separate festivals, this was not quite the case. CIA and NATO documents show that ways to use the festival for Western interests were pondered but the conclusion was that sending an official delegation with government sanction or an openly anti-Soviet group to Moscow would have been audacious. Although it seems – especially with hindsight – that the festival would have offered fruitful prospects for successful counter-propaganda, the

and delegate to the Moscow festival. Fonseca Amador, Carlos, *Un Nicaragiense en Moscu* (Managua: Silvio Mayorga [1958] 1981), 60.

146 Rosenberg, Victor, *Soviet-American Relations, 1953–1960. Diplomacy and Cultural Exchange during the Eisenhower Presidency* (London: McFarland & Co., 2005), 168.

147 *The New Republic*, 15 July 1957, 12–14, H. Wofford, "Moscow's Festival for Youth. Is the State Department Justified in Discouraging American Participation? I. The More Contacts the Better"; *The New Republic*, 15 July 1957, 14–15, H. Lunn, "II. The Department is Right". See also *The New York Times*, 19 July 1957, A6, "Pro-Reds Recruit U.S. Youths To Attend 'Festival' in Moscow".

148 *The New York Times*, 30 July 1957, 22, "Moscow's Youth Festival".

149 Barghoorn, *The Soviet Cultural Offensive*, 25–26; Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*, 159–160, 223; see also Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 113.

possibility that the organizers would have used the presence of a large delegation from the United States as proof of the festival's world-wide recognition was equally plausible. Also, the anti-communist aftermath of McCarthyism very likely contributed to the decision to keep away from Soviet-organized activities.¹⁵⁰

Through the spring and summer of 1957, Shelepin and his team closely followed information on boycotts and other counter-measures. They received information on various campaigns against the festival in Western Europe and in Scandinavia. They heard of withdrawals of support for the festival and of refusal to issue travel documents in several countries. In Argentina, the Catholic youth organization threatened those who were planning to take part in the festival with expulsion.¹⁵¹ The same threat was used in non-communist youth organizations in Western Germany, where police conducted house searches of the members of the West German festival committee.¹⁵² Two weeks before the start of the festival, the Party Central Committee made a last-minute move to make sure everything was under control. It sent out a circular to Soviet ambassadors, saying that the enemies were taking measures to disturb the festival. The circular called ambassadors to keep their eyes open and to prevent "reactionary forces" from placing their agents in foreign delegations. It also urged that they check the foreign delegations' performances so that Moscow would not be inundated with demoralized bourgeois culture. Finally, the circular emphasized the significant role the Moscow gathering played in propagandizing the achievements of the socialist camp.¹⁵³ From rank-and-file youths to ambassadors abroad the Soviet state and society were now ready to encounter the world and take a controlled risk.

150 On McCarthy's influence on US Cold War politics, see Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*, 52–55, 121–124.

151 RGANI, f. 5, op. 33, d. 31, ll. 18–22. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, 13.3.1957; RGANI, f. 5, op. 33, d. 38, ll. 107–108. N. Bobrovnikov, A. Shelepin, S. Romanovskii v TsK KPSS, 12.7.1957; *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 21 July 1957, 1, 3, "Oni boiatsia? Da, boiatsia. Festivalia Moskvvy, pravdy"; *The New York Times*, 26 July 1957, 3, "Thai Red Law Upheld. But Curbs Are Reported Eased for Soviet Fete", Bagdasarian et al., 2007, 105–106.

152 *The New York Times*, 19 July 1957, 7, "W. German Police Search Homes".

153 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, ll. 95–98. Sovposlam i poslannikam, 15.7.1957.

4 The Long-awaited Encounter with the World

18 June 1957, five weeks before the opening of the Moscow youth festival, a group of party leaders attempted to overthrow Nikita Khrushchev. The old Stalinists, Georgi Malenkov, Viacheslav Molotov and Lazar Kaganovich with their younger conspirators had grown dissatisfied with the way Khrushchev had handled Soviet foreign policy and the legacy of Stalin. Luckily, Khrushchev managed to defeat the opposition and personally welcomed foreign youths to the Kremlin reception five weeks later.¹ Had the coup succeeded, we would now have a different story to tell about the Moscow youth festival – an event that became one of the symbols of the Thaw. When the power struggle was waged behind the Kremlin walls, some of the foreign participants were already on their way to Moscow, and those who had not yet set off were preparing for their encounter with the number one socialist country. The Soviet press had told plenty of stories of the peoples and cultures around the world, but who were the actual visitors who would arrive in Moscow, and how would they perceive the USSR in the aftermath of the secret speech and the rising in Hungary?

“The World” in Moscow

Those who read Soviet newspapers in July-August 1957 might have felt as if the whole world had come to Moscow. Central newspapers reported on every foreign delegation’s arrival and pictures and headlines embraced “black, yellow and white people” highlighting the ethnic and geographical diversity of the guests.² According to the published statistics, the Moscow festival gathered 34,000 delegates from 131 countries, about 60,000 domestic tourists and an unfathomable number of Muscovites.³ The bureaucrats counted this crowd’s overall number of visits to various events at eight million.⁴ The WFDY, the IUS and the Soviet hosts had indeed managed to mobilize a more diverse group of people than ever before in the history of the event. Almost every state on earth had a representative in Moscow. This time there were more people from the Global

1 William Taubman, *Khrushchev. The Man and His Era* (London: Free Press, 2003), 313–314.

2 *Pravda*, 29 July 1957, 1, “Velichestvennaia demonstratsiia” (editorial); *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 31 July 1957, 1, “Mir voskhishchen!” (editorial); *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, August 3, 1957, 2; *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 2 August 1957, 2.

3 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 3, l. 196.

4 GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, l. 428. Minister vnutrennykh del Dudorov, 17.8.1957.

South and Asia than before; nevertheless, Europeans once again dominated the representation: 76 percent of all the delegates came from European countries (see Table 6). Besides the USSR’s delegation (3,719), the biggest contingents came from Finland (2,103), France (2,099) and Italy (1,854) – all countries with relatively large communist parties. The second largest proportion of delegates came from Asia, followed by Africa, Latin America, Australia & Oceania and then North America. The biggest delegations from outside of Europe were from China (1,566), Egypt (725), North Korea (460), and India (356). Approximately half of the delegations from Africa, Asia and Latin America were tiny: 51 of the Global South contingents consisted of between one and ten members.⁵

Tab. 6: Continental representation in Moscow 1957.

Continent	Countries	% of count.	Part.	% of all part.
Europe	31	23.7	25,808	76
<i>West</i>	22	16.8	14,534	42.8
<i>East</i>	9	6.9	11,274	33.2
North America	2	1.5	33	0.1
Latin America	25	19.1	1,014	3
Africa	40	30.5	1,489	4.4
Australia & Oceania	4	3.1	152	0.4
Asia	29	22.1	4,705	13.8
Honoured guests	–	–	491	1.4
Total	131	100	33,996	100

Source: *Le VIe Festival Mondial de la Jeunesse et des Etudiants*, Moscow: WFDY, 1957.

The organizers utilized every possibility to increase the number of countries present, and one single person was enough to represent “a country”. The list of 131 participating countries included 85 independent states (at the time the UN had 82 members)⁶ and 46 non-independent countries and regions, mostly from Africa and Latin America. Many of these regions gained independence between 1958 and 1975, including Algeria, Jamaica, Kenya and Malta. Soviet bureaucrats also listed regions that have still today not been established as independent states, such as India’s state of Goa and the French overseas states of Réunion,

⁵ *Le VIe Festival Mondial de la Jeunesse et des Etudiants*, Moscow: WFDY, 1957, 202–203; *Sixth World Youth Festival* (Moscow: WFDY, 1958), 187–189.

⁶ The United Nations, [<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/growth-in-un-membership#1950s>] (Accessed 16 December 2021).

Martinique, Guyana and Guadeloupe.⁷ Listing as many countries as possible was part of the strategy to construct the legitimacy of the festival, yet it was also a powerful political tool to support national liberalization movements in newly independent and soon-to-be-independent countries in the Global South at a time when colonialism was coming to an end. A few weeks prior to the festival, a Sudanese student at the Moscow medical institute Yosif Mukhamed Bushara told *Komsomol'skaya Pravda* about the importance of the festival in helping to develop the Sudanese youth movement, culture, and sports.⁸ During the festival, stories in *Komsomol'skaia pravda* devoted much space to delegations from Global South countries, showing them as equal to the delegates from Europe, and sometimes resembling celebrities, surrounded by fascinated locals. It was even noted when the first African delegate arrived in Moscow.⁹

The small proportion of Global South representatives and the subject of European numerical domination had been an acknowledged problem for a long time and was again discussed within the international preparatory committee. But even though there was political will to increase the quotas of Latin America, Africa and Asia delegations, the unequal possibilities for travelling and poor finances in Global South countries favoured European delegations.¹⁰ Whereas wealthier Europeans could do the festival trip in a few days, Global South delegates from much poorer countries had to use more time and more money to get there. The trip from Southern America to Europe took about three months by boat, and Australians and New Zealanders had to travel for more than a month to get to Moscow.¹¹ The mixture of high travel costs and modest financial resources meant that most Global South participants were entirely dependent on the financial support of the WFDY and the IUS. Another reason was the pressure coming from those European countries that had traditionally sent large delegations. The World Youth Festival had become very popular among European communist youth organizations, especially in France, Italy and Finland. Each World Youth Festival could only accommodate a limited number of delegates, and

7 *Le Vie Festival*, 1957, 202–3. For a list of colonial countries and the year of their independence, see Springhall, John, *Decolonization since 1945: The Collapse of European Overseas Empires* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), xii–xiii.

8 *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 2 July 1957, 2, Yosif Mukhamed Bushara, “Vmeste borot'sia za mir”.

9 See e.g. *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 24 July 1957, 1; *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 2 August 1957, 2; *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 11 July 1957, 3, “Pervyi afrikanskii delegat pribyl v Moskvu”.

10 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 22, ll. 7, 13–14. Stenogramma zasedaniia postoiannoii komissii MPK VI VFMS, 7–9.5.1957.

11 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 22, l. 9. Stenogramma zasedaniia postoiannoii komissii mezhdunorodnogo podgotovitel'nogo komiteta, 7–9.5.1957; Bresland, Charles, *Moscow Turned it on! Story of Australians at 6th World Youth Festival* (Sydney: Coronation Press, 1957), 1–2, 9.

Europeans alone could easily fulfil this quota. European organizations were not going to agree readily to diminish their delegations in order to give more places to delegations coming from other parts of the world.¹² The pressure was so great that only a couple of weeks before the festival started, the international preparatory committee raised the maximum number of delegates from 30,000 to 32,000 in order to meet some of the demand from foreign delegations.¹³

Besides the number of countries and delegates, political affiliation was a significant dynamic in legitimizing the status of the World Youth Festival. The organizers wanted to soften the communist label attached to the festival by emphasizing the diversity of their guests' political backgrounds and of the organizations represented.¹⁴ The organizers' statistics listed twenty-two international organizations, among them Soviet front-organizations (e.g. World Peace Council, Women's International Democratic Federation and International Organization of Journalists) as well as the World Assembly of Muslim Youth, the World Union of Jewish Students, the World Organization of Esperantist Youth and the International Philately Federation.¹⁵

The Soviet organizers estimated that only 40 per cent of the delegates belonged to Communist youth leagues or parties, which was much less than at the previous festivals.¹⁶ There was no systematic data kept on each delegation, but those reports on national contingents which indicated the share of communists in each national group show that there was considerable political variation between the groups. For example, 53 percent of the Finnish delegates belonged either to the Finnish Democratic Youth League or to the Communist Party of Finland.¹⁷ 10 percent of Belgians were communists and a further 14 percent were categorized as sympathizers.¹⁸ The Austrian delegation was 78 percent communist and members of the Free Austrian Youth (communist youth organization).¹⁹ 17 percent of the

12 RGANI, f. 5, op. 28, d. 363, l. 10. O deiatel'nosti VFDM, A. Shelepin, 18.1.1955; RGANI, f. 5, op. 33, d. 38, ll. 107, 113. N. Bobrovnikov, A. Shelepin, S. Romanovskii v TsK KPSS, 12.7.1957.

13 RGANI, f. 5, op. 33, d. 38, ll. 107, 113. N. Bobrovnikov, A. Shelepin, S. Romanovskii v TsK KPSS, 12.7.1957.

14 *Courtship of Young Minds. A Case Study of the Moscow Youth Festival* (New York: East European Student and Youth Service, 1959), 9–11.

15 *The Vith World Festival of Youth and Students for Peace and Friendship, Moscow July 28th–August 11th 1957* (Moscow: WFDY, 1957), 27.

16 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, ll. 155–158. N. Bobrovnikov, A. Shelepin, S. Romanovskii v TsK KPSS, 30.8.1957.

17 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 200, l. 1. A Report on the Finnish delegation.

18 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 197, l. 130. Informatsiia o Bel'giiskom delegatsii, 13.8.1957.

19 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, 197, l. 1. Otchet o rabote s avstriivskoi delegatsii na VI Vsemirnomo festivale molodezhi i studentov, 22 August 1957.

British participants were communists, 34 percent were Labour Party members, as well as 12 percent drawn from both Liberal and Conservative parties.²⁰

Whereas most European participants came from the ranks of communist and “democratic” youth leagues or their affiliates, visitors from the rest of the world were more heterogeneous in terms of political currents and affiliations. For example, CIA officials gauged that only 15 per cent of 160 US participants were communists or had leftist sympathies. The rest of the group were non-communist or even “militantly anti-communist”. What sounded even better for the intelligence officials was that, according to their sources, Americans formed an unorganized, leaderless, unbriefed, and unoriented group.²¹ Excluding the big delegations of China and North Korea, whose delegates came from the ranks of the local communist youth leagues, the rest of the Global South teams were formed more or less without a discernible pattern. Many delegations were made up of young people who were studying, working or traveling in Europe. For example, the delegations of French Guyana (10), Morocco (25), and Martinique (25) all studied in France. In Guadeloupe’s delegation of 28 representatives, 25 of them studied in France; 16 members out of the 36 Nigerian delegates studied in East Germany; most of the Sudanese delegates studied in the UK; and the majority of the US delegates were studying or working in Europe at the time of the festival.²² Another large group consisted of emigrants from the Soviet Union. The Uruguayan and Venezuelan delegations included emigrants from the Soviet Union and other European countries not specified in the report. The Canadian delegation contained 13 Doukhobors – members of a sect of spiritual Christians originating in the 18th century Russian empire – who wished to visit the land of their ancestors.²³

20 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 197, l. 58. Spravka o rabote delegatsii Velikobritanii na VI VFMS, v TsK VLKSM.

21 General CIA records, CIA-RDP80-01445R000100130001-3, Job no. 80-01445R, Box no. 1, folder no. 13, Report 1 December 1958, Between Two Communist World Youth Festivals: Moscow 1957–Vienna 1959, 19.

22 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 204, ll. 1–142. Summaries on the US delegations and the delegations from Latin America; RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 203, ll. 1–215. Summaries on working with African delegations at the Moscow festival. See also Kanet, Robert E. 1968, “African Youth: Target of Soviet African Policy”, *Russian Review*, 27, No. 2, 166.

23 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 203, ll. 50, 62, 103, 133. Reports on Moroccan and Sudanese delegations and the delegates from Portuguese colonies and Black Africa; RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 205, ll. 58–62, 109. Reports on the delegations from Uruguay and Ecuador; RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 204, ll. 78, 81, 82, 114, 136. Reports on the delegations from Argentina, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Bolivia and Guatemala. Tarasoff, Koozma J., “Impressions of my visit to the Soviet Union 1957”, *The Inquirer*, 4, No. 6, August 1957, 4–10.

The Moscow festival also attracted international media: 987 foreign journalists representing press, television and radio from 60 countries registered for the festival, including *The New York Times*, *The New York Herald Tribune*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Life*, *Reuters*, and *Columbia Broadcasting System*; 526 journalists came from the capitalist countries, and only 83 of them represented the communist media.²⁴ Among the foreign correspondents were Max Frankel of *The New York Times*, Daniel Schorr of CBC, and Cedric Belfrage, a journalist for a leftist American newspaper, *The National Guardian*, and the father of US delegate Sally Belfrage.²⁵ Besides international media, a few elderly honored guests celebrated with the multinational crowd of young people, aged 14 to 35 years. Professor Leo Weismantel from West Germany (69 years), Argentinean composer Gilardo Gilardi (68), Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet (55), and Chilean writer Pablo Neruda (53) travelled to Moscow to party with the younger guests. “I came to the festival because I feel connected with the young generation, and the questions that bother it”, explained Hikmet to *Komsomol’skaia pravda*.²⁶

Exploring the Unknown

The Moscow 1957 festival gathered a record number of foreign participants in the history of the event. What were the motives of these people for taking part? What did they expect to see in Moscow and what was their relation to the youth festival?

One of the participants was Peter Waterman, 21-year-old communist, who grew up in a leftist, middle-class Jewish family in the UK. Waterman had earlier attended the Berlin and Warsaw festivals and was working for the IUS magazine *World Student News* at the time. In February 1957, he was heading to Moscow in order to report on the festival preparations for his employer. During this trip, Waterman poured out his expectations for and feelings about traveling to the USSR for the first time.

Moscow. What will it be like? I feel in a way as if I was coming home after a 21-year long exile. And in the same way I am full of expectations and fears. I have heard too much about the Soviet Union and had my expectations smashed and replaced by something

²⁴ RGANI, f. 5, op. 33, d. 38, l. 106. N. Bobrovnikov, A. Shelepin, S. Romanovskii v TsK KPSS, 12.7.1957.

²⁵ *Ogonek*, 32/1957, 6, “My napisali ob etom”.

²⁶ *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 3 August 1957, 3, Nazim Khikmet, “Byt’ molodym – eto ochen’ otvetstvenno!”.

akin to hatred, or at least suspicion. I have met Soviet citizens without learning to like or trust them. Well, another 40 minutes and I begin to see.²⁷

Waterman's diary entry captures the contradictory feelings that many of his communist and non-communist peers shared. They were keenly awaiting a glimpse of the first socialist state with their own eyes, yet still they could not help thinking about the recent past, which had shown the country in a more complex light. The Secret Speech, the Hungarian rising and discussion of these topics in the non-leftist Western press had shaken the image of the socialist paradise. In Waterman's case, personal experiences with his Soviet co-workers at the *World Student News* editorial staff had also shaped his picture of the Soviet Union and international communism.

Moscow was a special place among the World Youth Festival host cities. Besides the traditional motives for attending – political conviction, peace activism and a cheap way of traveling – the capital of the first socialist country held a special appeal that even the happenings of 1956 had not been able to overshadow. For a 17-year-old American communist, Kim Chernin (1940–), the Soviet Union was both a land of revolution and her Russian-born Jewish parents' home country. Therefore she felt, like Waterman, that she was going home. "Here, something had happened to the world, people came together as sisters and brothers. We believed in the Russian Revolution, we believed in the revolution we would make in our own countries", she wrote in her memoir.²⁸ While socialism and Moscow appeared to Kim Chernin in terms of revolutionary romanticism, for many Global South youths, socialism was an alternative path of development for their native countries. Ali Sultan Issa from Zanzibar admired the Russian revolution and saw socialism as a solution for his own country.²⁹ An Indian participant, 29-year-old Pradip Bose, a democratic socialist by his own definition, wrote in an autobiographical account published in 1960 that if he could choose only one foreign country to visit, it would definitely be the Soviet Union, because it was there that "the most conscious and comprehensive transformation of human society in our time has been undertaken".³⁰ An Iraqi poet, Sadi Yūsuf, 23, also an admirer of Soviet socialism, took a risk and travelled illegally to the festival. "It was against every rule in Iraq,

²⁷ Peter Waterman's diary, February 1957, Moscow.

²⁸ Chernin, Kim, *In My Mother's House. A Daughter's Story* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1994), 266.

²⁹ Burgess, Thomas, "A Socialist Diaspora: Ali Sultan Issa, the Soviet Union, and the Zanzibari Revolution", in *Africa in Russia. Russia in Africa. Three Centuries of Encounters*, edited by Maxim Matusevich (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2007), 268–269.

³⁰ Pradip Bose, *Communism and Communist Systems. Some Reflections* (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications, 1995), 127.

because it was forbidden to go to the Soviet Union. We had to travel clandestinely via Syria.” On the way back, Yūsuf learned that someone had reported his and his fellow travellers’ names to the Iraqi authorities. Consequently, he moved to Kuwait until 1958, when the Iraqi regime was changed.³¹

The British Leon Rosselson represents perhaps the most common type of youth festival participant. Later a songwriter and author of children’s books, Rosselson was born to Jewish immigrant parents from Imperial Russia in 1934. He grew up in a communist family, where the *Daily worker*, discussions on politics, political songs, and various communist organizations were part of the everyday life. Such were the World Youth Festivals. In 1953, Rosselson, then a 19-year-old student at Cambridge University, joined the London Youth Choir, a left-wing political choir that was just about to head to the Bucharest youth festival. Singing, performing and getting acquainted with a variety of folk music traditions from around the world was at the heart of his experiences in Bucharest, Warsaw and Moscow.³²



Fig. 10: The festival pass of Finnish delegate Veikko Ruuska.

Source: The Finnish Labour Museum Werstas.

³¹ Huri, Yair, *The Poetry of Sadi Yūsuf between homeland and exile* (Eastbourne: Sussex academic press, 2006), 59.

³² Interview with Leon Rosselson, 13 April 2018.

The location of the festival was the decisive factor particularly among non-communist participants. Changes in Soviet foreign policy had made Moscow more approachable and the festival provided easy entry. Pushed by sheer curiosity to explore the unknown, many young foreigners utilized the festival simply as a means to visit the Soviet Union. These people were far more interested in wandering around the city, meeting locals and experiencing the fresh atmosphere of the post-Stalin Soviet Union than participating in the events of the official program.³³ A Canadian delegate, Nick Sherstobitoff, “was little interested in the festival – only wanted to see Russia from natural curiosity”.³⁴

Desire for knowledge prompted some people to join the festival and later share their experiences of Soviet society to others in the form of travelogues and articles. The great enthusiasm towards the USSR is partly explained by the fact that people simply did not know much about it. During the late Stalin period only a few foreigners had been allowed to visit the country, and even though these people – mostly foreign diplomats, correspondents and fellow travellers – had published travelogues on their visits, there was still relatively little available information about the USSR and its capital, “a city much talked about, but little known”, as the leader of the Eureka Youth League, Charles Bresland put it in his travelogue *Moscow Turned It on! Story of Australians at 6th World Youth Festival* (1957).³⁵

An American-British journalist and writer, 21-year-old Sally Belfrage (1936–1994) spent five months working for Foreign Languages Publishing House in Moscow after the youth festival and recorded her perceptions of Soviet society in a travelogue, *A Room in Moscow* (1958). Belfrage had little expectation in advance, but she felt a strong desire to see what the Soviet Union was like.³⁶ A Canadian visitor to Moscow, G. Alex Jupp (1927–2018), was also motivated by the chance of getting to know more about the country and reflected afterwards on his experiences in a travelogue, *A Canadian Looks at the U.S.S.R. A Firsthand View of Russian Life during the World Youth Festival* (1958). Jupp travelled to the festival as an observer, at his own cost, and explained that his book was “written in the hope that it may bring about a greater understanding of the Soviet Union, its people, and its system”.³⁷ Jupp was hesitant as to whether a capitalist “free society” was

33 Interview with a Finnish man, 30 March 2009.

34 Shertobitoff, Nick W. “Impressions of the Soviet Union and its People”, *The Inquirer*, 4, No. 9, November 1957, 4.

35 Bresland, *Moscow Turned it*, 1.

36 Belfrage, Sally, *A Room in Moscow* (London: Pan Books Ltd, 1959), 8.

37 Jupp, G. Alex, *A Canadian Looks at the U.S.S.R. A Firsthand View of Russian Life during the World Youth Festival* (New York: Exposition Press, 1958), 56.

the best system, since he had not been able to see how people lived under state socialism.³⁸ Similar travel stories on the USSR written in relation to the Moscow festival also appeared by the Nicaraguan socialist leader Carlos Fonseca Amador – *Un Nigaragüense en Moscu (A Nicaraguan in Moscow 1958)*, Columbian writer Gabriel García Marquez – *De Viaje por los países socialistas. 90 días en la “Cortina de Hierro” (Travels in socialist countries. 90 days behind the iron curtain, 1958)*, and an elderly West German professor Leo Weismantel – *Tagebuch einer skandalösen Reise (Diary of a Scandalous Trip, 1959)*.

Some visitors ended up in Moscow at very short notice, some quite accidentally. These people almost exclusively came from outside of Europe and were tempted into visiting Moscow by the recruitment campaigns organized by the WFDY and its member organizations. One of the “catches” of such campaigns was Robert Carl Cohen, a 27-year-old psychology student and documentary filmmaker from the United States, who was studying for a PhD in the Sorbonne University, Paris in 1957. Cohen noticed an advertisement in a British publication, which offered a journey to Moscow at a knockdown price. “For a total of £43, only about \$135.00 US at the time, it offered round trip rail transportation from London to Moscow, plus room & board in a student dormitory for two weeks.” In addition to the price, which was only a little more than Cohen’s monthly salary, he was fascinated by the idea of getting a chance to “learn something about life in the centre of Communist military and political power”.³⁹ Cohen managed to persuade some compatriots, also living in Paris at the time, to accompany him to Moscow. Among them was the cartoonist, later known as a children’s writer, Shel Silverstein (1930–99), who had already tried to visit the Soviet Union without success on a couple of occasions. At the time, Silverstein was working as a cartoonist for *Playboy* magazine. He produced a visual reportage from Moscow, which became part of a series of satirical cartoons from his trips around the world. The reportage consisted of rather docile political satire and photographs depicting Silverstein’s encounters with locals. The closest reference to the wider ethos of the *Playboy* magazine was a caption, which stated, “wherever he goes, even to a Russian railroad station, Silverstein finds pretty girls.”⁴⁰

38 Jupp, *A Canadian Looks*, 13–14.

39 Cohen, Robert Carl, *Forbidden Journey*, an unpublished memoir.

40 *Playboy*, March 1958, 59–62, “Silverstein in Moscow. Behind the iron curtain with Playboy’s unguided missile”, (quotation on page 62). The series was later published in one volume, Shel Silverstein, *Playboy’s Silverstein Around the World* (New York: Touchstone, 2007). On Shel Silverstein’s travelogues and the life, see Rogak, Lisa, *A Boy Named Shel: The Life and Times of Shel Silverstein* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2007), 24–25.

The World Youth Festival was not necessarily the main interest for all visitors, but a way to get to the Soviet Union. One of the foreigners who used the festival as a key to the country was the Columbian leftist writer and future Nobel laureate, 30-year-old Gabriel García Márquez (1927–2014). García Márquez was a leftist writer, “a Marxist of his own kind”, who had respect for Soviet achievements but also saw and criticized the defects of the system.⁴¹ Also working in Paris at the time, García Márquez had tried several times to obtain a visa for the USSR but authorities had refused it for lack of official sponsorship. When he heard about the youth festival from acquaintances living in East Berlin, García Márquez together with his friend, the Columbian writer Plinio Mendoza, decided to attend and joined the Columbian festival delegation by pretending to be folk musicians.⁴²

For ambitious, rising communist youth leaders, a multinational festival offered multitude of opportunities to establish contacts with the Komsomol and youth leagues from other socialist countries, or in some cases even get involved with espionage. Carlos Fonseca Amador (1936–76), later known as the leader of the Sandinista movement, travelled to Moscow as a representative of the Nicaraguan delegation. In his travelogue, *Un Nigaragüense en Moscu*, Fonseca Amador explains that the opportunity to attend the festival was offered him by the Nicaraguan poet Manolo Cuadra (1907–57), who arranged the trip and obtained funding for him. This was probably a polished version of events. The Partido Socialista Nicaragüense, PSN (the Nicaraguan Socialist Party), was more likely the funder of his trip.⁴³ Moreover, he was later recognized as a KGB agent with the codename GIDROLOG (hydrologist) by former KGB officer Vasili Mitrokhin. Apparently, Fonseca Amador later cooperated with Aleksander Shelepin, then the KGB head, in training new cadres and guerrillas to advance the revolution in Nicaragua.⁴⁴ Another possible KGB spy among the festival folks was Charles Bresland, leader of the Australian Eureka Youth League and a member of the Communist Party, who was connected to a Soviet spy drama, the Petrov affair. Vladimir Petrov, a KGB officer working at the Soviet embassy in Canberra, had made a deal with the Australian Security Intelligence Organization to provide

41 Bell-Villada, Gene, *García Márquez. The Man and His Work* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 64.

42 Martin, Gerald, *Gabriel García Márquez. A Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008), 221–222; Rupprecht, Tobias, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin. Interaction and Exchange between the USSR and Latin America during the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 54.

43 Fonseca Amador, Carlos, *Un Nicaragüense en Moscu* (Managua: Silvio Mayorga, [1958] 1981), 14–16; Zimmermann, Matilde, *Sandinista. Carlos Fonseca and the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 45.

44 Andrew, Christopher and Mitrokhin, Vasili, *The KGB and the World. The Mitrokhin Archive II* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 41–42.

information on Soviet espionage in exchange for political asylum. Bresland was questioned before the Royal Commission of Espionage in 1955 for his three trips to Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in 1954 and was suspected of being an agent of the Soviet foreign ministry. Bresland explained that even though the Komsomol paid for his trips, he had not given Soviet state bodies any information that would have harmed the interests of Australia. According to Peter Hruby, who has examined the connections between Australian and Czechoslovak agents, Bresland was a Soviet agent known by the code name COOK.⁴⁵

Whatever one's background was, the decision to take part in a festival trip was often a combination of youthful curiosity and the tempting offer to travel abroad at a very low cost. Numerous memoirs and interviews emphasized how cheap it was for an individual to attend the festival. According to Sally Belfrage they only had to pay for the journey from London to the Soviet border.⁴⁶ "Whatever their motives in coming, they are getting one of the cheapest tourist trips ever offered", maintained *The Manchester Guardian* in an article on British participation in the festival.⁴⁷ Family roots or family members living in the Soviet Union also featured as a motivation for travelling. Robert Cohen recalled meeting relatives, his mother's cousins Ida and Rose and their families, during the festival. He was the first family member from "the other side" that Ida and Rose had seen in 27 years.⁴⁸ Similarly, an Irish delegate mentioned that the festival gave him a chance to see his "cousin and aunt in Moscow, who had been out of contact since my uncle had to leave them in 1938".⁴⁹ It was also common that the trip to Moscow constituted only part of a wider journey within the world of socialism. Most of the delegates travelled to Moscow by train through Europe, which enabled them see other countries along the way, and some extended their journeys with longer stays in other socialist countries. According to Sally Belfrage, many British students combined the festival trip with a tour of Europe.⁵⁰ Gabriel García Marquez's (Berlin, Prague, Slovakia, Hungary, Ukraine) and Carlos Fonseca Amador's journeys included visits

45 *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 March 1955, "'Potential Recruit' System of M.V.D."; Hruby, Peter, *Dangerous Dreamers. Australian Anti-democratic Left and Czechoslovak Agents* (Iuniverse.com, 2010), 187, 223.

46 Belfrage, *A Room*, 8, 11.

47 Belfrage, *A Room*, 8, 9, 11; *The Manchester Guardian*, 27 July 1957, 1, "Young British in Moscow. Arrival for Festival".

48 Interview with Robert Cohen, 10 April 2010.

49 Interview with an Irish man, 31 January 2008. See also Chernin, *In My Mother's House*, 268 and GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, l. 257. Minister vnutrennykh del Dudorov v TsK KPSS, Sovet ministrov, MGK KPSS, TsK VLKSM, KGB, 27.7.1957.

50 Belfrage, *A Room*, 8, 11.

to various destinations in socialist Eastern Europe, which gave them a broader perspective of the existing socialist system. After the festival, Soviet hosts invited 7,000 festival guests to other Soviet cities on their way back home, while communist China hosted around 40 American and Western European delegates, including Sally Belfrage and Robert Cohen.⁵¹

The variety of reasons to get involved with the Moscow youth festival illustrates the ways in which individuals “re-appropriated” these trips for their own purposes, thereby contradicting with the organizers’ ideal vision of the participants’ roles in the peace and friendship performance. In the organizers’ view, the festival was a politically motivated gathering in which carefully selected and nationally representative delegations would manifest the ideas of peace and friendship through the achievements of their delegates in arts, sports and culture. Even if the architects of Soviet cultural diplomacy must have been proud of managing to attract so many non-communists to Moscow, their aim was by no means to offer cheap and entertaining holidays, just for the sake of travelling, paid for by the socialist states. In reality, they could not be too selective as to who could attend the festival and how. In order to tempt new groups and to extend the geographical reach of the event, Soviet organizers had to sacrifice their high principles and be content with every visitor, whatever she or he might think about the festival’s driving philosophy.

“The Second Spring of 1957”

On 28 July 1957, a pompous opening ceremony at the Lenin Stadium in Luzhniki launched the sixth World Youth Festival. The majority of the foreign delegates were transported to the ceremony in a colossal parade of 800 trucks and 16,000 participants. The procession from the Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy through the city centre and finally to the stadium took three and half hours. According to estimates by Soviet authorities, 2–3.5 million Muscovites and Soviet tourists gathered on the streets to watch.⁵² This was “more [people] than for Stalin’s victory parade”, estimated *The Manchester Guardian*.⁵³ Practically the

51 García Marquez, Gabriel, *De Viaje por los países socialistas. 90 días en la “Cortina de Hierro”* (Bogota: Ediciones Macondo, [1957 and 1959] 1981); Fonseca Amador, *Un Nicaragüense*; Belfrage, *A Room*, 8; Cohen, Robert, *Forbidden Journey*. RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 162. N. Bobrovnikov, A. Shelepin, S. Romanovskii v TsK KPSS, 30.8.1957.

52 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 187, l. 15. (No date, no title); GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, l. 428. Dudorov, 17.8.1957; Bresland, *Moscow Turned It*, 7.

53 *The Manchester Guardian*, 29 July 1957, 1, “Welcome from 2M. Russians”.

whole of Moscow had come to welcome the festival guests. Enthusiastic spectators crowded the streets and the windows, balconies and rooftops of nearby houses were pouring with curious Muscovites who craved to see at least a glimpse of the exotic foreigners. The crowd was so vast that it delayed the start of the opening ceremony for two hours.⁵⁴ Coverage of the parade in *Komsomol'skaia pravda* spoke of an atmosphere full of joy and expectation:

[P]articipants drive along Prospekt Mira. The pavements are packed with jubilant Muscovites. Every national flag is welcomed with greetings and good wishes. The flags of Australia, Bulgaria, Ghana, Egypt, Great Britain and many other countries are floating by. [. . .] Dissonant noise of the celebrating crowds – it is great, it has to be heard, it has to be remembered. [. . .] How few words people from five continents need to know to be able to understand one another on a day like this – a day of celebration of the world. Here are the words: peace, friendship, festival!⁵⁵

The US participant Robert Cohen recalled the parade as an emotionally touching moment. Muscovites ran alongside the trucks, handing out souvenir pins, ice cream bars and boxes of candy. “There were even Russians who climbed up on the sides of the trucks to embrace the Americans and other delegates.” Cohen thought that people had been encouraged to come and “give the World Youth Festival attendees a friendly reception”, but the scale of the locals’ response and its intensity was far larger than he had anticipated.⁵⁶ Foreign visitors had already been met with a warm-hearted reception on their way to Moscow, at railway stations, harbours and airports, where local youths greeted foreigners with huge bouquets of flowers, smiling faces, dancing and singing, and live music played by small orchestras. The Australian communist youth leader Charles Bresland remarked that ordinary people in their casual outfits came to cheer the Australians on their way to Moscow, giving little gifts and “showers of flowers”.⁵⁷

All visitors were not so excited by the parade. Some American participants worried that they were being used for propaganda purposes and did not accept a banner with the slogan “the USA delegation salutes the VI World Festival”, which was provided for them by the organizers. Many of them took the word “delegate” to signify formal support for the festival, and consequently the slogan

⁵⁴ Khrushchev, Sergei, *Nikita Khrushchev. Reformer* (Moscow: Veche, 2010), 530; Semichastnyi, Vladimir, *Bespokoinoe serdtse* (Moscow: Vagrius, 2002), 68.

⁵⁵ *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 29 July 1957, 1, “Millionny moskvichei pozhali ruki delegatam VI Vsemirnogo” (Editorial).

⁵⁶ Cohen, Robert Carl, *Forbidden Journey*; similar positive remarks in *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 29 July 1957, 4, B. Val'nichek, “Bratsvo i družba”.

⁵⁷ Bresland, *Moscow Turned It*, 2, 4; Interview with Finnish festival delegates, 16 March 2006.



Fig. 11: Festival participants were transported to the Lenin Stadium in trucks.
Photographer: Reino Koivunen.
Source: Private collection.



Fig. 12: Almost the whole Moscow had come to welcome the foreign visitors.
Photographer: Sinikka Tuominen.
Source: The Finnish Labour Museum Werstas.

was modified to “USA participants salute World Youth”.⁵⁸ Similar reservations regarding Soviet celebration practices appeared among the British delegates. According to an eyewitness account, a British theatre group commented on the mass singing of the official festival anthem by attaching a banner to their bus that stated “This bus does not sing”.⁵⁹

The Olympic style opening ceremonies at the recently built Lenin Stadium began with a march, in which each national delegation entered the stadium in uniforms, carrying flags and other national symbols. Members of the Australian delegation were dressed in their uniform of a green Bermuda jacket with an outline of Australia and a kangaroo in the centre. The Germans carried a huge bear, the British delegation included an orchestra of bagpipers, and the Dutch marched in clogs.⁶⁰ The procession was followed by traditional mass performances with thousands of Soviet gymnasts and athletes. For the final spectacle, five thousand performers formed the word “peace” in Russian, English, French, German, Spanish and Chinese. The show ended with the release of thousands of white doves specially bred for the festival.⁶¹ The Soviet organizers had attempted to avoid any direct references to politics and left out the traditional gallery of communist leaders, seen at many previous festivals. Instead, the city was filled with Picasso’s peace doves, pictures of smiling young people, flags of the participating countries and the official emblem, the five-petal, multi-coloured flower.⁶² Only the obligatory portraits of Lenin, which decorated one of the ends of the stadium, and the Egyptian delegation, with a portrait of President Gamal Abdel Nasser, sullied the idea of a visually intact celebration.⁶³ *The Manchester Guardian* correspondent presumed that Nasser’s poster was surely an embarrassment to the organizers, who

58 Interview with Robert Cohen, 10 April 2010; Interview with Peter Waterman, 4 March 2008; *Courtship of Young Minds*, 1959, 18; *The New York Times*, 31 July 1957, 4, “2 U.S. Youths Quit Rally in Moscow”.

59 Heilpern, John, *John Osborne. The Many Lives of the Angry Young Man* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 230–231.

60 Bresland, *Moscow Turned It*, 6, 9; Golovanov, Jaroslav, *Zametki vashego sovremennika* (Moskva: “Dobroe slovo”, 2001), 76.

61 GARF, f. R-7576, op. 22, d. 14, ll. 42–43, 66. Sportivno-gimnasticheski vystupleniia; GARF, f. R-7576, op. 22, d. 16, ll. 3–5. Predlozheniia k Vsemirnomu festivaliu molodezhi v g. Moskve 1957 g.

62 *Smena*, 14/1957; *Ogonek*, 31/1957; *Shestoi vsemirnyi festival’ molodezhi i studentov*, Moscow, 1957; Zubkova, Elena, *Russia after the War Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945–1957* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 200.

63 Weismantel, Leo, *Tagebuch einer skandalösen Reise* (Neumünster: Weltkreis Verlags, 1959), 87; *The New York Times*, 4 August 1957, 3, “Moscow Youth Festival Completes Its First Week”; *Courtship of Young Minds*, 1959, 18.

had done their utmost to put together an apolitical gathering.⁶⁴ Visual reminders about the recent past were seen also in the Moscow cityscape and around the country. The Nicaraguan communist Carlos Fonseca Amador wondered in his travelogue why there were still Stalin statues in the country, but none of Khrushchev, concluding that the continuing presence of representations of Stalin meant that he was still highly regarded and enjoyed wider support than his heirs did.⁶⁵



Fig. 13: Participants at the opening ceremony of the Moscow 1957 festival.
Source: Finnish Labour Museum Werstas.

American delegate Kim Chernin found in the opening ceremony something she had never experienced before. “I felt that I was weeping with joy, and a peculiar, arching sadness. This ecstasy grew greater as we entered the stadium.”⁶⁶ Soviet reporters recorded similar reactions. According to a Komsomol official, Albanian delegates celebrated at the opening ceremony almost in tears, and when asked about their feelings, they replied: “we cannot answer, this is just

⁶⁴ *The Manchester Guardian*, 1 August 1957, 1, “Free Speech in Moscow. No Counter-revolution yet”.

⁶⁵ Fonseca Amador, *Un Nicaragüense*, 40.

⁶⁶ Chernin, *In My Mother’s House*, 272–273.

like a fantasy, a dream.”⁶⁷ For a Swiss participant, the festival and the warm relations between Hungarian and Soviet people cast the Hungarian events of 1956 in a new light.⁶⁸ One of the most important gestures for the Soviet authorities was that the Yugoslav delegation attended the World Youth Festival for the first time since the split between Stalin and Tito. While entering the stadium, Yugoslavs shouted “Moskva-Belgrad” as if no disagreements between the two countries had ever existed.⁶⁹ While many accounts praised the warm welcome and friendly atmosphere, various tensions simmered away beneath the surface. Soviet officials noted strained relations between Arab and Israeli delegates, a repercussion from the Suez crisis a year earlier. An Egyptian even shouted “Nasser, Nasser” while the Israel delegation marched to the stadium.⁷⁰ *The Manchester Guardian* made a similar observation about tense relations between French delegates and Algerians, who “nearly caused a riot at the agricultural exhibition when after a heated exchange they began shaking fists”.⁷¹ One setback in the regime’s attempts to gain recognition of the festival as a recognized event came when a representative of UNESCO, the French writer Jean Chevalier (1906–93), departed the stadium as the opening ceremony was about to begin. He later explained that the US representatives had complained about a UNESCO representative playing an official role in the festival program, which prompted him to leave.⁷² Apparently, there had been discussion within the NATO countries about a common policy to decline any invitations to the festival events to avoid showing official support.⁷³ Chevalier had either not heard of this or wanted to follow his own path.

On the days following the opening ceremony, the Soviet press continued to embrace the world, echoing the shift from the Stalinist model of suspecting every foreigner of being a spy to the more optimistic idea of regarding foreigners as potential new friends and tolerating those who did not share the same thinking.⁷⁴

67 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 197, l. 13. Otchet o rabote albanskoi delegatsii na VI Vsermirmom festivale molodezhi i studentov, 24.8.1957.

68 TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, ll. 37–41. Informatsiia 8.

69 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 196, ll. 51–53. Informatsiia o iugoslavskoi delegatsii, Belostotskaia.

70 TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, l. 43. Informatsiia 8.

71 *The Manchester Guardian*, 1 August 1957, 1, “Free Speech in Moscow. No counter-revolution yet”.

72 GARF, f. R-9518, op. 1, d. 8, ll. 184–185. Zapis’ besedy s nachal’nikom otdeleniia biuro po sviazi s gosudarstvami chlenami Iunesko Zhanom Sheval’e, 29.7.1957, iz dnevnika Mal’deva A. F.

73 NATO Archive, NATO secret working paper, Committee of Political Advisers, Sixth World Youth Festival –Moscow, 28th July–11th August 1957, AC/119-WP/53, 19 July 1957.

74 Hopf, Ted, *Reconstructing the Cold War. The Early Years, 1945–1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 199, 223.

Ogonek anticipated that “no one during these days will be surprised if two people completely unknown to each other shake hands on the street, embrace and separate as friends”.⁷⁵ Perhaps the most surprising story of contacts between Soviet people and foreigners was a meeting between a Soviet World War Two veteran, Mikhail Polyskalov, and a French girl, Simona Karo. Polyskalov had made friends with the French girl’s family during the war and Simona’s mother had sent a letter to *Komsomol’skaia pravda* asking about their Soviet friend, from whom they had not heard anything after the war. With the help of the article, Polyskalov was found and a meeting organized.⁷⁶ During the festivities, another Soviet soldier who had got acquainted with the Karo family, Nikolai Lakhno, contacted *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, and his letter to them was published on the front page.⁷⁷ A significant point in this amazing story was that Polyskalov and Lakhno had both been prisoners of war – persons who had previously been labelled by the Soviet authorities as suspicious because of their contact with the enemy. Another point that indicated a change in views on foreign contacts was the fact that *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, an organ of the Komsomol Central Committee, assisted the French girl in finding her friends. Apparently, this was an example of the “cultured service” for foreigners.

In addition to the new kind of relationship with foreigners, the Soviet press signaled to the Soviet people that their country was adored and respected. *Komsomol’skaia pravda* described how love toward the USSR and its people could be felt everywhere, “in joyous greetings of visitors resounding to us from bus windows, in delegates’ hectic pursuit to see everything, embrace, remember”.⁷⁸ Tellingly, *Ogonek* and *Krokodil* chose to depict the festival as a second spring, a metaphor of rebirth and revival, often used to describe the atmosphere of Khrushchev’s Thaw.⁷⁹ Viewing the Moscow festival in this context symbolically linked the celebration to the Thaw and rapprochement with the West. Emphasizing bright colours and lively voices implied that after the grim and silent years of Stalinist repression, a new era had begun.

⁷⁵ *Ogonek*, 32/1957, 2, “Sobralas’ na festival’nyi praznik molodezhnaia sem’ia”.

⁷⁶ *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 31 July 1957, 1, “Oni vstretilis!”.

⁷⁷ *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 5 August 1957, 1, “Eshche odin drug sem’i Karo”.

⁷⁸ *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 28 July 1957, 1, “My chuvstvuem vashu liubov” (editorial); on love as a special theme in Soviet press coverage of the festival, see Roth-Ey, “Loose Girls”, 78–82.

⁷⁹ *Ogonek*, 32/1957, 2, “Sobralas’ na festival’nyi praznik molodezhnaia sem’ia”; *Krokodil*, 21/1957, 11, risunok Tseian Fania (China), “Vtoraia vesna v Moskve”.

Mapping the Performance of Peace and Friendship

After the spectacular opening ceremony, Peter Waterman, Sally Belfrage, Pradip Bose, Kim Chernin and other foreign delegates were busy taking part in the myriad events that the festival program provided around the Moscow city centre.⁸⁰ Statistics illuminate the great variety and the enormous size of the Moscow festival with an all-embracing selection of contemporary cultural forms. According to the Soviet authorities' summaries (see Table 7), the festival featured 670 concerts, 88 circus performances, 39 meetings of young professionals and enthusiasts, cultural competitions in 21 categories, sporting competitions in 23 sports, 10 mass events, art and photography exhibitions in Gorky Park, a film festival, and a special student program at Moscow State University.⁸¹ All tourist attractions, including the Lenin-Stalin mausoleum, the GUM department store, museums and the Lenin library, were open to visitors free of charge, and special excursions around the Moscow region made it possible to see other parts of the capital area. A guidebook for Soviet lecturers bragged that the program of the Moscow festival was so massive that if one person had attended every event it would have taken them 95–100 years.⁸² “It would be good if the festival continued a whole year so that one could see everything”, commented an English delegate to *Komsomol'skaia pravda*.⁸³ Some speculated that the rich program was one of the strategies to keep festival guests busy and away from the places and people that organizers wanted to keep them away from.⁸⁴ Many festival attendees also mentioned that the program was so wide that it was difficult to choose where to go.⁸⁵ A limited number of tickets for every delegation, without any guarantee of getting tickets to a specific spectacle or event, further complicated arranging one's schedule. In fact, the distribution of tickets was an on-going sore point at World Youth Festivals. Complaints on this topic came at every festival, but it was not always the organizers' fault. Control of the distribution of tickets was usually in the hands of delegation leaders, and

80 For a summary of the full programme, see *VI Vsemirnyi festival' molodezhi i studentov. Sbornik materialov* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1958), 121–125.

81 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 83, ll. 41–43. Dopolnenie k soobshcheniiu ob itogakh VI-go festivalia, 25.8.1957. Slightly different numbers are given in the final report on the results of the festival, RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 173. N. Bobrovnikov, A. Shelepin, S. Romanovskii v TsK KPSS, 30.8.1957.

82 Kurantov, A. *Prazhnik molodosti. Vsesoiuznyi i vsemirnyi festivali molodezhi* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo kul'turno-prosvitetiel'noi literatury, 1957), 16.

83 *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 8 August 1957, 1, “Den' dvenadtsatyi”.

84 Aksiutin, Iurii, *Khrushchevskaia "ottepel'" i obshchestvennye nastroeniia v SSSR v 1953–1964 gg* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), 243; *Courtship of Young Minds*, 1959, 5–8, 17.

85 Interview with Finnish festival participants, 16 March 2006.

there was very little that the organizers could do if the leaders did not pass on the tickets.⁸⁶

Tab. 7: Events and Participants in the Moscow 1957 Festival programme.

Event	Participants/Visitors
Motorized parade before the opening ceremony	3,5 million
Opening ceremony	120,000
Manifestation of peace and friendship	500,000
Girls' party	25,000
Planting of trees in Park Kultury	10,000
Celebration of labour	70,000
24 professional meetings	8,000
15 meetings of interest groups	2,000
Solidarity evening for colonial youth	24,000
Celebration of rural youth	75,000
Ball at the Kremlin	40,000
Circus performance	60,000
Aqua party	120,000
Carnival	2 million
670 (791)* Concerts	10 million
88 Circus performances	–
Cultural competitions	3,900
Art exhibitions 4000 works of art displayed (amount of visitors not given)	
Photo exhibition 1500 photographs displayed (amount of visitors not given)	
Visits to schools, factories, institutes	40,000 (42,000)*

⁸⁶ See e.g. RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 197, l. 61. Spravka o rabote delegatsii Velikobritanii na VI VFMS, v TsK VLKSM, 22.8.1957.

Tab. 7 (continued)

Event	Participants/Visitors
Visits to kolkhozes	8,000 (12,250)*
273 (500)* Inter-delegation meetings	–
20 Student seminars	80,000
Participants in the Student club	96,000
Student carnival	30,000
21 Art and film competitions	3,100

Source: RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 83, ll. 41–43. Dopolnenie k soobshcheniiu ob itogakh VI-go festivalia, 25.8.1957; RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 173. N. Bobrovnikov, A. Shelepin, S. Romanovskii v TsK KPSS, 30.8.1957. * Figures given in brackets indicate the numbers mentioned in the final report of the festival to the CPSU CC.

Soviet press highlighted mass events and demonstrations, such as a solidarity evening of colonial youth, an aqua party on the Moskva river, and a demonstration against atomic weapons on the anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing on 6 August on Manezhnaia Ploshchad.⁸⁷ Politically, the most symbolic “mass event” was a ball organized at the Kremlin, where Khrushchev and those members of the Soviet government who had not been caught for plotting against Khrushchev, including Beliaikov, Mikoyan, Furtseva, Kosygin, Pervukhin, Kuusinen, Zhukov and Bulganin, celebrated with foreign delegates. Visitors were treated to Russian cuisine with traditional pastries, pies and beer made according to a recipe dating back to the 18th century and they saw the old churches, halls and art collections of the Kremlin palaces and the famous Tsar Bell.⁸⁸ Entertainment featured also foreign trends as a British band, John Hasted’s Skiffle and Folksong Group, performed at the reception.⁸⁹ The Kremlin ball was a powerful sign of the changed atmosphere in Soviet society. The new post-Stalin regime was not only present but also approachable. The most daring foreign guests

⁸⁷ *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 7 August 1957, 1, “500.000 vyshli na miting. ‘Net!’ govoriat oni atomnoi bombe”; *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 7 August 1957, 2, “Pust’ eto ne povtoritsial!”; *Sixth World Festival of Youth and Students*, 1958, 60–65, 90, 100–104; see also *The New York Times*, 7 August 1957, 3, Max Frankel, “Soviet Festival Marks Hiroshima”.

⁸⁸ RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 223, ll. 1–86. Country lists of participants at the Kremlin ball. The invitations were given to around 2 to 20 people from each delegation; *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 4 August 1957, 5–6, “Sred’ shumnogo bala. 15 000 gostei v Moskovskom Kreml’e”.

⁸⁹ Harker Ben, *Class Act. The Cultural and Political Life of Ewan MacColl* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 121.

approached the Soviet premiere and shook hands with Nikita; a Zanzibari delegate, Ali Sultan Issa, even danced with the first female member of the CPSU presidium, Ekaterina Furtseva.⁹⁰ Dancing with foreign youths in the Kremlin helped to generate a new image of the Soviet leadership and had symbolic significance in respect to Khrushchev's attempts to ease tensions with the West. The impression the Soviet organizers aimed to encourage was that if a Soviet leader could dance and shake hands with Western youths, he had to be sincere in his aims for peaceful coexistence. This was exactly the kind of publicity that the US government wished to avoid, and therefore the US ambassador to Moscow, Llewellyn Thompson, like a number of other Western diplomats, declined his invitation to the ball.⁹¹

As with the earlier festivals, the program emphasized classical and folk cultures. In addition to the traditional cavalcade of world culture performed by different national delegations, the astoundingly wide cultural program indulged visitors with the best parts of Soviet culture: classical ballets performed by the Bolshoi theatre, such as Piotr Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*, Sergei Prokofiev's *Stone Flower* and Aram Khachaturyan's *Gayaneh*; folk groups from all around the country and circus spectacles, featuring the stars of Soviet cultural life, such as the ballerina Galina Ulanova (1910–98), and the clown Oleg Popov (1930–2016).⁹² The cultural competitions, organized in the Hall of Columns at the House of the Soviets, provided an international stage for young performers in a wide variety of arts, including classical solo instruments, ballet, folk music and dance, amateur choirs, theatre, circus, fine arts and photography.⁹³

90 Bresslein, Erwin, *Drushba! Freundschaft? Von der Kommunistischen Jugendinternationale zu den Weltjugendfestspielen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fisher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1973), 104; Interview with Finnish festival participants, 16 March 2006; TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, l. 91; RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 251, l. 49. Delegatsiia Niu Zeelandii. V. Poniataev, 24.8.1957; *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 6 August 1957, 1, "Iazyk druzhby – nash obshchii iazyk"; Issa's memoirs, which were published in a series of articles in a local newspaper after the Moscow festival, were cited in Burgess, "A Socialist Diaspora", 269.

91 *The New York Times*, 6 August 1957, 11, "Khrushchev Lets Food Punctuate Friendship".

92 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 16, ll. 30–32. Prikaz ministerstva kul'tury nro 268, 29.4.1957, (appendix); *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 30 July 1957, 3, M. Larova, "Tol'ko nachalo. Torzhestvennyi kontsert sovetskoi delegatsii".

93 *Sixth World Festival of Youth and Students*, 1958, 57; *Izvestiia*, 21 July 1957, 3, Val. Gol'tsev, "Sorevnovanie talantov"; Koivunen, Pia, "The World Youth Festival as an Arena of the 'Cultural Olympics': Meanings of Competition in Soviet Culture in the 1940s and 1950s", in *Competition in Socialist Society*, edited by Katalin Miklóssy and Melanie Ilic (London: Routledge, 2014), 125–141.



Fig. 14: Planting trees in a Friendship Park.
Photographer: Yrjö Lintunen, People's Archive, Helsinki.

Sporting events constituted another large part of the program. The III Friendly Youth Games were organized by the Soviet Olympic Committee and were introduced as a high profile sporting contest comparable to the summer Olympics, featuring socialist sport stars like long-distance runners Vladimir Kuts (1927–75) from Ukraine and Emil Zátopek (1922–2000) from Czechoslovakia, Soviet gymnast Larissa Latynina (1934–), rower Viacheslav Ivanov (1938–) and sprint canoer Elizaveta Dement'eva (1928–), all of whom had been successful in the Melbourne Olympic Games a year earlier.⁹⁴ 1,872 athletes attended the Friendly Games (360 from France, 180 from Italy, 100 from Finland and 300 from the USSR) and around one million spectators watched the competitions.⁹⁵ As with the festival's earlier

⁹⁴ *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 30 July 1957, 1, I Mel'nikov; M. Fomichev, "Estafeta priniala Moskva"; *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 31 July 1957, 3; *Pravda*, 9 August 1957, 6, "Druzheskie igry". For the history of the Friendly Games, see Lesnykh, Lidia, "Sport at the World Festival of Youth and Students: Between Olympic Ideals and Socialist Internationalism", *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living* 2:567095, 2020, 1–15.

⁹⁵ RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 184, ll. 1–26. Otchet Mezhdunarodnogo orgkomiteta po provedeniiu sportivnykh sorevnovanii na VI Vsemirnom festivale molodezhi i studentov v Moskve. G. Emiseev, V. Vanin. The figures given in the final report were much larger (4,156 participants from 46 countries). RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, ll. 175–176. N. Bobrovnikov, A. Shelepin, S. Romanovskii v TsK KPSS, 30.8.1957.

sports matches, numerous national sporting unions and associations forbade their athletes from attending the games.⁹⁶ In order to bring over the best athletes from the West, Soviet organizers attempted to appeal to the non-leftist sporting world by repeatedly stressing that although the games were held simultaneously with the festival, they were nonetheless a stand-alone event. In the Soviet media, however, sport and athletes were very much a part of the performance of peace and friendship.⁹⁷ Rather than fierce competitors, athletes were shown as missionaries of friendship, who, after they had left the sporting arena, sang the hit song of the festival *Podmoskovnye vechera* (*Moscow nights*), together.⁹⁸ In a feature article in *Ogonek*, the Czech long distance runner Emil Zátopek offered a glimpse into the world of the athletes by talking about his warm relationships with his foreign competitors, which included sharing training tips and exchanging letters outside of competition. “It is possible that there is unhealthy competition in sports”, wrote Zátopek. “This never takes place at the youth festivals, where the most important things are friendship and mutual assistance”.⁹⁹

Free Discussion

Freedom of expression was at the heart of Western criticism of Soviet society. It was not surprising then that Western coverage of the Moscow festival concentrated on investigating whether it truly offered possibilities for “genuine exchange of opinions” and on finding out what the true role of Soviet youth was in the spectacle.¹⁰⁰ The US press was sceptical about the voluntary nature of local festival participation, and tended to depict Soviet young people as either forced or indoctrinated to fulfil their duties in official celebrations. This “victim narrative” was beneficial to the opponents of the USSR, and therefore there

96 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, ll. 175–176. N. Bobrovnikov, A. Shelepin, S. Romanovskii v TsK KPSS, 30.8.1957.

97 *Ogonek*, 32/1957, 28–29, V. Viktorov; A. Kuleshov, “Geografia družby. Tret’i mezhdunarodnye sportivnye igry molodezhi”; Kurantov, *Prazhnik molodosti*, 18. For a western commentary on this, see *The Observer*, 28 July 1957, 14, George Sherman, “Fun and Games”.

98 *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 4 August 1957, 3, E. Obminskii, “Ne za budutsia podmoskovnye vechera”.

99 *Ogonek*, 31/1957, 13, Emil Zátopek, “Samoe prekrasnoe”.

100 See e.g. *The New York Times*, 4 August 1957, E2, “Youth to Moscow”; *The New York Times*, 11 August 1957, 169, Max Frankel, “Voices of America in Moscow”; *The Manchester Guardian*, 16 August 1957, 1, Victor Zorza, “Leaven of Western youth in Russia. Unforeseen ferment from the Moscow Festival”.

was no need to change it, even though there would have been evidence of the opposite.¹⁰¹

Free discussion was one those issues that Soviet authorities had targeted for their plans to construct a new kind of image of the country and its youth. Particularly illuminating in this respect were the student seminars and meetings for religious groups, whose purpose was to prove that Western views of the Soviet Union as a totalitarian and suppressive state did not correspond to reality by attesting that Soviet youth could speak freely and religious practice was acceptable.¹⁰² In a series of strikingly similar articles, *Komsomol'skaia pravda's* correspondents told of “hot debates” that had taken place between discussants in various student meetings. Another distinctive feature that the articles on student meetings repeatedly addressed was debate over the Hungarian rising. Represented as a spontaneous act, it was more likely a performance that followed a specific pattern. It started with a question raised by one of the participants – usually a Westerner – concerning the Soviet version of the Hungarian happenings. This comment was followed by a detailed explanation from a Hungarian participant, who offered the officially sanctioned version about a Fascist counterrevolution, coloured and confirmed by his or her eyewitness commentaries.¹⁰³ It is glaring that the Hungarian rising was the only politically or culturally sensitive issue that *Komsomol'skaia pravda* frequently mentioned in its festival coverage. Given that the Soviet press was still closely controlled during the Thaw, confining discussion to Hungarian events could not be a coincidence.¹⁰⁴ It seems that Komsomol leadership had chosen to address the topic that Soviet youth was most likely to face in its encounters with foreigners. Soviet monitoring reports indicated that the Hungarian case was widely discussed among foreign youth and was a frequent topic in foreign media. The rationale behind the decision might also be linked to the popular moods among the Soviet people. The Hungarian rising was by some margin the most frequently raised topic among people convicted of political dissent around this time.¹⁰⁵ By

101 Peacock, Margaret, “The Perils of Building Cold War Consensus at the 1957 Moscow World Festival of Youth and Students”, *Cold War History* 12, No. 3, 2012, 9–11.

102 On the student programme, see Gerasimova, O. G. “*Ottepel*”, “*zamoroziki*” i studenty Moskovskogo universiteta (Moscow: Airo, 2015), 387–395.

103 See e.g. *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 5 August 1957, 2, A. Sukontsev, I. Shatunovskii, “Razgovor o pravakh cheloveka”; *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 11 August 1957, 3, S. Bol'shakova, B. Pankin, “Molodoi spetsialist vstupil v zhizn”; *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 1 August 1957, 2, E. Syrtsov, A. Mashin, “Govoriat pisateli piati kontinentov”.

104 On the Soviet press, see Wolfe, Thomas, *Governing Soviet Journalism. The Press and the Socialist Person after Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

105 Hornsby, Robert, *Protest, Reform and Repression in Khrushchev's Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 79–107.

repeating the official Soviet version of the Hungarian rising, the authorities battled against contesting versions of events emanating from foreign visitors. At the same time, the meaning of this performance was to show the outside world that Soviet youth could address this kind of issue in public.

Stenographic transcripts of the student meetings offer a somewhat different picture of the “hotness of debates” and the possibility for the “free exchange of opinions”. Most of the meetings left behind written protocols, but there was plenty of variation as to how the discussions were recorded. While some of the seminars were documented word by word, other reports summarized discussions more superficially. Some of the reports consisted only of prepared speeches, which raises the question whether these gatherings contained any open discussion at all. Often the critics of the festival argued that their pre-arranged nature made these meetings dull, and questioned whether the aim of this was to hinder genuine discussion. Alexei Yurchak has argued that the ritualistic nature of official meetings was part of the larger standardization of Soviet public life after Stalin. This ritualistic tradition of holding meetings in a very formal way was likely to curtail the space for free discussion.¹⁰⁶ In the context of a multinational gathering, there might also have been other factors that demanded such advance planning. A Finnish interpreter and delegate at several youth festivals noted that pre-written speeches were needed in order to provide translations for the multilingual audience.¹⁰⁷ This fact notwithstanding, materials on the student meetings did evince a tendency to minimize spontaneous discussion.

Records of three meticulously documented discussions, including meetings of literature students, history students, and a meeting between young Marxists and young Christians, offer a useful perspective on this activity. The literature meeting, held on 31 July, gathered participants from Great Britain, France, Iraq, Dahomey, the GDR, and the USSR, as well as Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet (1902–63), who was living in exile in Moscow at the time of the festival. The key theme of the meeting was tradition and reform in literature.¹⁰⁸ In the meeting of history students, on 7–8 August, participants from Indonesia, France, Poland, Great Britain, India, Hungary, the GDR, Romania, the Soviet Union, Nigeria, FRG and Bulgaria gave talks on studying history in their respective

106 *Courtship of young minds*, 1959, 19; Yurchak, Alexei, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More. The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University press, 2006), 59.

107 Interview with a Finnish woman, 15 December, 2009.

108 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 162, ll. 24–36, 41–45. *Kratkii otchet o mezhdunarodnom literaturnom seminare VI festivalia molodezhi.*

countries and touched upon some general themes of historical research.¹⁰⁹ The meeting between young Marxists and young Christians (8 August) was organized by English and Scottish Christians and Soviet historians, philosophers and sociologists; among the Soviet group was the subsequently well-known sociologist Yuri Levada (1930–2006).¹¹⁰ The meeting dealt with questions answered differently by Christianity and Communism, such as those regarding the origins of human life and questions relations between the individual and wider society.¹¹¹

The records suggest that some of the meetings allowed the raising of sensitive issues. A good example is the history student meeting, where participants exchanged views on the principles of conducting historical research. While Western students emphasized the need for objectivity, Global South participants stressed the context of colonialism and its effects on writing the national histories of their countries, which had either just achieved or were about to achieve independence. The delegates of the socialist countries, predictably, accentuated Marxist-Leninist principles and historical materialism as their method.¹¹² It is remarkable to note that in comparison with the public representations of the meetings, the range of sensitive topics addressed was somewhat wider than usual, and the Hungarian case was not discussed as intensively as the articles published in *Komsomol'skaia pravda* might lead one to believe. Sensitive issues that were addressed in the meetings included questions about Vladimir Dudintsev's (1918–98) recent book *Ne khlebom edinyim* (*Not by Bread Alone*), which had provoked a large debate in the Soviet Union in late 1956, and a comparison of religious and atheist worldviews in the meeting between Marxists and Christians.¹¹³ The variety of sensitive topics addressed was, in the end, rather scant, and if discussion on any topic was considered too risky, the organizers could limit the audience's capacity to speak. This happened, for example, in the meeting between Marxists and Christians. The stenographic report shows that early on in

109 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 160, ll. 1–93. Protokoly mezhnunarodnoi vstrechi studentov-istorikov na VI VFMS v g. Moskve 7–8 avgusta 1957 g. V. I. Bovykin, I. Pozdeeva, I. Sorokovanova.

110 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 136, ll. 1–76. Stenogramma besedy s predstaviteliami Angliiskogo i Shotlandskogo khristianstva 8.8.1957.

111 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 136, ll. 1–76. Stenogramma besedy s predstaviteliami Angliiskogo i Shotlandskogo khristianstva 8 August 1957.

112 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 160, ll. 1–93. Protokoly mezhnunarodnoi vstrechi studentov-istorikov na VI VFMS v g. Moskve 7–8 avgusta 1957 g. V. I. Bovykin, I. Pozdeeva, I. Sorokovanova.

113 For the reception of Dudintsev's book in the Soviet Union, see e.g. Zubok, Vladislav, *Zhivago's Children. The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 74–76 and Fürst, Juliane, *Stalin's Last generation. Soviet Post-war Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 355–358.

the session, the chair, comrade Borisenkov, requested that “surplus people” leave the room, explaining that the meeting was meant solely for twenty-five pre-registered persons.¹¹⁴ This meeting represented exactly the type of encounter that the CPSU and the Komsomol strived to minimize. Some of the Party Central Committee were in fact completely against organizing such meetings because of the risks they entailed in terms of evoking heated discussions on topics that were not talked about openly in the country.¹¹⁵ The meeting was, nevertheless, held for the very reason that its cancellation would have harmed attempts to manage the image of the festival.

Allowing these kinds of meetings was a significant sign of the change in the authorities’ attitudes about what kind of discussions could be accepted in a semi-public environment with foreigners. The records, however, suggest that the reason for allowing free meetings was largely part of the performance of openness. The organizers, as well as the participants from socialist countries, had been well prepared to encounter comments on sensitive political issues. This was often seen when they expressed their astonishment if no such issues were raised. For example, Komsomol officials reporting on the meeting of economics students were amazed that no one, “not even the British delegates”, spoke directly against socialism.¹¹⁶

Another event that aimed to prove that Western views on Soviet society were inaccurate was the program for religious youth groups. During the course of the World Youth Festival, 2,660 foreigners visited sacred places of different religions, including Catholic churches, mosques, Protestant (Baptist) chapels and synagogues. The program also offered three meetings, held in the Troitse-Sergiev monastery in Zagorsk and at the dacha of the All-Union council of Evangelical Christian Baptists.¹¹⁷ Participants came from Great Britain, France, West Germany, Bulgaria, East Germany, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Austria, China, Sweden and the Soviet Union.¹¹⁸ According to a report by A. Puzin, a representative

114 RGASPI, f. M-3, 15, 136, l. 17. Stenogramma besedy s predstaviteliami Angliiskogo i Shotlandskogo khristianstva, 8.8.1957.

115 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 86. O nekotorykh voprosakh VI Vsemirnogo festivalia molozhdi i studentov, 31.5.1957.

116 TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, ll. 65–66. Informatsiia 11, 1.8.1957. V. Zaluzhnyi, A. Ratanov; similar comments were made in the meeting of literature students, RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 162, ll. 30–34.

117 Vsesoiuznyi sovet evangel'skikh khristian-babtistov, VSEHB.

118 RGANI, f. 5, op. 33, d. 55, ll. 1–5. V TsK KPSS, ot predsedatel'ia sovet po delam religioznykh kul'tov pri sovete ministrov SSSR, A. Puzin, Informatsii o besedakh zarubezhnykh utshastnikov festivalia po voprosam religii. The meeting, held at the request of British, Dutch and Swedish festival participants, gathered around 1,400–1,500 people (750 foreigners from

of the Council of Religious Cults, attached to the Council of Ministers, guests had been eager to know whether the church could operate without supervision from the government. They asked for statistical information on believers and prayer houses, and how frequently people went to services. Funding issues and religious education were also raised in the meeting.¹¹⁹ In his report, Puzin gave a very positive assessment of the religious program. According to him, foreigners had been pleased with the responses the clerical staff gave them, the newly renovated churches and prayer houses had left a positive impression, and most importantly, the program had transformed views on the state of religion in the country. The British Christians had promised that they would no longer believe their government's "lies about the Soviet Union". A Belgian representative said that he had never dreamt that he would be allowed to walk freely around Moscow without an escort and conduct religious practices in whichever church he liked. The only unfortunate occasion mentioned in the report was the dissemination of religious leaflets in Russian.¹²⁰ In conclusion, Puzin praised the preparations of the clerical staff, which had helped them give satisfactory answer to visitors' enquiries.¹²¹ This rosy depiction hardly told the whole truth; however, critical views were not widely shared in Western media. One rare reflection is by a 24-year old student, a Quaker named David Harper, who commented in *The Manchester Guardian* that "the Church in Russia was rather a blind alley. It was not a live church of living people as we know it; and a professed Christian would be at a disadvantage in his place of work".¹²² More views like this were probably expressed but went unrecorded in official sources, though the lack of evidence to this effect in memoirs, oral history and press coverage hints that the religious-themed events interested only a minority of the festival crowd.

Records of the student meetings and the religious program suggest that even though festival organizers allowed the expression of opinions that were not normally accepted by the Soviet authorities, true debates on different views were next to non-existent. Most of the meetings where sensitive issues were handled did not feature heated or extensive interchange of opinion. However, allowing even this kind of discussion between Soviet and foreign students was remarkable, given that this was taking place only four years after the death of Stalin.

17–18 countries, mostly from England, France and Italy, and about 700 Christian young people from the Soviet Union, 600 Orthodox, 67 Baptists and 12 old Believers).

119 RGANI, f. 5, op. 33, d. 55, ll. 1–2; RGANI, f. 5, op. 33, d. 54, ll. 1–116. Notes on the discussions at the religious meetings.

120 RGANI, f. 5, op. 33, d. 55, ll. 1, 4, 6, 7.

121 RGANI, f. 5, op. 33, d. 55, ll. 4, 7.

122 *The Manchester Guardian*, 17 August 1957, 6, "Moscow Festival 'Back-fired'".

Nevertheless, student seminars and religious meetings were only a temporary showcase. As studies on the later history of the Soviet Union show, towards the end of the Khrushchev years censorship was tightened again: expressing non-conformism in public was liable to lead to imprisonment, and religious observance was again attacked in a series of new anti-religious campaigns held in the late 1950s.¹²³

Soviet Society through Foreign Visitors' Eyes

Although pampered with high-quality art, such as the Bolshoi theatre's ballet featuring Galina Ulanova, the spectacular opening ceremony at the Lenin Stadium and the easy-going reception at the Kremlin, foreign visitors had a desire to look behind those fancy scenes. More than about the festival itself, foreign youth wrote and told in their travelogues, memoirs, diaries, and interviews about the host city and its people. As the Indian Pradip Bose worded it: "there was nothing to complain about. In fact, there was every reason to be extremely happy with the arrangements." But, as he continued, "a festive time does not reveal the normal mood of any people". Therefore he, along with numerous other foreign attendees, used this unique opportunity to explore Soviet life behind the "performance".¹²⁴

Typical of foreign grass-root narratives was the reflection of experience against the portrayal of the Soviet Union as a controlled, closed, and foreigner-unfriendly country disseminated by non-communist media. This can be seen in the accounts' emphasis on the unusual openness and warmth of the welcome. Numerous accounts mentioned the feeling of amazement when one could freely enter the Red Square or when someone was lucky enough to be invited to the international ball in the Kremlin palaces – totally against the expectation raised by Western non-communist media prior to the festival. An Irish participant was astonished that "I could move freely everywhere, and even answer eager questions in public about life in the West, and about the Hungarian rising of 1956."¹²⁵ British participant Leon Rosselson paid attention to the change in atmosphere that had taken place in the country after Khrushchev's

¹²³ Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*; Hornsby, *Protest, Reform*; Stone, Andrew B., "Overcoming Peasant Backwardness: The Khrushchev Antireligious Campaign and the Rural Soviet Union", *The Russian Review*, 67, No. 2, 2008, 296–320.

¹²⁴ Bose, Pradip, *Communism and Communist Systems. Some Reflections* (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications, 1995), 129.

¹²⁵ Interview with an Irish man, 31 January 2008.

speech. “We mixed easily and freely with the Russians, which had not been the case when I was there a few years earlier”.¹²⁶

Comparative perspectives on housing, consumer goods and infrastructure were more often than not made by those from Western Europe. This also applied to those Global South participants who were studying or working at the time in Paris, London, or other Western European cities. Therefore, many Global South attendees did not actually compare the Soviet Union to their native lands, but to their current living environments in capitalist countries. This came up most specifically in the account of the Indian delegate Pradip Bose, who had visited London, the Netherlands, Germany and Poland prior to his arrival in Moscow. Thus, the Soviet Union did not look like the paradise he had been expecting to see, but seemed to lag behind even its socialist little brothers. According to Bose’s observation during a train trip through Eastern Europe, “the gradual deterioration in living standards was obvious”.¹²⁷ The Soviet authorities remarked that Global South youth voiced critical comments, but the Soviet press maintained the image of young people from Africa, Latin America and Asia being especially fond of Soviet life.¹²⁸

Generally speaking, the new image of the USSR amazed many festival attendees. Western newspapers seemed to have told a story which did not tally with what young people saw in Moscow. Foreign guests could go almost anywhere and talk with people about almost anything. Foreign visitors were also impressed by aspects of the Soviet project, especially the educational system, as well as women’s position in society. For example, Alex Jupp, who otherwise did not give much credit to Soviet achievements, maintained that “we must admit that as westerners, this [education] is one aspect of its society which merits our most serious consideration”.¹²⁹ Carlos Fonseca Amador praised women’s role in Soviet society, which was exemplified by the fact that prostitution had been completely eradicated and further underlined by the fact that Ekaterina Furtseva was one of the leading political figures in the Communist Party.¹³⁰ Alex Jupp noted that “there doesn’t appear to be any kind of work that women seem incapable of doing”.¹³¹

126 Interview with Leon Rosselson, 13 April 2018.

127 Bose, Pradip, *Growing up in India* (Calcutta: Minerva Associates, 1972), 126–127.

128 See e.g. *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, July 30, 1957, 3, V. Chachin, “Zhitel’ Gany sravnivaet”; GARF, f. 8581, op. 2, d. 457, ll. 5–6, 8.

129 Jupp, *A Canadian Looks*, 45.

130 Fonseca Amador, *Un Nicaragüense*, 32, 35–36.

131 Jupp, *A Canadian Looks*, 39.

The main differences between participants' narratives can be seen in the way they evaluated Soviet society. The accounts written by communists, including Bresland, Fonseca Amador, Weismantel, and to some extent also Waterman, praised the Soviet project, ignoring or painting over its shortcomings. The accounts by non-communists, and those communists' narratives that were published much later on (including García Marquez, Jupp, Chernin, Hill, Cohen) gave a much more nuanced picture of Soviet reality. Often one finds observations on the same aspect of Soviet life written from different perspectives, and the same elements could be used to give credence to the system or to represent its failings. To give a few examples, while García Marquez mentioned having seen empty shop windows, for Fonseca Amador they were all full.¹³² While Alex Jupp found that Soviet housing suffered from a lack of space, and many suburban dwellings were in bad condition, Charles Bresland praised the numerous building projects and the rapid modernization that the country was going through.¹³³ Similarly, opinions varied with regard to clothes. According to Jupp, "clothing is dreary and totally lacking in color", and was also expensive, and had "been designed for utility, not for style." Jupp also noticed, as did many other Western travellers to the Soviet Union at that time, that Westerners were easily recognized on the street because of their clothing.¹³⁴ Charles Bresland admitted that Soviet clothes were not as fashionable as those in his own country, but he emphasized that the way people dressed seemed not to be such an important part of judging people as in his culture.¹³⁵ Peter Waterman's diary entries presented clothing as a choice made by Soviet people in order to focus on other aspects of developing their society. "If the people are willing to sacrifice in order that Soviet heavy industry can overtake the Americans as soon as possible, that's O.K. by me."¹³⁶

As with many Western visitors and travel writers before and after 1957, festival participants emphasized the paradoxical nature of Soviet society. "In some ways very advanced, and yet in others it was simply backward", commented British communist Denis Hill.

For example, there was no such thing as a telephone directory for Moscow. Whether this was due to indifference to consumer-needs, or as a result of the paranoid secrecy of the

132 García Marquez, *De Viaje*, 177; Fonseca Amador, *Un Nicaragüense*, 34.

133 Jupp, *A Canadian Looks*, 29; Bresland, *Moscow Turned It*, 17.

134 Jupp, *A Canadian Looks*, 38. See also Ludmilla Alexeyeva and Goldberg, Paul, *The Thaw Generation: Growing Up in the Post-Stalin Era* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1990), 130.

135 Bresland, *Moscow Turned It*, 22.

136 Peter Waterman's diary, February 1957, Moscow, 8.

authorities, I could not say. It meant that you had to jot down people's phone numbers on scraps of paper. If you lost them it was then impossible to make contact.¹³⁷

In a similar fashion, Gabriel García Márquez pondered how a country that possessed nuclear weapons and had developed space technology could not provide enough consumer goods for its citizens. "Workers can buy two suits a year, and at the same time they pride themselves on that Soviet gadget that had been sent into space".¹³⁸ Furthermore, Alex Jupp wondered, "where else must one work for two months to buy an ordinary set of dishes and yet pay only five per cent of one's income for rent?". His conclusion was that "in many respects it [the Soviet Union] is even more mysterious after one has made a visit to it than it was before".¹³⁹

Ambivalence was also a central element in the language that participants used in their accounts. There were fine examples of bricolage – fusing elements from both official and unofficial sources. Accounts written during the festival or soon afterwards adopted much of the festival rhetoric, yet it is remarkable that almost all accounts irrespective of the time of writing mentioned the slogan of the festival – whether as an embodiment of the festival's message, a symbol of the collective experience of solidarity when shouting the slogan with thousands of other youths, or by way of sneering at the political formalities of the festival. "Peace and friendship", *mir i druzhba* in Russian, seems to have echoed everywhere, and in effect became the trademark of the festival both for supporters and opponents. In Kim Chernin's words, *mir i druzhba* was a "ritual call no one who attended that festival had ever been able to forget".¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, use of Western Cold War terms such as "the iron curtain" was common. The idea of looking behind the East-West divide was embedded in García Márquez's travelogue (*90 days behind the Iron Curtain*), it was used by Carlos Fonseca Amador, and the Southern Cross Jazz Band from Australia recorded an album entitled "Iron Curtain Call" in the Moscow film studio during the festival.¹⁴¹ Also, Charles Bresland employed the metaphor in his concluding observations. "We had spent almost 11 weeks behind the so-called 'Iron Curtain'. Never in all

137 Hill, Denis, *Seeing Red, Being Green. The Life and Times of a Southern Rebel* (Brighton: Iconoclast Press, 1989), 337.

138 García Márquez, *De Viaje*, 171–172.

139 Jupp, *A Canadian Looks*, 15.

140 Chernin, *In My Mother's House*, 267, 270; Belfrage, *A Room*, 10; García Márquez, *De viaje*, 143; *Sixth World Festival of Youth and Students*, 1958, 34–36.

141 McCardell, Terry, *Jazz Speaks All Languages. The Southern Cross Jazz Band in Soviet Russia and the People's Republic of China, 1957* (Sydney: Australian Jazz Convention Trust Fund, 1985), 9, 12.

this time had our freedom been restricted in any way despite the fact that our political opinions ranged from Communist to Liberal. Never was one case or bag opened for customs inspection. We were treated as guests everywhere we went.”¹⁴²

Disproving the harshest Western claims about the Soviet Union seems to have been easy for festival visitors. Trying to explain why the world that foreign youth had seen on the pages of Soviet and local leftist publications did not fully resemble the scenes in Moscow and elsewhere around country was far more challenging. Seeing the unfinished parts of the socialist paradise: ruined houses, occasional beggars on the streets, *stiliaga* youth who admired the Western lifestyle and were uninterested in the building of a socialist society, was most difficult for Western “true believers”.¹⁴³ While non-communists could publish their critical remarks at the time, and opponents were more than willing to do just that, the communists, both the rank and file as well as leaders, were expected not to express disappointment in public since it would have given ammunition to the enemies of socialism. Therefore, there was a clear temporal distinction as to when these kinds of remarks were relayed by devoted communists. While Charles Bresland’s travelogue, published in 1958, was almost a naïve eulogy to the USSR, Kim Chernin’s recollections, published in 1994, included reflections on her disappointment at not being able to find the paradise of her dreams. Chernin’s memoir is a telling example of the complexities of meeting the dreamland. The official festival program gave her the experiences she was looking for – hugging, kissing, and singing together with like-minded people. But the discussions with locals showed her an unexpected side of the country: Soviet youngsters who yearned to listen jazz and to buy Western clothes on the black market, poorly treated Soviet Jews, prostitutes, and the shock of the revelations of Khrushchev’s Secret Speech. Chernin had a dream of staying in Moscow after the festival, learning Russian and studying at Moscow State University. Yet, everybody she met during the festival told her she should not to stay in the country.¹⁴⁴ Chernin’s disappointment was so huge that she could not tell her parents about everything she had seen in Moscow. “What I left out was the real story, and it is difficult for me to write even today.”¹⁴⁵

142 Bresland, *Moscow Turned It*, 30.

143 Waterman, Peter, autobiography, chapter 2, 79–80; Interview with Finnish delegates, 16 March 2006.

144 Chernin, *In My Mother’s House*, 280–281.

145 Chernin, *In My Mother’s House*, 273.

“The World was Open to Us”

For Soviet people, the Moscow festival provided a unique chance for cultural contact. Prior to 1957, the World Youth Festivals, or other forms of cultural exchange, had been open only for selected groups of Soviet artists, athletes, Komsomol cadres and a few ordinary youths. The Moscow gathering was a completely different world. The organizers reserved a total of 118,000 places (34–40,000 for each day) for ordinary Soviet young people, the best of whom could win a trip to the festival within their local Komsomol and labour union organizations. For those who did not manage to attend any of the festival’s official events, the mere presence of foreign visitors in the city provided possibilities for novel encounters.¹⁴⁶ “The world was open to us”, one of the Russian interviewees described the 1957 festival.¹⁴⁷

The Moscow festival has typically been reminisced by members of the intelligentsia or the political elite – painters, journalists, musicians, academics, students, and party apparatchiks. Being born between the mid-1920s and the late-1930s, they were approximately 20–30 years old at the time of the festival. They had lived through the war as children and adolescents and they came of age during late Stalinism or the early Thaw. In comparison with foreigners’ travelogues and memoirs that focused on observing a foreign country and a foreign culture, in Soviet memoirs the recollections of the festival usually played only a minor role as part of the larger story of one’s life in Soviet society. A typical feature in Soviet memoirs in general, the interconnectedness of one’s private and the collective past, also characterized reflections on the youth festival.¹⁴⁸ The meanings of one’s perceptions and experiences tended to be given almost exclusively in the context of the cultural and political Thaw.

Given the significance of the 1957 World Youth Festival for Soviet cultural history, and for the revival of international cultural relations, it is surprising how little the festival and its influences have been examined in Soviet and Russian memoirs after the fact. Besides the most well-known narratives of the festival – such as that of saxophonist Aleksei Kozlov’s (1935–) chapter in “*Kozel na*

146 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 11, ll. 96–97. Stenogramma zasedanii komissii po organizatsii i provedeniiu shestogo Vsemirnogo festivalia molodezhi i studentov, 21.1.1957; TsAOPIM, f. 635, op. 13, d. 551, ll. 2–6. Stenogramma soveshaniia pervykh sekretarei RK VLKSM Moskvyy ot 20.8.1957.

147 Interview with a Russian woman, 15 April 2008.

148 Paperno, Irina, *Stories of the Soviet Experience. Memoirs, Diaries, Dreams* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 15–17; Kirss, Tiina and Hinrikus, Rutt (eds), *Estonian Life Stories* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009), 1.

sakse” – *I tak vsiu zhizn* (1998) – most memoirs contain short and fragmentary passages. One of the reasons for this might be that when a memory-writing boom started, first in the 1960s and then again during the perestroika and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, people were more occupied with topics other than the festival. The two biggest themes in Soviet memoirs written during and immediately after perestroika were World War II and the Stalinist terror.¹⁴⁹ Unlike the youth festival, the war and the terror touched the whole population of the USSR and thus constituted fundamental elements in personal narratives, without which the story of the Soviet past would have been difficult to tell. The Moscow youth festival represents a different type of memory, a short glimpse that encapsulates the best parts of the Thaw era, and therefore it is usually regarded as a moment of a positive Soviet past, even though the festival was organized by the Komsomol and thus was a state-orchestrated event.¹⁵⁰

A typical depiction of the Moscow festival, both in memoirs and interviews, portrays a passing moment offering welcome change to drab Soviet everyday life. It is pictured as a time of joyous, spontaneous, and colourful celebration; dancing, singing, and hugging on the streets and being friends with anybody who happened to be around.¹⁵¹ Writer Anatolii Makarov (1940–) recalls having spent the whole festival in a state of exaltation, being unable to remember “whether I ate something those days and whether I slept. I was just so happy. All fourteen days, from morning till night.”¹⁵² For the journalist Yuri Draichik, the festival was a “‘Vision’ (*zrelishche*), “with a capital ‘v’”, an experience, which is impossible to understand if one has not lived through it. “We were not often pampered with this kind of human festivities (*obshchechelovechekii prazdnik*); of course there existed 1 May and 7 November [the anniversary of the October revolution], but all that was so official.”¹⁵³ Art historian Mikhail German (1933–2018) stood in awe of the festival, only modestly dreaming of being involved with its events.¹⁵⁴ Similar uncertainty

149 Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience*, xi, 1–9.

150 For a positive remembering of the communist past, see Fulbrook, Mary, *The People's State. East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 2–5, 294–298.

151 See e.g. Brusilovskii, Anatolii, *Vremia khudozhnikov* (Moscow: “Magazin iskusstva”, 1999), 2; Altuhkhova, Natalia, “Back then I really wanted to join the party”, in *Russia's Sputnik Generation. Soviet Baby Boomers Talk about Their lives*, edited and translated by D. J. Raleigh (Bloomington: Indiana university Press, 2006), 70–71; Hindus, Maurice, *House without a Roof: Russia after Forty-three Years of Revolution* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1961), 76.

152 *Izvestiia*, 10 July 2007, Anatolii Makarov, “Deti Festivalia”.

153 Draichik, Iurii, *Golubaia krov' – mostoviki* (Moscow: Sfera, 2000), 259.

154 German, Mikhail, *Slozhnoe proshedshee (Passé composé)* (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo SPB, 2000), 284–285.

was recalled by the painter Oskar Rabin (1928–2018), who had to use all his fortitude to dare to show his works in an exhibition held at the festival. When Rabin finally got one of his works, a monotype portraying a flower bouquet, on display, he was very proud.¹⁵⁵

Another distinctive feature of Soviet festival narratives was the exceptional-ity of the encounters with people from abroad. The late Stalinist years, when mingling with foreigners had been proclaimed as suspicious and positive views of foreign culture were seen as “cow-towing in front the capitalists”, were still fresh in the minds of Soviets. For Anatolii Makarov, meeting foreigners after years of isolation felt like seeing Martians wandering around the city.¹⁵⁶ In Aleksei Kozlov’s words, it was pointless to try to explain to younger generations the Soviet semantic for “foreigner”. “Constant agitation and propaganda, used to inculcate hatred and mistrust toward anything foreign, led to the point that the word ‘foreigner’ itself aroused a combination of fear and exaltation in any Soviet citizen, just like ‘spies’ did.”¹⁵⁷

Encounters with foreign visitors challenged the picture that Soviet propa-ganda had created of people living in other societal systems and cultures. During late Stalinism, the conception of foreigners was based largely on stereotypes from literature and media. For example, people in capitalist countries were often portrayed either as poor beggars and victims of bad capitalism or extravagant capitalists in dress coats with cigars in their mouths. Against this background, seeing real young people from abroad was extraordinary. “When we suddenly saw on the streets of Moscow hundreds, if not thousands, of foreigners with whom one could openly chat”, Aleksei Kozlov recalled, “we were gripped by something close to euphoria.”¹⁵⁸ These exceptional meetings also generated con-tradictory feelings. Lily Golden (1934–2010), an African-American-Russian histo-rian, described her emotions as she boogied with a man from Guinea, suddenly realizing that “the Africans would all leave and I would never again have such an experience”. She thought that she “would never travel abroad and, equally obviously, Africans do not come to Russia. The normalcy of Soviet life was such that contact with outsiders was unthinkable.”¹⁵⁹

155 Rabin, Oskar, *Tri Zhizni. Kniga vospominanii* (Paris: “Tret’ia volna”, 1986), 36, 38.

156 *Izvestiia*, 10 July 2007, Anatolii Makarov, “Deti Festivalia”.

157 Kozlov, Aleksei, “*Kozel na sakse*” – *i tak vsyu zizhn’* (Moscow Vagrius, 1998), 102.

158 Interview with Yevgeni Yevtushenko, 17 January 1999, [http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/interviews/episode-14/yevtushenko1.html] (Accessed 19 August 2008); Kozlov, 1998, 103.

159 Golden, Lily, *My Long Journey Home* (Chicago: Third World Press, 2002), 62–63.

In addition to euphoria, the encounters with foreigners were presented with a sense of re-engagement with the rest of the world. In contrast to Stalinist isolationism, contact with “the world” at the youth festival was depicted as a physical and spiritual return. For art historian Yurii Gerchuk, this return meant a feeling of “interconnectedness of contemporary world culture and the possibility of fruitful, creative dialogue with the artists of the outside world”.¹⁶⁰ Vitalii Skuratovskii, a member of a circle of young intellectuals, described the festival as an encounter between the “free West” and Soviet Eurasia that was still liberating itself from the Stalinist path.¹⁶¹ For Yevgeni Yevtushenko the festival represented a moment when one could feel “as a part of humanity which was stolen from us, it was a great beginning of liberalization in Russia.” However, he continued that “we didn’t feel lost or completely culturally isolated, because we were continuing to read some great Western books, French, American, English books. [. . .] but we wanted . . . a physical connection with the rest of the world.”¹⁶²

The re-encounter with the outside world was especially important for the Jewish population, whose chances for preserving their cultural identity had been seriously narrowed during the anti-cosmopolitan campaign of the late 1940s and the so-called doctor’s plot of the early 1950s.¹⁶³ The Moscow festival meant a significant revival of Jewish identity and acted as a spur toward a renewal of cherishing Jewish traditions and studying Hebrew. Some Soviet Jews travelled from as far as Siberia, Central Asia and Birobidzhan to see “real Israelis”. They yearned to learn about Jewish history and Israel from a first-hand source – something which had previously not been possible, and the Soviet media distributed its own coloured information of this history.¹⁶⁴ Leonid Silber saw the Israel delegation in Kyiv on their way to the festival: “Somehow, I don’t know how, but a lot of people came to see this group. Propaganda showed Israelis

160 Gerchuk, Iurii, “Iskusstvo ottepei”, *Tvorchestvo*, cited in Reid, Susan E., “Toward a New (Socialist) Realism. The Re-Engagement with Western Modernism in the Khrushchev Thaw”, in *Russian Art and the West. A Century of Dialogue in Painting, Architecture, and the Decorative arts*, edited by Rosalind Blakesley and Susan E. Reid (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007), 226.

161 Skuratovskii, Vitalii, “Kokteil’ ‘Maiakovki’”, in *My predu . . . Ploshchad’ Maiakovskogo 1958–65*, edited by Liudmila Polikovskaia (Moscow: Zveniiia, 1997), 109–110.

162 Interview with Yevgeni Yevtushenko, 17 January 1999. See also Hindus, *House without a Roof*, 76.

163 Ro’i, Yaacov, *The Struggle for Soviet Jewish Emigration 1948–1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 51–54, 83–85, 115–116; Pinkus, Benjamin, *The Jews of the Soviet Union. The History of a National minority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 217; Zubok, *Zhivago’s Children*, 226–236.

164 Ro’i, *The Struggle for*, 261–268; Pinkus, *The Jews of*, 309.

with big noses, but nobody knew what Israelis looked like.”¹⁶⁵ Tina Brodetsky (1940–) saw free and proud Jews for the first time, in contrast to Soviet Jews, who had had to practice their religion and culture in secrecy.¹⁶⁶ An Israel writer and participant in the Moscow festival, Natan Shaham (1925–2018), described the first encounters with Soviet Jews in his travel account written in Hebrew, *Pegishot be-moskvah 1957 (Meetings in Moscow 1957)*. Like Brodetsky, he noted the clear difference between Jewish and non-Jewish locals. “How profoundly different was the firm and friendly handshake of a Russian lad who wanted our badge from the trembling handshake of a Jewish boy whose heart went out to us, hovering between hope and despair, that he might be one of us.”¹⁶⁷

Visuality, even an anthropological interest in visitors’ looks, featured among the recollections of the festival. What did foreigners look like? What did they wear? The painter Anatolii Brusilovskii recalled that “the city was filled with unusually joyous crowds of people, brightly, colourfully dressed, they loudly celebrated, made friends. Scottish bagpipes, Spanish guitars, American saxophones”, everything was mixed together.¹⁶⁸ The festival and foreign guests showed foreigners in a radically new light. Yaroslav Golovanov remembered that Swedes were dressed up in “inexpensive costumes, but of good quality and new”.¹⁶⁹ Foreign youths also were “more open” and “appeared more unrestrained” than their Soviet peers, observed Ina Aksel’rod-Rubina.¹⁷⁰ With their clothes, hairstyles, accessories, and their whole appearance, ordinary leftist youths seemed like mannequins of Western consumer culture, rebutting the official propaganda which claimed that young people in capitalist countries lived poorly. Western working-class youths wearing clothes and hairstyles that under socialism were ascribed to the petty bourgeois indicated to Soviet youths that a gap existed between the words of their leaders and what they saw in the flesh at the festival. Young people living in capitalist countries seemed to be something between the narrow stereotypes

165 Hoffman, Betty, *Jewish Hearts. A Study of Dynamic Ethnicity in the United States and the Soviet Union* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001), 37–38.

166 Ro’i, Yaccov & Beker, Avi, *Jewish Culture and Identity in the Soviet Union* (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 38; Interview with Tina Brodetsky.

167 Pinkus, Benjamin, *The Soviet Government and the Jews 1948–1967. A Documented Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 248. The original source, which Pinkus refers to, is Shaham, Natan, *Pegishot be-moskvah 1957 (Meetings in Moscow 1957)* (Merhaviah: Sifriat poalim, 1957), 12–13, 21–22, 36–37.

168 Brusilovskii, *Vremia khudozhnikov*, 2.

169 Golovanov, *Zametki vashego sovremennika*, 74–75.

170 Aksel’rod-Rubina, Ina, *Zhizn kak zhishn. Vospominania*, kniga 2 (Ierusalim, 2006), 25.

suggested: neither terribly poor nor overwhelmingly rich, but ordinary youngsters.¹⁷¹ From the authorities' perspective, the Western youths were particularly troublesome. Given that numerous Western participants belonged to communist and other leftist youth organizations, they not only showed the capitalist system in a new light, but demonstrated alternative ways to be communist. Western young people were not the only group whose picture was reshaped at the festival. According to Lily Golden, even the African delegates were dressed "too well" to fit with official image of poor Africans, who suffered more than the privileged Soviet people. Soviet citizens "had expected to see hungry people dressed in tatters. Instead they had met affluent students who spoke several foreign languages, wore European dress and did not forget their culture".¹⁷²

While not all foreign youths were enamoured by the festival program, young Soviet musicians and artists particularly thanked the Komsomol for the decision to allow performances and displays of the "forbidden fruits of the West": namely, abstract art and jazz. These events, barely mentioned in the Soviet press at the time, became the ones most frequently referred to in subsequent oral accounts and memoirs.¹⁷³

The Soviet art enthusiasts were treated to two art exhibitions. The international exhibition of fine arts, located in Gorky park, introduced 3,167 works of art by painters under 35 years old, representing 36 different countries and a variety of styles of modern art (Italian neo-realism, East German expressionism, Japanese surrealism, action painting and Icelandic geometric abstraction).¹⁷⁴ Participants included young Soviet painters and sculptors, such as Erik Bulatov, Ernst Neizvestny, Oscar Rabin, Mikhail Roginskii, Oleg Tselkov, and Vladimir Iakovlev.¹⁷⁵

171 Bukovsky, Vladimir, *To Build a Castle. My Life as a Dissenter* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1978), 113.

172 Golden, *My Long Journey*, 77.

173 *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 3 August 1957, 4, A. Svobodin, "Zdes' rabotaiui!"; *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 4 August 1957, 4, "Kal'man Bor: 'Dzhaz dolzhen byt' natsional'nym'"; *Ogonek*, 47/1957, 25, A. Plotnov, "Na mezhdunarodnoi khudozhestvennoi vystavke".

174 RGALI, f. 2329, op. 4, d. 655, l. 60–61. N. Mikhailovu. In the final report, the figures were slightly higher: 4,500 works from 52 countries. RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 174. See also Reid, Susan E., "Toward a New (Socialist) Realism. The Re-Engagement with Western Modernism in the Khrushchev Thaw", in *Russian Art and the West. A Century of Dialogue in Painting, Architecture, and the Decorative arts*, edited by Rosalind Blakesley and Susan E. Reid (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007), 226–229; RGALI, f. 2329, op. 4, d. 655, l. 1. Polozhenie o mezhdunarodnoi vystavke izobrazhitel'nogo i prikladnogo iskusstva VI Vsemirnogo festivalia molodezhi i studentov.

175 Tumarkin Goodman, Susan (ed.), *Russian Jewish Artists in a Century of Change 1890–1990* (Munich: Prestel, 1995), 156, 204, 214, 216, 230, 238.

Theirs and other Soviet artists’ work were concurrently displayed in an All-Union Exhibition of young Soviet artists at the Academy of Arts, featuring future underground artists such as the painters Anatolii Zverev, Ivan Chuikov, and Anatolii Brusilovskii.¹⁷⁶ Another major art event that offered an even more tangible connection with the alternative art world was a fine art workshop, which gathered artists from fifty-two countries to exchange ideas and comment on each other’s works. Among the participants were neo-realists, who exhibited expressionist abstract styles from around the world.¹⁷⁷

The International Exhibition, the All-Union exhibition and the art workshop brought the unknown world of abstract art to Moscow. These events offered the Soviet public and artists a chance to see exactly what the art that Party officials and ideologues had been so keen to ban looked like. In addition to foreign works of art, Soviet people could see the abstract, non-objective Russian works of the 1910s and 1920s that had been categorized as “formalist” and proscribed after the emergence of socialist realism. It was not only Western and Russian abstract works that widened the horizons of Soviet painters. A variety of foreign interpretations of realism indicated that “a range of styles was possible”.¹⁷⁸ The festival exhibition continued the gradual opening up of the Soviet art world which had started a couple of years earlier. The exhibition of French art in Moscow and Leningrad in 1955 and 1956, which displayed the works of early impressionists such as Renoir, Monet and Degas, and the first exhibition of Picasso’s works in Moscow in October 1956, signalled a moderate acceptance of Western modern art among the reformist and liberal-minded cultural elite.¹⁷⁹

The international exhibition of young painters left a profound impact on young Soviet artists, many of whom saw contemporary Western artists’ works for the first time.¹⁸⁰ The Soviet painter Raisa Orlova (1918–89) recalled that the abstract paintings of Polish, Czechoslovak, and French painters introduced new words, new colours and new sounds, which generated new thoughts and conceptions of life.¹⁸¹ Anatolii Brusilovskii pondered how amazing it was that only four years after Stalin’s death and the opening of the prison camps, there were Soviet artists who could take part in the Fine Arts Exhibition “with the

176 Jackson, Matthew Jesse, *The Experimental Group. Ilya Kabakov, Moscow Conceptualism, Soviet Avant-Gardes* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 19.

177 Reid, “Toward a New”, 227.

178 Reid, “Toward a New”, 227, 229.

179 Gilburd, Eleonory, *To See Paris and Die. The Soviet Lives of Western Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 249–267; Reid, 2007, 218–219, 221.

180 Tumarkin, *Russian Jewish Artists*, 35.

181 Orlova, Raisa and Kopelev, Lev, *My zhili v Moskve 1956–1980* (Moscow: Kniga, 1990), 129.

free world”. These artists had trained themselves “in the absence of information, artistic critique, the history of modern art and its trends; without trips abroad, symposia with Western colleagues, lectures and installations.”¹⁸²

The visual vocabulary of Western abstractionism did not necessarily chime with the aesthetic tastes of the masses. Nonetheless, the importance of these encounters with an alternative visual order was to give people the chance to make judgements themselves instead of relying on those provided by the political establishment. Comments in the visitors’ book of the international exhibition indicated that many condemned the exhibition as being incomprehensible, because it “gives nothing to the heart and mind” and was only “art for art’s sake”. Other people were happy that they were finally able to see Western contemporary art, which had been kept from them for such a long time. While some people judged the Western abstract art as trash and nonsense, others thought that free expression should be granted, even those who did not like or understand the works of abstract artists.¹⁸³

Soviet artists later recalled the exhibition as a formative experience in their careers; not in the sense that they all started to embrace Western styles, but in the sense that they realized how stagnant their own artistic worlds and processes were.¹⁸⁴ Soviet painters particularly appreciated the workshop led by an American painter named Harry Colman, who attended the festival unofficially with his wife. Apparently, the Colmans ended up to the art programme quite unexpectedly and mainly because they were the only artists in the unofficial US delegation.¹⁸⁵ Colman and his wife gave a lecture on contemporary American art accompanied with pictures of its brightest stars, like Willem de Kooning (1904–97) and Jackson Pollock (1921–56), and demonstrated the process of making an abstract work by using Pollock’s “dip” technique.¹⁸⁶ For Anatolii Brusilovskii, the workshop represented the feeling of freedom and “the world

182 Brusilovskii, *Vremia khudozhnikov*, 3.

183 *Excerpts from the visitors’ book of the festival’s exhibition*, additional material to the exhibition held at the KUMU Art Museum in Tallin, *The Free Art Workshop in Moscow 1957. Archives in Translation*, gathered and translated by Kädi Talvoja.

184 *Drugoe iskusstvo. Moskva 1956–1988* (Moscow: Galart. Gosudarstvennyi Tsentr sovremenogo iskusstva, 2005), 33, 39, 43, 45; Reid, 2007, 227, 228, 238 (n. 62); Interview with Leili Muuga by Kädi Talvoja.

185 Colman, Harry L., “An American Action Painter Invades Moscow”, *Art News*, Vol. 57, No. 8, 1958, 33, 56.

186 Reid, “Toward a New”, 227; Sepp, Eda, “Estonian Nonconformist Art from the Soviet Occupation in 1944 to Perestroika”, in *Art of the Baltics. The Struggle for Freedom of Artistic Expression under the Soviets, 1945–1991*, edited by Alla Rosenfeld and Norton T. Dodge (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 58.

of creativity”. “It was irrationally interesting, it was even shocking, when Americans started to spill, splash and spray the colours on their canvases in Pollock’s style. It was a miraculous liberation, a catharsis,” Brusilovskii recalled of the experience.¹⁸⁷ Estonian painter Lola Liivat (1928–) found Colman’s lecture equally interesting: “I was all ears [. . .] someone is talking without hypocrisy, freely, about the *matter*. It was like an explosion. Imagine getting out of prison and being free!” Liivat then made friends with the Colmans and spent a lot of time with them during the festival. She reckoned that the Colmans “had come with a mission” to spread knowledge about abstract art to the Soviet Union. Later they taught Liivat via correspondence and she came to regard herself as an artistic protégé of theirs.¹⁸⁸ In an article published in *Art News* magazine in 1958, Harry Colman described his astonishment at his encounter with Moscow artistic circles. For him it was unexpected that an unknown painter such as he could fascinate information-hungry local artists with a demonstration of techniques that were quite ordinary in Western art world at the time.¹⁸⁹

Participation in the international exhibition sometimes generated concrete benefits for those who were awarded.¹⁹⁰ When Oskar Rabin was looking for a job and cited the award presented to him at the Fine Art exhibition, the director of an art collective immediately welcomed him, saying “this is the laureate of the international festival of youth, and we do not even have any ordinary participants [of the festival] in the kombinat!” For Rabin, the nomination as a laureate gave him the courage to approach the director of the collective and find a job as a painter, allowing him to quit his odd jobs and earn a living as an artist.¹⁹¹ Rabin later became known for his involvement with the Lianozovo art group and was one of the leading figures of unofficial Soviet art in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁹² Another painter who became known as part of the Lianozovo group, Vladimir Nemukhin (1925–2016), considered the exhibition as having made a permanent impact on his thinking about art. A year after the festival, he made his first abstract work. For Nemukhin, “abstractionism was a way to show that this is it, I am different”. Nemukhin called the abstract art that emerged in the Soviet Union after the Moscow festival “dissident modernism”,

187 Brusilovskii, *Vremia khudozhnikov*, 3.

188 Interview with Lola Liivat, 26 November 2007 and 3 January 2008 by Kädi Talvoja.

189 Colman, Harry L., “An American Action Painter Invades Moscow”, *Art News*, Vol. 57, No. 8, 1958, 33, 56.

190 Reid, “Toward a New”, 227, 238.

191 Rabin, *Tri Zhizni*, 38.

192 On the Lianozovo group and Rabin, see Matthew, 2010, *passim*; Miller, Jack, *Jews in Soviet Culture* (London: Transaction Publishers, 1984), 58–59.

by which he meant that these works were made unofficially, underground. These works of art were not rebellious by their content – Western artists would not have found them anything but normal works – but they were rebellious because they were painted at all.¹⁹³

Another “forbidden fruit”, jazz, was more popular among Soviet people and was not confined to its own professional sphere like abstract art was.¹⁹⁴ At the youth festival, jazz (and to some extent also rock and roll) could be heard in concerts given by foreign groups, such as an Australian Dixieland band called the Southern Cross, Krzysztof Komeda’s sextet from Poland, Roman New Orleans from Italy, the London University Jazz, the Al Jenner Jazz, the City Ramblers Skiffle Group and the British jazz singer Bruce Turner with his band, who according to his autobiography were the first British jazz act to perform in the Soviet Union.¹⁹⁵ Another forum for musicians and enthusiastic audiences was an international competition for jazz groups. The competitors, fifteen bands, came from Poland, Sweden, Iceland, Hungary, Belgium, Great Britain, and three bands came from the Soviet Union: TsDRI (The Central House of workers in the Arts) from Moscow, a group from Tallinn, and a student band from Georgia.¹⁹⁶ According to *The New York Times*, the jazz competition was so popular that the concert hall could not accommodate all those who wanted to attend. People had to wait outside and be calmed down by the police.¹⁹⁷ Some local youths were so fond of jazz that they wanted to help the members of the Southern Cross by carrying their instruments to the concert hall. The Southern Cross also performed on Soviet television and ended up featuring in a popular film, “Girl with a Guitar” (*Devushka s gitaroi*, 1958), featuring Soviet actor Liudmila Gurchenko.¹⁹⁸ Russel Quay, the leader of a British skiffle band, commented to *The Manchester Guardian* reporters upon his return home that local youth in Russia knew a lot about Western jazz, and not only about older names like Duke Ellington and 1930s swing, “but about the newer schools of jazz represented by

193 Interview with Vladimir Nemuhin, January 30, 2008 by Kädi Talvoja; *Drugoe iskusstvo*, 2005, 27.

194 Draichik, Iurii, *Zapiski predposlednego arbattsa* (Moscow: Sfera, 1997), 64.

195 Starr, S. Frederick, *Red and Hot. The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union, 1917–1980* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 250; Turner, Bruce, *Hot Air, Cool Music* (London, Melbourne, New York: Quartet Books, 1984), 154–155; McCardell, *Jazz Speaks All*, 8.

196 RGALI, f. 2329, op. 3, d. 584, ll. 1–26. Stenogramma zasedaniia zhuri khudozhestvennogo konkursa estradnykh orkestrov, 4.8.1957.

197 *The New York Times*, 4 August 1957, 3, “Moscow Youth Festival Completes Its First Week”.

198 Bresland, *Moscow Turned It*, 15; McCardell, *Jazz Speaks All*, 12. On the making of the film, see Gurchenko, Liudmila, *Aplodismenty. Povest’* (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1987), 298–300; see also Turner, *Hot Air*, 154–155.

Gerry Mulligan and other young Americans.”¹⁹⁹ The US-British participant Sally Belfrage was equally astonished of the widespread enthusiasm of local youth toward Western popular culture and wrote in her travelogue of having found more jazz enthusiasts in Moscow than anywhere else she had been. “I even had to learn to rock’n’roll in Moscow because I could hardly go to any young person’s house without finding everyone doing it, or playing it, or at least discussing it”.²⁰⁰

For amateur saxophonist Aleksei Kozlov, concerts by foreign bands with their new styles meant a musical Mecca. He was especially fascinated by skiffle, played by the British guitarist and singer Lonnie Donegan. Kozlov spent most of his time, however, with another foreign group, Jeff Ellison’s band. After the first performance of the group, Kozlov daringly slid behind the scenes to meet the band in person. Apparently, he piqued the interest of the foreign musicians, who let Kozlov “follow them everywhere” as if he were a member of the crew. Thus, Kozlov was fortunate to receive first-hand tutelage from jazz specialists, especially from saxophonist Joe Temperley, who taught him tricks that were not mentioned in any music guidebooks. Despite his interest in Western culture, Kozlov underlined that he still planned to create music in the cultural context of the USSR. “I felt like a patriot, in spite of the inconvenience of the Soviet system, the un-culturedness and disregard for jazz among the people around me”. He even felt proud that he had been able to change the image that these foreign musicians had of the USSR, “to show that we are not a country of savages (*dikariei*) known solely for bears, caviar, and vodka”.²⁰¹ Kozlov’s feelings were probably shared by many of his peers, who took the Soviet patriotic discourse very seriously and considered the USSR as an essential part of world civilization.²⁰²

Another Soviet jazz musician, already a well-known professional by 1957, Leonid Utesov (1895–1982), served in the festival as a jury member in the jazz competition. Utesov was not merely a judge in a musical competition, however, but played an important role in the process of changing attitudes toward jazz as a musical genre. Before the festival, in February 1957, Utesov published an article supporting “light music” in *Literaturnaia gazeta*. The article tried to create a bridge between conservative and liberal opinions on popular music, namely jazz. Utesov maintained that there were no reasons to ban jazz or Estrada music as a genre, but also insisted that it was not right to copy or imitate

199 *The Manchester Guardian*, 16 August 1957, 14, “By our London Staff”.

200 Belfrage, *A Room*, 78.

201 Kozlov, “*Kozel na sakse*”, 108–113.

202 Tromly, Benjamin, “Soviet Patriotism and its Discontents among Higher Education Students in Khrushchev-era Russia and Ukraine”, *Nationalities Papers*, 37, No. 3, 2009, 310.

even brilliant foreign works. Utesov suggested the cultivation of “our own”, “original music, coinciding with our national traditions”.²⁰³

Kozlov’s, Utesov’s and other Soviet artists’ recollections demonstrate a dynamic that seems to have been shared by most of those who have reminisced about the 1957 festival: the fact that it provided alternatives to the stagnant and “top-down” Soviet cultural world. Not everybody turned to abstractionism or started to listen to jazz and rock and roll, but people yearned to see the alternatives to socialist realism or classic and folk music. The way that Soviet youth related to Western popular culture and fashion at the youth festival support studies that have concluded that affection for Western things did not equal diminished support for the socialist system, as the Soviet authorities feared and their Western opponents hoped for.²⁰⁴ The same also applied to the other side of the East-West divide. Young people who attended a communist youth festival and who were not active supporters or sympathizers of communism did not automatically begin to support Marxist ideology or Soviet power, however luxurious the treatment they received from their hosts. These narrow ways to view youth behavior owed much to the black and white rhetoric of the Cold War employed by the press both in the East and in the West. The Cold War rhetoric shaped the world into binary categories of “us” and “them”, “good” and “bad”, implying that there was no middle ground. Attending a communist youth festival or embracing a Western jazz band was understood by political leaders as a betrayal of one’s own system, either “the peace-loving world” or “the free world”. Many young people, however, defied the “rules of the Cold War” and re-appropriated the cultural world wherever they could.

203 Utesov, Leonid, *Spasibo, serdtse!* (Moscow: Vagrius, 1999), 144–148; *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 19 January 1957, 3. Leonid Utesov, “‘Turgenev’ i legkaia muzyka”.

204 Zubok, *Zhivago’s Children*, 317; Yurchak, *Everything Was*, 8–9, 207–237; Hornsby, *Protest, Reform*.

5 Boundaries of the Permissible

State control has been one of the defining elements in relations between Soviet people and the outside world. Frederick Barghoorn regarded Soviet-American cultural exchanges in the 1960s as “limited cultural contact”, and Anne Gorsuch characterized Soviet tourism to Eastern Europe as “experiencing controlled difference”.¹ Control exercised by state and Party institutions alike constituted a crucial part of the staged openness and the performance of peace and friendship at the Moscow festival. Because of their endeavour to demonstrate the open post-Stalin atmosphere, Soviet authorities had decided to tolerate many such aspects of encounters that were deemed unusual or which stretched the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. The risk that the authorities had decided to take left some latitude for Soviet and foreign people to extend the boundaries of what was permissible. The burning question for authorities, locals and foreign participants was: where did these new, interim boundaries lay? How much were the authorities prepared to tolerate in the name of promoting the new image of the USSR?

Social Control and Socialist Rituals

Displaying the USSR as open, accessible and tolerant did not mean everything was allowed in the summer of 1957. Numerous legal, social and cultural norms set limits to what local people and foreigners could do. Based on the reports from the previous World Youth Festivals, Soviet authorities had estimated the potential problems that might arise when thousands of young foreigners came to mingle with local people and explore Moscow, so they were well prepared to face possible social and legal deviance. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Komsomol collected special forces for taking care of social control during the festival days.² These included around 60,000 police officers, soldiers, firefighters and militia school students as well as 16,500 Komsomol volunteers who controlled the

1 Barghoorn, Frederick, *The Soviet Cultural Offensive. The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 336; Gorsuch, Anne E., “Time Travellers. Soviet Tourists to Eastern Europe”, in *Turizm. The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism*, edited by Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 207, 226.

2 Social control is understood here as a method of managing behaviour that breaks social norms. For definitions and discussion of social control see Deflem, Mathieu, “Social Control and Communicative Action”, *International Journal of Sociology of Law*, 22, 1994, 355–373; Meier, Robert F., “Perspectives on the Concept of Social Control”, *Annual Review of Sociology*,

legal and moral aspects of youth behaviour.³ Oral history accounts have tended to mention the special Komsomol morality brigades, which patrolled Moscow during the festival and apprehended young couples for “inappropriate” intimate contact.⁴ Otherwise, strong public social control did not seem to contradict the open and joyous atmosphere among the visitors. An East German visitor paid attention to the great number of policemen but noted that Moscow was “still a city not fully under police control”.⁵

The massive size of the Moscow festival made exercising control much more complicated than usual. Previously, foreign visitors had come to the Soviet Union in groups of 20 to 50 people, a size that authorities could easily supervise; but how could they follow 30,000 foreigners and millions of locals? The control could not operate as usual during the festivities, since this would have ruined the idea of an open festival, not to mention reinforcing the Soviet image of an authoritarian dictatorship. Oleg Tumanov, a KGB spy in West Germany in the 1960s, comments on the task of taking care of public control in such circumstances in his memoirs:

I can only imagine the horror of officials who were ordered to involve themselves directly with the organization of the festival, and above all that of the employees of the state security organization. Previously every single (!) foreign citizen had been kept under close observation, but now Moscow was expecting several thousand guests, from around the world, at once. How could they all be kept under observation? How could they be prevented from making undesirable contacts with Muscovites?⁶

According to the report by the Ministry of Interior, approximately 2,300 people were arrested for violating public order during the two-week festival. Among them were 293 beggars, 1,718 drunks, 158 vagrants and 107 women “of loose behaviour”. Furthermore, 54 crimes were conducted against foreigners (almost all thefts), for which 38 people were arrested.⁷ These figures were rather modest given that Moscow was a metropolis with a population around five million;

8, 1982, 35–55 and LaPierre, Brian, *Hooligans in Khrushchev’s Russia: Defining, Policing, and Producing Deviance during the Thaw* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012).

3 GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, l. 427. Ministernutrennykh del Dudorov, v TsK KPSS, Sovet ministrov, MGK KPSS, TsK VLKSM, KGB, 17.8.1957.

4 Plyushch, Leonid, *History’s Carnival. A Dissident’s autobiography* (London: Collins and Harvill Press, 1979), 15; Fürst, Juliane, *Stalin’s Last Generation. Soviet Post-war Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 106.

5 Corlais, Juergen, *Always on the Other Side. A Journalist’s Journey from Hitler to Howard’s End* (Lulu.com, 2008), 67.

6 Tumanov, Oleg, *Tumanov. Confessions of a KGB Agent* (Chicago: Edition q., 1993), 13–14.

7 GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, l. 430. Minister vnutrennykh del Dudorov, v TsK KPSS, Sovet ministrov, MGK KPSS, TsK VLKSM, KGB, 17.8.1957.

however, they showed that the measures taken by the authorities had not managed to clean the city completely of the anti-social elements that did not belong to the public face of socialist society.⁸

The overall statistics do not specify the nationality of law-breakers. The daily reports of the Ministry of Internal Affairs indicated that both the limits of the permissible and the likely consequences of illegal behaviour were different for locals and foreigners. While dozens of misbehaving foreign visitors were fined and arrested for drunkenness and hooliganism,⁹ Soviet citizens faced far more serious consequences. Those Soviet citizens who crossed the line in the eyes of the authorities received everything from informal reprimands to ten-year labour camp sentences for anti-Soviet acts. Reports informed in a very detailed manner about the law-breakers, giving their names, years of birth, professions and party-affiliations. They, for example, listed Soviet citizens who had discussions with foreign guests in their homes or who had wandered around the hotels where foreigners stayed attempting to acquire rare goods, festival passes or food tickets, or printed materials.¹⁰

Besides legal and social deviance, authorities noted the different cultural practices of foreign visitors. Crossing cultural boundaries was a far more complicated subject than breaking legal or social norms. Here crossing cultural boundaries meant the failure to follow the norms and rituals that the Komsomol and Party regarded as the ideal and right ways to encounter foreigners. These rituals and norms were an important part of the organizers' version of the performance of peace and friendship. In Soviet authorities' view, an ideal meeting with foreigners was supposed to be warm in spirit and friendly ties were to be expressed in countless speeches repeating the same old peace slogans everyone had heard dozens of times, ending with toasts to mutual understanding. For example, a secretary of the Komsomol's Moscow City Committee (MGK) named M. Davydov reported that "[the] meeting of the Yugoslav delegation with young people from the Kranopresnenskii district went accordingly, though the meeting could have been even warmer and more cordial".¹¹ In another report, Aleksandr Shelepin

8 Colton, Timothy J., *Moscow. Governing the Socialist Metropolis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 758.

9 GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, ll. 221–222, 393, 432. Minister vnutrennykh del Dudorov, v TsK KPSS, Sovet ministrov, MGK KPSS, TsK VLKSM, KGB, 17.8.1957.

10 TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, l. 57. Informatsiia 10, 30.7.1957. Sekretariu MGK KPSS, tov. Marchenko I. T., V. Zaluzhnyi; GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, ll. 289–291, 312, 391.

11 TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, l. 32. Sekretariu MGK tov. Furtsevoi. Informatsiia o vstrechakh moskovskoi molodezhi s delegatami festivalia i provedennykh ekskursiiakh na predpriiatiia Moskvyy 29–30 iuliia s.g.

complained that the US delegation had appeared very reserved and distant, noting that they “did not propose any toasts”. Similarly, Uruguayans who did not smile evoked the interest of Soviet reporters.¹²

The importance of certain formalities in youth festival activities can be explained by the fact that rituals and performative elements were at the core of Soviet public culture. Even though the de-Stalinization and Thaw had swept away the leader cult, allowed more freedoms and eased censorship, a certain degree of performativity remained in Soviet public life. Being part of predetermined rituals, fulfilling one’s role in a performance, and stating dogmatic phrases continued to mean more than the actual contents of those rituals.¹³ Komsomol reporting on intra-delegation meetings reflects the influence of the performative culture, which made Komsomol officials expect foreign delegates to perform their friendship towards their Soviet hosts by raising toasts, giving speeches in Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, and offering gifts. In the time of Stalin, the performance of peace and friendship had included celebration of the Soviet omnipotent leader, but in the Thaw it was centred around the celebration of youth. Even so, the Soviet expectation of what an ideal encounter should consist of still had much in common with the earlier ritualistic culture. The difficulty, however, was that foreign participants, especially if they came from outside of communist organizations, were not always familiar with these cultural practices.

From the participants’ perspective, the festival meant a break from everyday life and its routines. This was especially true for foreign participants who were mentally and physically far away from their ordinary habitats. To employ a concept developed by anthropologists Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner in their studies on rituals and rites, festival guests were in a liminal state. Liminality indicates a transition from the start to the end of a ritual, in which participants are no longer in the same state as they were before the ritual but have not yet transformed into the next state, which they will hold once the ritual is completed. Typical for a liminal state in regard to festivals and carnivals is “the notion of separation, loss of identity and social status, and role reversals. In

¹² RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, ll. 121–122. A. Shelepin v TsK KPSS, 9.8.1957; RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 205, l. 79. *Otchet o rabote s delegatsiei Urugvaia.*

¹³ Brooks, Jeffrey, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), xvi–xviii, 78, 241–244; Yurchak, Alexei, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More. The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University press, 2006), 21–22, 58–59, 93.

this state people are more relaxed, uninhibited, and open to new ideas”.¹⁴ At the festival, the liminal state, in addition to loosened official control, formed auspicious conditions for extending the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Many foreign guests travelled to Moscow without any political agenda, wanting simply to become familiar with a country that had been closed for several years. The extraordinary free and open invitation nonetheless also attracted many of those of whom the Soviet authorities were most afraid – especially people who aspired to test the moral and legal boundaries of Soviet society in order to challenge the legal order or simply to fight against the “communist other”. The problem was that not everything Soviet bureaucrats categorized as anti-Soviet or inappropriate behaviour was motivated by an intention to act against the authorities. Social and legal boundaries were crossed by many who did not realize they were doing anything unacceptable, or at least anything anti-Soviet. Drinking and premarital sex, mentioned in reports, tested the limits of local norms, but often also those of the delegates’ own cultural world. Once abroad, young people were away from the normal daily surveillance of parents, teachers, employers, older workmates, and other elders, which made it easier for them to break away from their expected behavioural patterns.

Some cases suggest that foreign participants intentionally ridiculed the Soviet organizers and tested how much they were prepared to tolerate. In one case, reported by a Komsomol official, some Polish delegates “wilfully” replaced the portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin with the Polish coat of arms and its white eagle in a room where a friendship meeting was about to take place. According to the report, this was not the only case when “Polish delegates had disturbed” public events, though it did not offer any further analysis or detail on the activities of the Poles.¹⁵ In another case, Soviet authorities reported on several American delegates who had behaved provocatively during the last days of the festival. The report said that this group of Americans entailed some “reactionary” delegates who had pinned an announcement on one of their hotel room doors, informing fellow participants about the establishment of a counter-revolutionary committee under the leadership of Trotsky and

¹⁴ Getz, Donald, “Event Tourism. Definition, Evolution, and Research”, in *Event Tourism. Critical Concepts in Tourism, Volume 1: The Evolution of Event Tourism: Concepts and Approaches*, edited by Joanne Connell and Stephen Page (London: Routledge, 2010), 41.

¹⁵ TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, l. 94. Sekretariu MGK KPSS, tov. Marchenko I. T., V. Zaluzhnyi, Informatsiia 14, 4.8.1957.

Beria. According to the report, the Americans explained the activity with reference to a tradition of American humour.¹⁶

Evaluating the degree of provocation, mockery or humour that defined these cases is difficult without sources other than the authorities' reports. From the authorities' perspectives, these incidents appeared by no means as humorous but as political provocations: anti-Soviet activity. Reasons for the activity of American participants might have been political provocation; however, it could also be viewed also another way. The authorities' reports included feedback, which showed that some foreigners thought Komsomol officials lacked a sense of humour and did not know how to have fun, and they complained that many of the meetings were too formal. With this information in mind, the tricks played by Poles and Americans could have been motivated by an intention to parody these formalities.

A similar kind of political joke, whose idea was to ridicule the formal nature of political rituals, can be found in the novel *Steps* (1968) by the Polish émigré writer Jerzy Kosinski, who had been a participant in the Warsaw (1955) and Moscow (1957) festivals. In the novel, there is an episode describing the exchange of national and political badges at a reception for local, Party and military people, scientists and foreign delegates. The narrator focuses on a scientist who, like all the other guests, goes around fastening his badges to distinguished guests' chests. The badge, however, looks somehow different than the others, and the narrator decides to take a closer look.

I [. . .] instantly had to restrain myself: the badge was a foreign-made prophylactic. The condom was wrapped and pressed into a shiny golden foil, and the name of the foreign factory stood out clearly in small letters embossed around its edges. On my way out I saw the results of the scientist's activity: almost all of the high Party and government officials displayed foil-wrapped contraceptives pinned to their lapels.¹⁷

The story continues with the narrator speculating on what the reaction would be when the guests finally realize that one of their new badges was not what it seemed. The episode in the book does not mention any connection to the youth festival, but according to Kosinski it was based on his own activity at the Moscow gathering. The author of Kosinski's biography, James Park Sloan, mentions

¹⁶ TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, l. 110. Sekretariu MGK KPSS, tov. Marchenko I. T., V. Zaluzhnyi, *Informatsiia* 15, 5.8.1957.

¹⁷ Kosinski, Jerzy, *Steps* (New York: Grove Press, (1968) 1997), 70–71. Kosinski used the milieu of the Moscow World Youth Festival in a non-fiction book about the Soviet Union and the socialist system. The book was published under the pseudonym Joseph Novak. Novak, Joseph, *No Third Path* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1962).

however that Kosinski had a habit of embellishing his stories and his role at the Warsaw and Moscow youth festivals. It might be that the condom episode was “something he would have liked to have done”.¹⁸ This kind of activity would have been very risky and would probably have had consequences, and certainly would have left a mark in the authorities’ reports. Much more interesting than whether this really happened is the fact that Kosinski chose to include the episode in his novel. When this practical joke is viewed in its purported historical context, through the lens of performative culture and the little tactics of the habitat, the replacing of political medals with condoms – symbols of Western moral corruption – if only in a semi-fictional novel, can be interpreted as a means of ridiculing the existing political culture and its rituals. Given Kosinski’s critical attitude towards the Soviet Union after his emigration to the USA, the idea may well have been simply to ridicule the whole socialist system.

Face to Face at the Grassroots Level

Given that only a few years earlier Soviet citizens had been arrested and convicted for their contacts with foreigners, the Moscow youth festival provided an unusual chance for personal interactions between people from the capitalist West, the unknown South and East, as well as those from the more familiar “fraternal Eastern Europe”. Memoirs, travelogues, interviews, and diaries of foreign visitors and local people suggest that the degree of interaction varied considerably. While some people seized every minute of this uncommon opportunity for international interaction, others preferred to observe it from a distance. For those visitors who had not been abroad before, communication with foreigners might have been a completely new experience. This applied especially to participants from areas with low levels of emigration, such as the Scandinavian countries. In most cases, “international friendship” meant basic discussion about everyday life and the exchange of small gifts, such as post cards, pins, scarves, and flags. For many, simply seeing and being with people from other countries and cultures constituted a new and interesting experience.¹⁹

The same trend applied to Soviet youth. The average description of contact with foreigners in interviews and memoirs centred upon conversations about everyday life. People who worked as interpreters, tour guides or in the city centre

¹⁸ Sloan, James Park, *Jerzy Kosinski* (New York: A Dutton Book, 1996), 91–92.

¹⁹ Interview with Finnish delegates, 16 March 2006, Interview with an Irish man, 31 January 2008; Interview with a Russian woman, 9 April 2008.

hotels and shops were more likely to encounter foreigners than were ordinary youths. One of those who worked with foreigners was a 20-year-old Muscovite girl, a history student at MGU at the time of the festival, later a history professor. She had been trained to work as a tour guide on city excursions during the festival, and in this capacity she met hundreds of foreign guests. The way she described her experiences with foreigners evokes ordinary meetings between new people. She did not recall, or did not want to share, any anecdotal or particular memory, but mentioned that her perceptions of foreigners were very positive. Foreign visitors were interested in the country and asked her about ordinary issues of daily life: family, studies, professional plans and hobbies.²⁰ Some people more consciously utilized the space for interaction, like the saxophonist Aleksei Kozlov, who explicitly mentioned in his memoir that he took advantage of the festival for widening his cultural horizon by crossing borders of acceptable behaviour.²¹ In addition to mingling with the British jazz band, Kozlov and his local peers gathered in the centre of Moscow during the evenings to talk and have fun. They occupied Gorky Street, near Mossovet (Moscow Soviet), Pushkin square and Karl Marx Prospekt. Kozlov pointed out that it was not only with foreigners that people talked, but also with their fellow Soviet citizens. “Those were the first lessons of democracy, the first experience of release from fear, the first absolutely new experiences of uncontrolled talking”, he recalled.²²

Those who had been involved with the apparatuses of the WFDY and IUS, or other international organizations, were more likely to be in contact with foreigners and to be part of international networks. For example, the Australian communist Charles Bresland, a cosmopolite (and an alleged spy) who had visited the Soviet Union already in 1954, met with several people he knew from his previous trip.²³ Similarly, the IUS workers Denis Hill and Peter Waterman were engaged in international networking. In addition to old contacts, Waterman spent time with a new friend, Renita Grigor’eva (1931–2021), then a film student and the organizer of the film festival at the 1957 gathering, later a film director, screenwriter and public figure.²⁴ Waterman and Grigor’eva, whose common language was French, first met in the preparatory activities in February 1957 and then again in July–August. Although Waterman was a communist and worked for the IUS paper, Grigor’eva was warned that she should be careful

²⁰ Interview with a Russian woman, 15 April 2008.

²¹ Kozlov, Aleksei, “*Kozel na sakse*” – *i tak vsiu zizhn’* (Moscow: Vagrius, 1998), 102.

²² Kozlov, “*Kozel na sakse*”, 105–106.

²³ Bresland, Chas. *Moscow Turned It on! Story of Australians at 6th World Youth Festival* (Sydney: Coronation Press, 1957), 5–6, 17.

²⁴ Waterman, Peter, autobiography, 2. chapter, 82.

with a foreigner. After the festival it took nearly 50 years for Grigor'eva to find Waterman again via Skype. They kept in contact the rest of their lives.²⁵ The US participant Robert Cohen was not as successful. He made friends with a Soviet girl, Ideya, a film student like himself. They spent a lot of time together during the festival and exchanged contact details. After the festival, Cohen tried to contact Ideya, but his letter was returned with a Russian note. "At first I assumed that the KGB was preventing us from corresponding. When I found a friend who could read Russian, however, I learned that the note said: 'Stop trying to write to my wife – you bastard.'"²⁶

One major obstacle that made interaction difficult was the lack of language skills. Visitors from small language areas were especially dependent on interpreters, as were many locals. Even so, people were creative and used various strategies for overcoming the lack of a common language, ranging from reliance on dictionaries to body language. For Yuri Draichik, the lack of a common language did not seem to be an insurmountable problem when he enjoyed his short friendship with Italian delegate Giovanni. All they needed was friendship, youth, Russian vodka, and the girls, Svetka and Zoika.²⁷ As the Australian delegate Charles Bresland described it, international communication was more often than not a mixture of the whole spectrum of human signals. "Small groups of foreign delegates with us from Indonesia, Vietnam, New Zealand and China, were soon in huddles with our Russian friends working things out in broken English, a few words of Russian, and much hand work and arm waving."²⁸ Delegates from large language areas, speaking, for example, English, French or German had more opportunities for conversations with Soviet people and with other foreign guests. Charles Bresland mentions in his travelogue that Australians found a surprising number of people who knew English but had never had the opportunity to use it with native speakers.²⁹ The Canadian observer Alex Jupp had similar experiences, especially with Soviet students who knew English, describing how "when they spot someone whom they know to be western, they eagerly approach him to try out what they have learned".³⁰ Similarly, Italian and French delegates to the

²⁵ Waterman, Peter *Back in the USSR. A Red Internationalist visits a Red, White and Blue Russia* (Self-publication, 2008); Interview with Renita Grigor'eva, 12 June 2008.

²⁶ Interview with Robert Cohen, 10 April 2010.

²⁷ Draichik, Iurii, *Zapiski predposlednego arbattsya* (Moscow: Sfera, 1997), 63; Golovanov, Iaroslav, *Zametki vashogo sovremennika* (Moscow: "Dobroe slovo", 2001), 74–75.

²⁸ Bresland, *Moscow Turned It*, 3.

²⁹ Bresland, *Moscow Turned It*, 14.

³⁰ Jupp, G. Alex, *A Canadian Looks at the U.S.S.R. A Firsthand View of Russian Life during the World Youth Festival* (New York: Exposition Press, 1958), 33.

Bucharest 1953 festival ended up in lively conversations with local youths because they all spoke Romance languages.³¹ García Marquez found only a few Spanish speakers in Moscow and lamented that because he did not know Russian, his experiences in Moscow remained incomplete.³²

The lack of foreign language skills was not the only problem. Little or no experience at all of being with foreigners could also complicate the matters. Lily Golden reminisces the difficulties her mate had faced when organizing a meeting between Soviet and Chinese students during the festival. Golden's recollection illustrates not only the verbal gap but also the difficulties in arranging these kinds of occasions oneself.

One day she invited a group of Chinese students to a tea party in the hostel. The guests sat in our visitors' room, facing a row of Soviet students, watching everything with great interest. There was no communication whatsoever. They spoke no Russian and we spoke no Chinese. They sat, politely and quietly, for an hour or more, then left. Maybe the idea had been good, but we were still unused to participating in events that had not been directly sanctioned by the Communist Party or the KGB. I imagine the same was true for the Chinese Students.³³

Even when no language barriers existed, communication could be difficult because of different cultural habits. Art historian Mikhail German tellingly described his encounter with an Egyptian girl, to whom he said something inappropriate. German recalls that the experience made him frightened and confused over the situation: "how strange were these discussions with foreigners, how dangerous".³⁴

Despite the unusually open atmosphere and the locals' great enthusiasm for foreign youth, many Soviet people remained on the side-lines and watched the celebrations from a distance. Some of them were so deeply involved with organizing and working for the festival that there was no time to use the festival for socializing.³⁵ One Russian woman spoke in an interview of how she had had no time to associate with foreigners because she was occupied with endless rehearsals for performances in the opening and closing ceremonies before and

31 Goretto, Leo, "Snapshots of Real Socialism: Italian Young Communists at the East European World Youth Festival (1947–1957)", a draft paper presented at *the European summer school on Cold War History*, Bertinoro, in September 2010.

32 García Marquez, Gabriel, *De Viaje por los países socialistas. 90 días en la "Cortina de Hierro"* (Bogota: Ediciones Macondo, 1981), 142.

33 Golden, Lily, *My Long Journey Home* (Chicago: Third World Press, 2002), 59.

34 German, Mikhail, *Slozhnoe proshedshee (Passé composé)* (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo SPB, 2000), 284.

35 Interview with Eila Lahti-Argutina, 29 September 2006; Interview with a Russian woman, 23 May 2007.

during the festival.³⁶ Journalist-writer Olga Kuchkina (1936–), in 1957 a student of journalism, was working for *Komsomol'skaia pravda* during the festivities. She had no time either to hang around with foreigners or to establish contacts with them, since the world of journalism, of which she was getting her first real taste, swept her up completely.³⁷ Kuchkina recalled that her boss criticized her for writing too positively about the foreign guests. An article entitled “Nashi dveri i serdtsa otkrytyi” (Our doors and hearts are open) was returned to her with a new title “Nashi dveri i serdtsa otkrytyi, no ne dlia vsekh” (Our doors and hearts are open, but not for all).³⁸ Fear, too, prevented some people from mingling with foreigners. Writer Yuri Draichik reminisced that the Stalin period had made Soviet people so wary that they tried to avoid any contact with foreigners. He recalled how, when walking past the various embassies near the Arbat, people changed which side of the street they were on if a foreign citizen was walking toward them.³⁹ One of the interviewees, who was 15 years old at the time of the festival and the daughter of an intelligentsia family, recalled that her mother took her away from the city during the festival in order to avoid any negative consequences that meeting with foreigners might have. This wariness was rooted in Stalinist times, when some family members had been sentenced to prison camps. Many of her friends, most of them from intelligentsia families, recalled having followed the youth festival celebrations from a distance.⁴⁰ Leaving Moscow during the summer months was not unusual, however. Numerous Muscovites spent their summers in dachas on the outskirts of the city. And despite, or in some cases precisely because of, the festival many did so in the summer of 1957. Irina M. described in an interview how she only recalled the preparations for the festival, since at the time of the spectacle itself she was away from the city. When her cousin spent time with a Czechoslovakian youth during the festival, a panic arose within the family given their earlier experience of Stalinist repression.

It didn't bother me, but I remember that my grandmother and my grandfather were horrified by this Czech guy, despite the fact that he was very nice. My cousin was very pretty and very sociable, but this relationship was considered a horrible tragedy in our family. Luckily, his parents were Catholics and they prohibited him from seeing my cousin.⁴¹

36 Interview with a Russian woman, 9 April 2008.

37 Interview with Olga Kuchkina, 19 April 2009.

38 Kuchina, Olga, *Kosoi dozhd' ili peredisllokatsiia pigalitsy*, a draft of an unpublished memoir, given to the author in 2009.

39 Draichik, *Zapiski predposlednego*, 62.

40 Interview with a Russian woman, 29 September 2007, and email contact, 8 February 2010.

41 Interview with Irina M., in *Life Stories of Soviet Women*, edited by Melanie Ilic (London: Routledge, 2013), 127.

Similar suspicions about contacting foreigners arose among Bulgarian youth during the Sofia World Youth Festival in 1968. Repression as a part of family history had made people wary of involvement in public activities, and anyway, the Komsomol activists, who “would not be corrupted” by Western visitors, had priority to meet foreign guests.⁴² It was not only the Komsomol activists or the KGB but foreign communists who might also inform on Soviet youths who were asking “the wrong questions”. Ina Aksel’rod-Rubina recounted a discussion about events in Hungary with a Danish communist. After realizing that the Dane was following the official Soviet line, she quickly began to distance herself from him.⁴³

Visualizing Openness or the Lack Thereof

Negotiating and testing the boundaries of the permissible shines forth particularly well in photography. Foreign visitors desired to document Soviet society and get “hard” evidence to back their eyewitness stories, a desire which came up against the local people’s and authorities’ attempts to control the image of the USSR accessible to foreigners.

Foreign attendees captured their perceptions and experiences of the festival and of Soviet society in countless snapshots, which ended up in the visitors’ private albums. Typical pictures in festival visitors’ albums depict fellow delegates and new international friends at the festival events, like in Figure 15, in stadiums, on public squares, in meetings, on the streets. It was common to take pictures with those who came from different cultural backgrounds and looked different. Other typical themes in participants’ photos were tourist attractions, street views, as well as vehicles such as cars, locomotives and airplanes. While these photos provided memories for individual participants, they also served as visual testimonies of Soviet society. A report on foreign visitors noted that West German delegates had told their hosts that no one back home would believe what they had seen in the Soviet Union; luckily, they said, photographs of the streets of Moscow would help confirm their experiences.⁴⁴

⁴² Taylor, Karin, “Socialist Orchestration of Youth: the Sofia Youth Festival and Encounters on the Fringe”, *Ethnologia Balkanica*, 7, 2003, 50, 54. See also Taylor, Karin, *Let’s Twist Again: Youth and Leisure in Socialist Bulgaria* (Wien: Lit Verlag, 2006).

⁴³ Aksel’rod-Rubina, Ina, *Zhizn kak zhizn. Vospominania*, kniga 2 (Ierusalim, 2006), 25.

⁴⁴ Collection of photographs from private albums; Photo collection of the Finland-Soviet Friendship Society, KansA; TsAOPIIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, ll. 37–41. Informatsiia 8, Ob otkrytii VI Vsemirnogo festivalia molodezhi i studentov. V. Zaluzhnyi, A. Ratanov.



Fig. 15: Posing with a new friend at the Lenin Stadium.
Source: The Finnish Labour Museum Werstas.

Some of the visitors had a more professional approach to taking pictures of Soviet people, whom many in the West had only seen in Soviet propaganda imagery. A 22-year old Swiss student, Léonard Gianadda (1935–), travelled to Moscow as a photojournalist for the Swiss French-language paper *L'Illustré*. Gianadda's shots never ended up on public display during the Cold War, since the paper refused to publish the photos, regarding one of them as communist propaganda. Gianadda subsequently left journalism, and his photographs, some of them still undeveloped, eventually found their way to exhibitions displayed in Switzerland and Russia in 2009 and 2010 by a lucky accident.⁴⁵ Another photographer with a professional touch was 27-year old American film school graduate Robert Cohen.

⁴⁵ Papilloud, Jean-Henry, "Shveitsarskii fotograf v Moskve"/"Un photographe Suisse à Moscou", in *Moscou 1957 Moskva*, edited by Léonard Gianadda (Martigny: Fondation Pierre Gianadda, 2010), 9, 15, 18, 22, 26, 33; *The Moscow News*, 26 February 2010, Alisa Ballard, "Moscow.1957. Photos Go on Show at Pushkin"; *The Moscow News*, 26 February 2010, Nathan Toohey, "A Swiss view of the Soviet '50s"; *Itogi*, 1 February 2010, No. 5, Zhanna Vasil'eva, "Ot litsa sovetskogo".

Like Gianadda, his shots were made available for the wider public only in the 2000s, when Cohen put them up on his website.⁴⁶

Both Gianadda's and Cohen's photographs greatly differed from the official visual presentation and from the average festival participant's pictures, which were largely focused on festival events and depicting international friendship. In addition to shots of the festival itself, Gianadda's and Cohen's collections take an anthropological approach to ordinary people and day-to-day life on the streets and squares of Moscow. Like those who attended the festival primarily as a way to see the USSR, Gianadda and Cohen focused on what happened around the festival. Consequently, they managed to show something that very few Western correspondents could: they depicted the country in ordinary people, giving the Soviet Union a human face. Gianadda's collection included pictures of the changing of the guard in the front of the Lenin-Stalin mausoleum, ordinary Muscovites queuing in the metro, soldiers having a smoking break, cleaners on Red Square, outdoor toilets in the backyards of the city. The collection also entailed portraits of the long-distance runner Vladimir Kuts and the clown Oleg Popov with and without his mask, as well as Soviet women watching a fashion show in the GUM department store.⁴⁷

Photography finely illuminated both the freedom granted to foreign visitors and its limits. Taking pictures of Soviet achievements and cheering happy people certainly helped the process of refashioning the Soviet image abroad. Still, there was also a risk that visitors would not confine themselves to depicting only the positive aspects of Soviet life. Reports by the Ministry of International Affairs mentioned a few instances when foreigners were caught photographing rotten houses and untidy gardens. One of the reports told of how a Soviet worker had invited Czechoslovak delegates into his home in order to photograph a broken oven. At the police station, the man explained that he had already asked several times for the oven to be repaired but nothing had happened.⁴⁸ Locals seemed to be active in interfering in photographing and advising visitors on where to take pictures. Alex Jupp recalled that "I was usually (not always) interrupted by some well-meaning citizen and directed to a spot where I could photograph a new building under construction." He understood that Soviet

⁴⁶ Robert Cohen's photographs at Radical films, [<https://www.radfilms.com/>] (Accessed January 22, 2022).

⁴⁷ Gianadda, Léonard (ed.), *Moscou 1957 Moskva* (Martigny: Fondation Pierre Gianadda, 2010), 10–197.

⁴⁸ GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, l. 258. Minister vnutrennykh del SSSR, Dudorov, 27.7.1957; GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, l. 315. Minister vnutrennykh del SSSR, Dudorov, 3.8.1957; GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, l. 433. Minister vnutrennykh del SSSR, Dudorov, 16.8.1957.



Fig. 16: Queuing to the Lenin-Stalin Mausoleum at the Red Square.
 Photographer: Sinikka Tuominen.
 Source: The Finnish Labour Museum Werstas.

people thought showing the worst parts of the society would give foreigners the wrong impression about the Soviet Union and its future. “They consider this an unfriendly act. It struck me that the authorities have actually succeeded in convincing the people that my taking pictures of poor housing conditions was dishonest”.⁴⁹ Denis Hill recounted similar experiences. While taking pictures of a wooden house in Moscow, Hill was chastised by an old man who asked why he did not take pictures of modern houses instead. Hill replied to him that he had already taken some. “Eventually the chap accepted that I was a comrade, and not some foreign journalist trying to present Russia in a bad light”.⁵⁰ In the authorities’ reports, vigilant locals were praised for their heroic deeds. By guiding foreign visitors to obey the rules of Soviet society, they fulfilled their duty as Soviet people.

The concern about visitors photographing unpleasant scenes related both to efforts at refashioning the Soviet image and to the realistic fear of espionage. *The New York Times* told about a theology student from California, Stanley Mumford, who had been accused of spying in an article published in *Literaturnaia gazeta*. Mumford was twice detained and suspected of photographing a defense installation. He was first caught while climbing into the factory yard, but he

⁴⁹ Jupp, *A Canadian Looks*, 30–31.

⁵⁰ Hill, Denis, *Seeing Red, Being Green. The Life and Times of a Southern Rebel* (Brighton: Iconoclast Press, 1989), 339.



Fig. 17: One of the key themes of the festival trips in young men's home albums were vehicles. A young man photographing the locomotive at the Leningrad Station in Moscow.
Source: Finnish Labour Museum Werstas.

explained to have mistaken this for the route to the opening ceremony. The second detention happened at the very same spot, at which time he claimed to have returned to take a souvenir photo of the place where he had been detained the first time. According to *The New York Times*, he was questioned for five hours but apparently avoided any further consequences.⁵¹ In another case, two Australian delegates were accused of spying during a train trip back home through Siberia. In their report, the train staff and a KGB officer noted that the Australians had photographed bridges, railroads and industrial buildings along the way. The pair insisted they had photographed Siberia to show their friends and then said that they would tell Australian newspapers about the lack of individual freedom in the USSR if their films were taken. In the end, they consented to relinquishing their films, and the episode ended in a "friendly spirit".⁵² Whether or not it was the same people, CIA records indicate that an anonymous person (or persons) had included observations and technical information about the Trans-Siberian railway in their report on the Moscow festival.⁵³

⁵¹ Belfrage, Sally, *A Room in Moscow* (London: Pan Books Ltd, 1959), 10–11; *The New York Times*, 11 August 1957, 2, "Soviet Paper Gibes at Student".

⁵² RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 251, ll. 9–12. Zamestitel' SPK t. Sokolovu E. N., V. Pontiaev 26.8.1957.

⁵³ General CIA records, CIA-RDP80T00246A026800320001-9, Information report, 3 February 1958.

The question of what foreign visitors should and should not photograph highlighted cultural differences in the practice of photography. While there certainly were Westerners who wished to capture the worst bits of socialism as proof of the misery that the system had generated, an obsession with photographing everything they could was typical for Western tourists in general, including Western festival visitors. Sensitivity about the content of pictures also worked the other way around at times, as Gianadda's case demonstrated. His mistake was to take a picture of János Kádár, the chairman of the Hungarian Council of Ministries, when he was receiving a pin at the Swiss embassy in Moscow. Regarding this picture as communist propaganda, Gianadda's paper *L'Illustré* refused to publish any of his photos.⁵⁴ For Western Cold Warriors, disseminating anything that could be understood as Soviet or communist propaganda was out of question. Maintaining the image of the USSR as a poor, isolated and hostile country was just as important to Western opponents as Soviet leaders' attempts to achieve the opposite. On both sides, the cultural Cold War was about managing the images of one's own system and that of one's enemy.

Encounters with the Material West

The exchange of small gifts, such as postcards and scarves, was a vital element in encounters between festival youth and local people. Besides this, various businesses blossomed during the Moscow festival, with merchandise ranging from clothes and shoes to watches and cheap jewellery. Black market trade, speculation (*spekulatsiia*), was a surprisingly widespread a phenomenon: the authorities reported that foreign delegates traded over two million roubles during the festival.⁵⁵ Speculation was against the law; however, Soviet authorities had decided to allow trading among foreigners, for which they designated special areas so as to keep it under control. These trading areas were not open to locals, who found their own ways to get a hold of various goods coming from abroad.

It is not difficult to see why Soviet people were willing to take risks in order to gain foreign items. They regarded Western-made goods (clothes, watches, shoes) as being of better quality than domestic products, and in times of scarcity there was simply not much to buy, which prompted Soviets to use every opportunity to acquire things from foreigners and fellow citizens who had been abroad. A far

⁵⁴ *The Moscow News*, 26 February 2010, Alisa Ballard, "Moscow.1957. Photos Go on Show at Pushkin".

⁵⁵ GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, l. 432. Minister vnutrennykh del SSSR Dudorov, v TsK KPSS, Sovet ministrov, MGK KPSS, TsK VLKSM, KGB, 17.8.1957.

more puzzling question is why the authorities allowed foreign participants to trade. Was it another way to demonstrate the new openness? A realistic explanation might be that authorities had not expected trading to take place at the festival. At least, the preparatory materials do not mention anything of the kind. It was probably too late to begin prohibiting trade once the festival had started, so instead, authorities directed foreign visitors willing to do business to specific trading spots.

Most of the cases reported by the Ministry of Internal Affairs involved individuals or small groups. A typical case involved an individual or a small group of foreign participants with one or two items for sale. For example, one report concerned Danish delegates who had sold women's socks near the hotel Zolotoi golos where they were staying, but vanished once told they were breaking laws. There is also an account of a Swedish delegate who had sold a watch of unspecified foreign brand for 400 roubles.⁵⁶ Alongside the rather unsystematic trading, more organized forms of private, unauthorized business were carried out as well. One of the cases was that of an Austrian delegate, Ukrainian on her father's side, who organized the selling of Western goods such as shoes, clothes and accessories in her dormitory, along with her relatives from Kharkiv. Her case came to the knowledge of the authorities when she reported a robbery in her dormitory room, where she had set up shop. When asked to sign a written declaration about the alleged crime, she refused and left the dormitory.⁵⁷ Another businesswoman, treasurer of the Finnish Democratic Youth League, Meri Elo, reportedly sold 1,748 wrist watches, earning almost 480,000 roubles.⁵⁸ Elo was not doing an individual business but collecting money for the youth league, an activity that the Finnish Democratic Youth League had been practicing at the World Youth Festivals in order to acquire extra funds.⁵⁹ The Ministry of Internal Affairs' report noted that Elo was probably part of a larger business and informed the head of the Ministry of Foreign Trade about the matter. He, however, did not see any problem with this activity, which gives cause to consider whether there was a tacit agreement to allow foreign communists to conduct such businesses freely during the festival.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, l. 284. Minister vnutrennykh del Dudorov, v TsK KPSS, Sovet ministrov, MGK KPSS, TsK VLKSM, KGB, 29.7.1957.

⁵⁷ GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, l. 376. Minister vnutrennykh del Dudorov, v TsK KPSS, Sovet ministrov, MGK KPSS, TsK VLKSM, KGB, 10.8.1957.

⁵⁸ GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, ll. 375, 432. Minister vnutrennykh del Dudorov, v TsK KPSS, Sovet ministrov, MGK KPSS, TsK VLKSM, KGB, 17.8.1957.

⁵⁹ Viitanen, Reijo, *SDNL 50 vuotta* (Helsinki: SDNL, 1994), 265–266.

⁶⁰ GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, ll. 375, 432. Minister vnutrennykh del Dudorov, v TsK KPSS, Sovet ministrov, MGK KPSS, TsK VLKSM, KGB, 17.8.1957.

While foreigners were allowed to carry out their businesses, hundreds of Soviet citizens were arrested for speculation. According to the final report by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, between 22 July and 12 August the militia arrested 601 people for breaking the trading laws and 183 people who had bought consumables from foreigners. 30 of them were convicted, 155 fined and 42 deported from Moscow.⁶¹ This level of control also applied to the participants from socialist countries. For example, the Romanian delegation sent 12 of its delegates home because they had attempted to sell goods to a Soviet commission trade shop.⁶²

Soviet citizens' eagerness to buy foreign goods was a frequent topic in both Soviet and foreign memoirs. Yuri Draichik recounted that the black market was used by almost everybody and the militia gave it their silent acceptance, even though it was against law.⁶³ Vladimir Papernyi regards speculation as a primarily cultural, rather than economic, phenomenon. "They [Soviet people] were motivated less by the desire to get rich through the exchange of foreign goods than by the desire to handle them."⁶⁴ The American-British attendee Sally Belfrage describes in her travelogue the ways in which stiliaga youth obtained rare consumer goods and highlights the festival for its unusual opportunities for buying foreign things. One of her friends was upset about missing the youth festival especially because he lost the chance to buy foreign clothes and records.⁶⁵ While some people had prepared to sell things at the festival, for less experienced visitors to the socialist countries it came as a surprise that locals were willing to buy things from the West. A Finnish delegate recalled that Russians bought clothes in particular, and paid well for them. Since he had nothing else to trade, he sold trousers that belonged to the uniform of the Finnish delegation.⁶⁶ If foreign delegates had nothing to sell, local youths were happy to receive the autographs of foreign visitors – an exchange item specific to the World Youth Festivals.⁶⁷ A journalist from *The Manchester Guardian* highlighted this peculiar

61 GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, l. 431. Minister vnutrennykh del Dudorov, v TsK KPSS, Sovet ministrov, MGK KPSS, TsK VLKSM, KGB, 17.8.1957.

62 RGASPI, f. M-3, op.15, d. 193, ll. 16, 29. Nekotorye fakty, soobshchennye otvetstvennymi za delegatsii.

63 Draichik, Iurii, *Golubaia krov' – mostoviki* (Moscow: Sfera, 2000), 262.

64 Papernyi, Vladimir, *Architecture in the Age of Stalin. Culture Two* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 63–64.

65 Belfrage, *A Room*, 27. According to the American journalist Harrison Salisbury, street speculation began at the time of the festival. Salisbury, Harrison E., *And Beyond. A Reporter's Narrative* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 90.

66 Interview with a Finnish man, 30 March 2009.

67 Golovanov, *Zametki vashego sovremennika*, 75–76.

item of exchange in one festival report: “One curious feature of the Festival is the autograph-hunting in all the streets and public places. I asked one East German youth what his object was, and he explained that he wanted to get the signature of at least one member of every foreign delegation.”⁶⁸ Robert Cohen explained the interest in autographs, which many other interviewees also mentioned, as a product of the mystical and exotic presence that foreigners embodied, especially if a name was written in nonfamiliar (Latin, Cyrillic, Arabic etc.) letters. Anything one could get from a foreigner was desired and celebrated – even an autograph.⁶⁹

Since the Moscow shops and boutiques offered relatively little for foreigners, trade at the youth festival mostly meant goods transferred from Westerners to Easterners. Nevertheless, some items did move in the opposite direction. Finns bought vodka, guitars and balalaikas, which, according to the report by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, were much cheaper than in Finland. These records also stated that foreign guests bought cameras, vacuum cleaners, radios, televisions and other such things; Romanians even carried fridges back home.⁷⁰ Very few memoirists or interviewees subsequently wrote about what they had purchased in Moscow. British communist and IUS worker Denis Hill is an exception. His salary was paid in roubles, which he had to spend in Moscow because it was illegal to export the currency. Besides books and LP records, Hill bought an electric shaver, a record player and a “Raketa” vacuum cleaner.⁷¹

Informal trading also worked the other way around. When Soviet cultural or sporting ambassadors or tourists travelled abroad they took Soviet goods that would sell well in the West in order to earn money so as to bring back Western goods that were not available at home. The Soviet boxer Grigorii Rogolskii recalls how twenty bottles of Stolichnaya and four tins of black Beluga caviar earned him enough money to buy fifteen pairs of jeans, six Seiko watches and four auto cassette recorders. “The last were strictly *verboten*, particularly in wholesale quantities. But everybody did the same, stuffing their suitcases while our KGB major pretended not to see”.⁷²

Obtaining foreign goods, however difficult and restricted, was not as rare a phenomenon as many Western observers thought at the time. During periods of scarcity, Soviet people had developed various survival strategies to make ends

⁶⁸ *The Manchester Guardian*, 8 August 1951, 5, “East Germans see display of Life in Britain”.

⁶⁹ Interview with Robert Cohen, 10 April 2010.

⁷⁰ GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, ll. 387, 393, 404.

⁷¹ Hill, *Seeing Red*, 340.

⁷² Brokhin, Yuri, *The Big Red Machine. The Rise and Fall of Soviet Olympic Champions* (New York: Random House, 1978), 109.



Fig. 18: After some shopping in Moscow.
Source: Private collection.

meet. Black markets, personal networks and other such forms of gaining goods bloomed in the post-war Soviet Union. Although travelling abroad was a rare privilege, some people, like diplomats, athletes and artists were allowed to travel on occasion. Thus, they could acquire Western goods and bring them home for relatives and friends. Another way to procure such things was through foreign tourists: a practice that started emerge in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union from the 1960s onwards. The festival differed from everyday life, in that those people who could not obtain Western consumer goods through their usual networks had more opportunities to acquire them. When the city was full of foreign youngsters, it was far more difficult to scrutinize every person's every actions.

Intimate Encounters

When recalling his festival memories, the poet Yevgeni Yevtushenko framed his intimate moment with a foreign girl in Cold War context. The kiss was not just a kiss, but a touch between the socialist and “the so-called capitalist lips”, momentarily bridging the East and West.⁷³ Intimate encounters are one of the

⁷³ Interview with Yevgeni Yevtushenko 17 January 1999, [<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/interviews/episode-14/yevtushenko1.html>], (Accessed 19 August 2008).

central things that the Moscow 1957 festival came to be known for. As Yevtushenko hints, it was yet another field where the boundaries of acceptable behaviour were controlled, negotiated and redrawn. Mixing thousands of young people from multiple cultural backgrounds, the Moscow youth festival brought the gift of love and the winds of sexual liberation into the Soviet Union, challenging traditional Soviet socialist moral codes.⁷⁴

Besides restrictions on mobility, access to outsider information and freedom of speech, the Soviet state regulated with whom their citizens were allowed to establish romantic and intimate contacts, and even how its citizens used their bodies. Despite the 1920s, when sexual relations between men and women and free love had been widely debated amongst Bolshevik ideologists, attitudes towards sex were conservative and restrictive, characterized by something close to sexophobia.⁷⁵ The years of the Thaw brought a temporary change to the ways in which sex and sexuality were discussed. In the culture of the Thaw, e.g. in its films, literature and media, the definition and limits of love and intimate life began to expand and became less a matter for the collective than for individuals. During the decades following the Thaw, “Soviet love transformed from a feeling defined by responsibility and sense, into irrational, inexplicable, perpetual torturous lust”.⁷⁶

The Moscow youth festival became a fruitful chance for Soviet youth to explore how far the Soviet state was willing to yield in its traditional values and, given the frequency with which matters of a sexual nature were later discussed in regard to the youth festival, it seems to have been an active testing ground. While some Soviet citizens embraced sexual liberalization, others took it as a sign of moral decadence. Rumours about loose sexual behaviour spread around Moscow at the time of the festival and aroused fears of Western influences, which threatened socialist values and corrupted young people. Talk of loose behaviour focused specifically on “loose girls” and young women, whose behaviour was the more strictly watched and whose maidenly honour needed watching.⁷⁷ The conservativeness of Soviet attitudes toward sex and intimacy was perceptible on the streets

74 Roth-Ey, Kristin, “‘Loose Girls’ on the Loose?: Sex, Propaganda and the 1957 Youth Festival”, in *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, edited by Melanie Ilic, Susan E. Reid and Lynne Attwood (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 90–91; see also Kozlov, “*Kozel na sakse*”, 106–107.

75 Kon, Igor, *The Sexual Revolution in Russia: from the Age of the Czars to Today* (New York: Free Press, 1995); Naiman, Eric, *Sex in Public. The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

76 Borisova, Nataliia, “Liubliu – i nechego bol’she. Sovetskaia liubov’ 1960–1980-kh godov”, in *SSSR territoriiia liubvi*, edited by N. Borisova; K. Bogdanov and Iu. Murashov (Moscow: Novoe izdatel’stvo, 2008), 40–60, 46 (quotation).

77 Roth-Ey, “‘Loose Girls’”, 90–91; see also Kozlov, “*Kozel na sakse*”, 106–107.

of Moscow. Columbian writer Gabriel García Márquez noted in his travelogue that the Soviet attitude to intimate relations was nothing like the days of “free love” of the 1920s.⁷⁸ Indian delegate Pradip Bose described the atmosphere in Moscow as “Victorian”, saying that “I saw no public demonstration of affection all the time I was there and I was told that even for a husband to embrace his wife on a railway station was frowned upon”.⁷⁹

By the end of the festival, the Ministry of Internal Affairs reported 107 arrests of women for indecent behaviour.⁸⁰ Reports described several cases in which Soviet girls had met with foreigners. In one case, two young women, 22 and 23 years old, were accused of attempting to have intimate contact with Italian men. One of the girls was a secretary working in a factory and the other a cashier at a scientific institution. They were both arrested and taken into custody.⁸¹ While the report gave detailed information of the Soviet girls, their foreign male accomplices were only mentioned by nationality. Soviet men were not recorded at all. The different rules that applied to Soviet men versus Soviet women also came up in Kim Chernin’s description of her intimate moment with a Russian man named Tolya. When this American-Russian couple was interrupted by a Komsomol brigade in a park, Tolya explained to Kim that there was no problem because: “You, American girl. I, Soviet boy”. Had it been the other way around, serious consequences would have ensued.⁸² The fact that Soviet men were freer to jump into occasional relations with foreigners than their female peers can be derived from the authorities’ reports, as well as the oral history accounts and memoirs. While official reports did not mention anything about Soviet men’s sexual activities during the festival, Soviet women were explicitly identified as bad examples.

The main tool for catching international couples was a special voluntary activity designed to control public order. Known as the Komsomol brigades (sometimes called morality brigades), these groups belonged to a special form of civic control, the Light Cavalry (*legkaia kavaleriia*). The Light Cavalry dated back to

⁷⁸ García Márquez, *De Viaje*, 160.

⁷⁹ Bose, Pradip, *Growing up in India* (Calcutta: Minerva Associates, 1972), 127–128.

⁸⁰ GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, ll. 430, 433. Minister vnutrennykh del Dudorov, v TsK KPSS, Sovet ministrov, MGK KPSS, TsK VLKSM, KGB, 17.8.1957; GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, l. 379. Minister vnutrennykh del Dudorov, v TsK KPSS, Sovet ministrov, MGK KPSS, TsK VLKSM, KGB, 9.8.1957; TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, l. 57. Informatsiia 10, 30.7.1957.

⁸¹ GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, ll. 400–401. Minister vnutrennykh del Dudorov, v TsK KPSS, Sovet ministrov, MGK KPSS, TsK VLKSM, KGB, 12.8.1957.

⁸² Chernin, Kim, *In My Mother’s House. A Daughter’s Story* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1994), 277.

the 1930s, when it had focused merely on controlling work efficiency. The revived version for the 1950s concentrated more on catching people breaking societal norms: drunkenness, hooliganism, illegal trading and prostitution.⁸³ The Komsomol brigades constituted the most common form of control that foreigners faced during their visit. Based on mentions of the brigades in oral histories and memoirs, at the time of the festival they mainly occupied themselves with guarding Soviet women's sexual purity, not hooliganism, overconsumption of alcohol or black-market trading, which were just as present as "free love". The authorities' reports drew heroic portraits of vigilant citizens who confronted their compatriots, as well as foreigners, about their inappropriate behaviour. Personal accounts show this activity in a far less heroic light. Yuri Draichik, who himself patrolled the streets, recalled that working as a Komsomol brigadier was an awkward task, especially because there was always the possibility that in the dark they would catch a girl they knew.⁸⁴ The Ukrainian mathematician Leonid Plyushch, who later became a dissident, shared his feelings of embarrassment at catching fellow citizens. Plyushch participated in a special campaign against misbehaving Soviet girls that was held right after the Moscow festival, when some foreign guests visited Odesa. "We'd walk around the park looking for couples in the bushes. It was very embarrassing, but what could we do?" One girl whom they found and reprimanded, preaching to her of the honour of Soviet girls and the Soviet Union's reputation, said that it was none of the Komsomol's business how she used her body. When she was threatened with prison, she finally admitted her "guilt".⁸⁵

Vigilance in supervising women's sexual conduct with foreigners was neither unique to the Soviet Union nor to the Moscow festival. Similar fears were projected at the eighth World Youth Festival held in Helsinki in 1962, where local anti-communist lads violently attacked festival youth. It has been speculated that in addition to their efforts to fight communism, the attacks were motivated by their being threatened by the presence of exotic and attractive foreign men.⁸⁶ While in Helsinki the maidenly honour of local girls remained a matter of dispute between men, one which could be resolved by fistfights, in Moscow it was the "fallen girls"

83 Pilkington, Hilary, *Russia's Youth and Its Culture. A Nation's Constructors and Constructed* (London: Routledge, 1994), 95, 99; Fürst, Juliane, "The Arrival of Spring? Changes and Continuities in Soviet Youth culture and policy between Stalin and Khrushchev", in *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization. Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era*, edited by Polly Jones (London: Routledge, 2006), 145–148; Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation*, 106, 266.

84 Draichik, *Zapiski predposlednego*, 63.

85 Plyushch, *History's Carnival*, 15.

86 Krekola, Joni, *Maailma kylässä 1962. Helsingin nuorisofestivaali* (Helsinki: Like, 2012), 216.

that suffered the consequences. A rumour spread among Muscovites that the heads of those girls who had been caught were shaved for public punishment and humiliation.⁸⁷ Sally Belfrage heard about these rumours via her acquaintance Shura, according to whom about 80 girls had been caught, had their heads shaved and were then sent to the Virgin lands.⁸⁸ The reports of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, however, mention only one case related to head shaving. Some local youngsters had found two Soviet girls with Italian festival guests, put the girls into a car and drove them to the countryside, to Babushkin, forced them out of the car and cut their hair. Although the report did not explicitly offer judgement on the girls, it indirectly excused the action taken by the local men by mentioning that one of the women had already been detained once by the police for similar reasons.⁸⁹ Another nuisance that haunted international love-birds was venereal disease. Although this might not have anything to do with festival relationships, Soviet authorities reported several instances in which festival participants had been treated in Soviet hospitals because of syphilis and gonorrhoea. For a comparison, at the 1985 World Youth Festival in Moscow one of the external fears centred upon the then new and unknown disease AIDS.⁹⁰

Oral history and memoirs tell about troubles that Soviet women mingling with foreign men encountered. Robert Cohen described in an interview how his friendship with a Soviet film student, Ideya, was interrupted by the authorities several times. One of the incidents led to her arrest, even though they had only walked “hand in hand on a public street”. Cohen followed Ideya to the militia station, but because he did not speak Russian, he could not understand the reason for the arrest. Later Cohen found out through his journalist acquaintances that the arrests resulted from the authorities’ wish to guard Soviet girls from unwanted pregnancies. Cohen’s journalist friends explained that Polish women had been seduced into sex for nylon stockings during the Warsaw Festival in 1955. As a result, some of these women had apparently given birth to dual heritage children and this had prompted the Komsomol to plan pre-emptive methods to prevent the same thing from happening in Moscow. After returning

87 Roth-Ey, 2004, 83–87; Kozlov, “*Kozel na sakse*”, 107–108.

88 Belfrage, *A Room*, 42–43. The Virgin Lands Campaign was Khrushchev’s initiative to widen the land under agriculture in the Kazakh and Altai regions.

89 GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, l. 378. Minister vnutrennykh del Dudorov, v TsK KPSS, Sovet ministrov, MGK KPSS, TsK VLKSM, KGB, 10.8.1957.

90 GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, ll. 258, 263. Minister vnutrennykh del Dudorov, v TsK KPSS, Sovet ministrov, MGK KPSS, TsK VLKSM, KGB, 27.7.1957; *The Washington Post*, 28 July 1985, A18, Celestine Bohlen, “Soviets, With Care, Hail World Youth. A More Blase Moscow Recalls Festival After Stalin Era”.

home, Cohen found out that Ideya's troubles had continued. Besides being arrested after walking hand in hand with a foreigner during the festival, the stigma of "being too friendly with foreigners" left an ineradicable mark on her file. After graduation, she could not find a job in Moscow or in Leningrad, and had to move to more peripheral regions.⁹¹ Pradip Bose wrote about a similar instance. Bose met a Russian girl who wished to know about yoga. While waiting for him at the hotel, the girl was picked up by the authorities and Bose saw her being questioned in the hotel control office. After she was released, Bose went to talk to her. "I still remember her expression of terror, finding it more eloquent than all the books I had read about the horrors of the Stalin period".⁹² The love affair of a 23-year old Finnish teacher also ended sadly. He had fallen in love with a Russian girl at the festival, stayed in contact with her through letters and planned a marriage. Their plans were never realized because Soviet authorities did not let her even visit Finland.⁹³

The story of the Finnish teacher was not unique, though it is difficult to evaluate the number of foreigners who developed the desire to marry a Soviet citizen at the festival; the Ministry of Internal Affairs' reports mention only a few cases. Marrying a foreigner had been illegal during the late Stalin period, and even though it was legally possible in 1957, it was still practically difficult in the Thaw years, as the foreign festival guests came to experience.⁹⁴ According to one report, two Libyans wanted to marry local girls, one a Russian and the other a Georgian. However, they were turned down on the spurious grounds that, because the registrar did not know foreign languages, she could not read the men's passports and therefore was unable to carry out registration.⁹⁵ In another case, an American delegate wanted to marry a student from Kyiv. The subsequent report complained that after the Soviet girl had accepted the proposal, the American had been constantly asking whether they could register their marriage in the Soviet Union

91 Interview with Robert Cohen, 10 April 2010.

92 Bose, 1972, 128.

93 Interview with a Finnish man, 30 March 2009.

94 Hopf, Ted, *Reconstructing the Cold War. The Early Years, 1945–1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 61, 156; Applebaum, Rachel, "The Friendship Project: Socialist Internationalism in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia in the 1950s and 1960s", *Slavic Review*, 74, No. 3, 489. According to American journalist John Gunther, marrying foreigners had ceased to be illegal already in November 1953. Gunther, John, *Inside Russia Today* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 230.

95 GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, l. 378. Minister vnutrennykh del Dudorov, v TsK KPSS, Sovet ministrov, MGK KPSS, TsK VLKSM, KGB, 10.8.1957.

and then move to the United States.⁹⁶ The fact remains that people did find life companions with the help of the World Youth Festivals, but it happened more often among one's compatriots.⁹⁷ Lily Golden was exceptional in that she as a Soviet citizen married a foreigner, yet in her case her African-American roots certainly played a role in the outcome. Golden met her husband through a Zanzibari festival delegate. This "matchmaker" had paid attention to Golden as she was taking care of the affairs of all African participants and suggested her as a partner to a Zanzibar national and activist named Abdulla Hanga, whom Lily Golden eventually married in 1961.⁹⁸

The most widely known myth regarding loose behaviour and the Moscow youth festival was that of the so-called festival children. *Deti festivalia* (sometimes also *festival'nye deti*) refers to babies who were apparently born to Soviet girls outside of wedlock, approximately nine months after the festival. While the festival children were almost completely absent in contemporary accounts, their existence has been well preserved in oral tradition within Russia.⁹⁹ It was emblematic that a popular yearbook of Soviet history, *Vash god rozhdeniia*, picked a black baby doll for the cover of the book for the year 1957 – a clear reference to *deti festivalia*.¹⁰⁰ The theme of festival children has also been used in fiction. M. Stolianskii played with the term in his short story "Deti festivalei" (Children of Festivals), and in a novel by a Russian born American writer Anya Ulinich, *Petropolis* (2007), the father of the protagonist Sasha Goldberg was a festival child.¹⁰¹ In her memoir, Lily Golden recounted that there was a public joke during those days that the next World Youth Festival in the Soviet Union "would only include our own people, for by then, we would have enough locally born Africans".¹⁰²

96 TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, l. 151. Sekretariu MGK KPSS, tov. Marchenko I. T., V. Zaluzhnyi, Informatsiia 19, 9.8.1957.

97 Krekola, Joni, "Kuumia tunteita ja kylmää sotaa nuorisofestivaaleilla", in *Työväki ja tunteet*, edited by E. Katainen and P. Kotila (Turku: Työväen historian ja perinteen tutkimuksen seura, 2002), 271; Bresland, 1957, 17; Myrdal, Jan, *Maj. En Kärlek* (Stockholm: En Bok för alla, 1999), 82, 306–307, 323–324 and passim.

98 Golden, 2002, 92–112; Garew, Gleason, *Blacks, Reds, and Russians: Sojourners in Search of the Soviet Promise* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008).

99 Interview with Eila Lahti-Argutina, 29 September 2006; Roth-Ey, 2004, 75, 86, 94 (n. 47).

100 Barengolts, Juliia and Karatov, Sergei, *Vash 1957. Vremia, fakty, podrobnosti* (Moscow: Anagramma, 2008).

101 Stolianskii, M. "Deti festivalei", in *Antologiiia sovremennogo rasskaza ili istorii kontsa veka* (Moscow: Izadatel'stvo ACT, 2000), 109–139; Ulinich, Anya, *Petropolis* (New York: Viking Books, 2007).

102 Golden, 2002, 63.



Fig. 19: Festival love? A Finnish man with a local girl.
Source: The Finnish Labour Museum Werstas.

What is nowadays a part of the romanticized past was then considered a tragedy for inexperienced and unfortunate Soviet girls, said to be “seduced” by exotic foreigners. The journalist Yuri Draichik reminisced that militiamen were ordered to protect Soviet girls from male festival guests, especially “black people”. When an officer asked why it was particularly “black people”, the militia leaders answered that it was because of the future of these girls. “They make a cohort of chocolate children with our girls, and it is not only a shame for our Soviet moral system, but also for the girl. She will hardly ever find any normal fellow to marry her with a chocolate baby”.¹⁰³ This candid comment aptly reflected the unfamiliarity of Soviet society with ethnic diversity. Although the Soviet Union was a country with thousands of different ethnic groups, this variety only covered a part of the global spectrum. In the 1950s, there were so few African immigrants in the USSR that a black child would likely have been read as directly symbolizing a girl’s promiscuity and would thus mark her out for her apparent sexual looseness.¹⁰⁴ The above quotation also points to the way that some Soviet people thought about otherness in the late 1950s. In the festival’s rhetoric, all nations and all people, irrespective of ethnicity, were to be embraced. This, however, applied only to the festival. After the celebration, it was time to return to everyday life and, as the above comment indicates,

¹⁰³ Draichik, Iurii, *Golubaia krov’ – mostoviki* (Moscow: Sfera, 2000), 260–261.

¹⁰⁴ Roth-Ey, 2004, 86.

standing out in this environment could make life difficult. Rumours that spread around Moscow after the festival spoke of a large group of offspring from festival romances. Instead of an army of the *deti festivalia*, however, these international relationships produced perhaps a dozen festival children.¹⁰⁵ Rather than being the offspring of festival participants, dual heritage children in the USSR during the 1960s were more often the children of African student fathers and Russian mothers.¹⁰⁶ The sources used for this study provide information about two “festival children”. The only reference to an existing Soviet festival child was mentioned by Khrushchev’s daughter Rada Adzhubei, whose female colleague had a child with a foreign festival participant. A song about curly haired black babies born to Finnish girls and filled with wild stories did the rounds after the Helsinki 1962 festival, yet only one festival child is known to have been born to a Finnish girl and a Cuban man in 1963.¹⁰⁷

Finding Ways to Debate Politics

In terms of controlling and testing the boundaries of the acceptable, topics related to recent political events and questions aimed at exposing the “truth” about the socialist system were what frightened the authorities the most. While the organizers had managed to arrange the festival so that its public events provided little chance for genuinely free discussions, the policy of openness guaranteed that those who wanted to could find ways to engage in political discussions with Soviet people. It is difficult to gain a clear picture of how widely political topics were discussed and what the reactions of authorities, Komsomol officials, ordinary youth and Soviet people in general were. Most of the sources, reports of the ministries, the Komsomol and local authorities, as well as oral histories, travelogues and memoirs, suggest that Soviet people avoided, rather than eagerly engaged in, political debates with foreigners.

Komsomol officials who worked with foreign delegations diligently recorded any political commentary and listed the questions posed by foreign youth. However, the report writing convention neither included elaborating on observations made nor allowed the addressing of systemic taboos such as the

105 The scope of the phenomenon is discussed earlier in Roth-Ey, 2004, 94 (n. 47); see also *Trud*, 14 July 2007, Vadim Karpov, “A byl li chernyi mal’chik?”.

106 Quist-Adade, Charles, “The African Russians: Children of the Cold War”, in *Africa in Russia. Russia in Africa. Three Centuries of Encounters*, edited by Maxim Matusevich (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2007), 153–155.

107 Interview with Rada Nikitichna Adzhubei, in Ilic, 2013, 68; Krekola, 2012, 216–217.

socialist system or the official narratives of Soviet military actions abroad. Reports identified the British, US, and Polish delegates as particularly active in initiating political conversations, and their questions typically related to the events in Hungary in 1956, the party plenum in July 1957 and the expulsion of the anti-party group, as well as numerous dimensions of the socialist system itself, for example its living standards, freedoms and the rights of Soviet citizens. The recent Stalinist past and its treatment in Western media served as the main source of knowledge of the USSR for some of the Western visitors. The conception of the USSR as a dictatorship prompted questions, like the one posed by a British delegate who wanted to know if the political leaders accused in the attempted coup against Khrushchev had been shot, as one might have expected to happen based on recent conventions in the country.¹⁰⁸

Foreign festival participants' memoirs, interviews and travelogues indicate, too, that only a few Soviet people were willing to talk about the Soviet system or to discuss political events, which made it difficult for them to draw a general picture of public opinion regarding the regime and its policies. Gabriel García Márquez marked that people were careful on what they talked about with foreigners. Many kept saying that times had changed, yet they did not elaborate upon the matter any further. García Márquez puts forth an elderly woman of 60 as a rare example of a Soviet citizen who openly and critically talked about Stalinist times. Without naming Stalin, the woman regarded "the one with the moustache" (*Le moustachu/El bigotudo*) as a criminal. Under his rule, she said, the festival would have never taken place, since people were so afraid of contacting foreigners that they would not have dared step foot out of their homes. She stated that times had changed but that the new leaders were occupied with correcting Stalin's mistakes. In spite of the criticism, she did not consider herself anti-Soviet and mentioned that she could only live in the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁹

Peter Waterman, as a worker in a communist-run organization, looked forward to gaining new information on what was happening inside the communist world, especially the 20th party congress. He was disappointed to find that true debates were practically impossible, since Soviet students seemed well-prepared to answer "difficult questions" following the official Soviet line. Waterman was, for example, keen to know more about the student riots he had read of in the Western press, but in response was told that the Western papers were lying and

108 TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, l. 5. Sekretariu MGK KPSS, tov. Marchenko I. T., V. Zaluzhnyi, A. Sukharev, Informatsiia 4, 25.7.1957; RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 197, l. 73. Spravka o rabote delegatsii Velikobritanii na VI Vsemirnomo festivale molodezhi i studentov, 22.8.1957.

109 García Márquez, *De viaje*, 152–159.

that no riots whatsoever had taken place.¹¹⁰ When Waterman asked for a copy of Vladimir Dudintsev's novel *Not by Bread Alone* in a meeting, he received a paradoxical answer, according to which the book was both "sold out and of no possible interest".¹¹¹

Alex Jupp's and Denis Hill's accounts allow one to draw similar conclusions. The Canadian visitor Alex Jupp found it difficult to evaluate the scale of anti-regime views, but rejoiced that he could find people who were not fully pro-regime. "The fact that there are in the Soviet Union people who can think in the language we in the West can understand is a healthy thing – not just for Russia or the West but for the future of civilization itself."¹¹² Denis Hill likewise noted that it was difficult to grasp what people really thought about politics, adding that average citizens whether in the USSR or in the US would similarly conform to the policies of their leaders. "You are not going to hear original thought, or critical views, by talking to the man-in-the-street in Pittsburgh or in Omsk. So it is very hard to know to what extent the mass of the population genuinely subscribes to the notions of socialism."¹¹³ Sally Belfrage, who had the chance to spend five months in Moscow after the festival, seemed to have met with wider spectrum of systemic criticism than other travel-writers and memoirists. Belfrage spent time with three *stiliaga* youth, Sergei, Shura and Kolia. According to them, people had been and were still so afraid that no one would criticize the system to a stranger. Yet people were shedding their fear and had started to criticize the regime more than before. They also held that the festival had been a big failure for the political leaders because it had increased dissatisfaction with the regime and had "been a living proof to the Russians that people from the capitalist countries not only were not oppressed but in fact were happy and lively and were materially better off."¹¹⁴

Amidst the crowd of multinational festival youth and locals wandered also foreign groups with a special mission. They were sent to Moscow in order to control or provoke discussions on current political events. One such group was the Hungarian delegation, whose goal at the festival was to spread the official Soviet version of what had happened in 1956. The Hungarian delegation consisted of 1,100 members, selected by the Communist youth association (KISZ) – a brand new youth league established after the rising in March 1957, only a few months before the Moscow festival. The delegates were equipped with three

110 Peter Waterman's diary, February 1957, Moscow.

111 Waterman, autobiography, chapter 2, 83; Peter Waterman's diary.

112 Jupp, *A Canadian Looks*, 34–36.

113 Hill, *Seeing Red*, 335.

114 Belfrage, *A Room*, 42.

documents supporting the official Soviet and Hungarian version of events, entitled “Hungary after counter-revolution”, “The truth about Hungary in pictures” and “Help them return home”, which sought to promote the repatriation of those Hungarians who had left the country during the uprising.¹¹⁵ Soviet authorities recorded a few heated moments when Hungarians ended up arguing about the interpretations of the 1956 rising. Hungarian delegates, for example, were reported to have clashed with the British delegation on a boat trip where the focus of discussion had been freedoms in the socialist countries.¹¹⁶ Another similar incident had taken place at a meeting of Polish and Hungarian delegations, where Poles shouted that what had happened in Hungary was a revolution and not, as the Soviets would have it, an imperialist attack.¹¹⁷ Apparently, nothing more scandalous had happened and the Soviet authorities could later applaud the Hungarians for a job well done.

Another such group consisted of a few US students covertly financed by the CIA through the National Student Association (NSA). Given the location of the Moscow festival, any massive counter-propaganda campaign was not possible, and therefore anti-Soviet activities were much milder than a few years later in Vienna (1959) and Helsinki (1962). The National Student Association trained some young people to attend the festival and to influence local people with the ideas of the free world. Before the festival, the CIA contacted around 25–30 members of the National Student Association who were attending the Moscow event. Among them were Richard Medalie, 28-year old former National Student Association officer and a student of Harvard Law school, and George Abrams, a 25-year old Harvard graduate. Before their trip to Moscow, Medalie and Abrams were given financial assistance for their travels and some moderate briefing on what to expect and what to talk about with local people, including a short course on espionage techniques. Medalie and Abrams travelled to Moscow with false names as part of the Polish delegation, with a copy of the United Nations’ report on the Hungarian rising in

115 Pósfai, Orsolya, “The 1957 Moscow Youth Festival and the Hungarian Delegation. Propaganda, Youth Organizations and the Cultural Cold War”, in *Students on the Cold War. New Findings and Interpretations*, edited by Csaba Békés and Melinda Kálmar (Budapest: Cold War research Centre, 2017), 336–341; HU OSA, 300-8-3-6054, 13 August 1957, The Hungarian delegation and the Moscow festival. [<http://hdl.handle.net/10891/osa:8b78c9f8-23e7-411d-8760-ece32a3e6ae8>] (Accessed 19 February 2008); *Courtship of young minds*, 1959, 22–23.

116 GARF, f. R-9401, op. 2, d. 491, l. 374. Minister vnutrennykh del Dudorov, v TsK KPSS, Sovet ministrov, MGK KPSS, TsK VLKSM, KGB, 9.8.1957.

117 TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, l. 161. Sekretariu MGK KPSS, tov. Marchenko I. T., V. Zaluzhnyi, Informatsiia 20, 10.8.1957; HU OSA, 300-8-3-13128, 5 August 1957, Collins, Polish Youth’s “Magnetism” in Moscow, [<http://hdl.handle.net/10891/osa:996249dd-8e15-4a23-bb26-cb3e41424f61>] (Accessed 19 February 2008).

their pocket. Medalie and Abrams visited various festival events, looking for the opportunity to talk with local youths about freedom and democracy. Against all their expectations, the most efficient place turned out to be Red square, right in front of the Lenin-Stalin mausoleum, where the two free-world students started to go and talk with locals evening after evening. Questions varied from average wages and housing to racial discrimination and other social inequalities in the US, but the real hit was when Abrams, reciting the UN report on Hungary, found a way to start discussions on real Cold War issues.¹¹⁸

As with so many other Cold War confrontations, both sides tried to take the full advantage of the event. In keeping with their openness policy, Soviet authorities did not disturb the Red Square meetings between Medalie and Abrams and locals, thereby showing the international audience that Moscow had indeed allowed free, spontaneous discussion right next to Kremlin wall. At the same time, however, *Izvestia* and *Sovetskaia Rossiia* told the domestic audience about an American spy who had been sent to Moscow by the US state department, demonstrating how the Cold War enemy had infiltrated the peace festival.¹¹⁹ Americans, too, thought that Medalie and Abrams had certainly played their part well. Upon their return, American newspapers embraced them as free-world heroes who had managed to make a hole in the iron curtain.¹²⁰ Interviewed by *The New York Times*, Medalie told that, besides have been interested “in East-West relations” and “the low cost of the trip”, he also had thought to “earn some money writing articles about his experiences”.¹²¹ Medalie’s and Abram’s heroic activities managed to convince the CIA about the effectiveness of face-to-face diplomacy and that anti-festival activities were worth continuing. Medalie and Abrams continued their anti-festival activities as workers of the Independent Service for Information at the Vienna Youth Festival (later renamed as Independent Research Service), an organization created to fight communism at the ninth World Youth Festival in Vienna two years after Moscow.¹²²

118 Stern, Sydney Ladensohn, *Gloria Steinem. Her Passions, Politics, and Mystique* (Secaucus: Carol Publishing Group, 1997), 111–112; Paget, Karen, *Patriotic Betrayal. The Inside Story of the CIA’s Secret campaign to Enroll American Students in the Crusade Against Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 186–195.

119 *Izvestia*, 1957; *The New York Times*, 9 August 1957, “Soviet Chides U.S. Youth”.

120 *The New York Times*, 1 August 1957, 2, “U.S. Youth Reads Report on Hungary to Russians”; *Life*, 12 August 1957, 26, Flora Lewis, “Youth from 102 Lands Swarms over Moscow”; Belfrage, A Room, 10–11; *Courtship of Young Minds*, 1959, 23. On the UN report on the Hungarian rising, see Matthews, John P. C., *Explosion. The Hungarian Revolution of 1956* (New York: Hippocrene, 2007), 527–550, 604.

121 *The New York Times*, 11 August 1957, 2, Philip Benjamin, “Festival Participant Back”.

122 Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal*, 214–222.

Another American organization, the New York based East European Student and Youth Service, sent US youths to mingle with locals and to find out about the “true face” of the USSR. Based on eyewitness accounts and a vast collection of festival press coverage from different countries, this organization published a detailed survey on the Moscow festival and its impacts, entitled *Courtship of Young Minds. A Case Study of the Moscow Youth Festival* (1959). The tone of the publication was relatively calm and dispassionate, but the underlying message was that the festival was a propaganda spectacle orchestrated by the Soviet state.¹²³ The timing of the survey, on the eve of the 1959 Vienna festival, suggested that the publication was probably part of the counter-propaganda campaign conducted by Western non-communist youth and student organizations against the Vienna gathering in particular, and the World Youth Festival in general. In 1958, the East European Student and Youth Service also started publishing a bi-monthly magazine entitled *Youth and Communism*, the aim of which was to provide information to those, “who feel they do not have enough facts on the situation of youth in countries with communist governments”.¹²⁴

During the festival, Soviet authorities managed to capture a two-page list of tasks to be accomplished at the festival. According to the records of the Soviet information bureau, the list was compiled by the East European Student and Youth Service and its purpose was to give American attendees the tools to “see through the propaganda” in order to reveal the “true face” of the country.¹²⁵ It is not known whether the survey *Courtship of Young Minds* was based upon this information-gathering project or whether this list was really produced by the East European Student and Youth Service. The list, however, contains many of the features of Soviet society and the festival that were emphasized in *Courtship of Young Minds*. The list contained the following tasks:

1. Try to travel somewhere without an escort, e.g. 100 km from Moscow.
2. Try to be in contact with people who are not involved with the festival.
3. Try to get to see a hut in a Kolkhoz and compare it with a dacha that belongs to a Party official.

123 *Courtship of Young Minds*, 1959, 31, 32–35.

124 See e.g. *Youth and Communism*, 1, No. 3. The East European Student and Youth Service has not been mentioned in studies of the CIA’s campaigns in the cultural Cold War. The name of the organization and the language used in its publication, *Youth and Communism*, suggest that it might have also been on the list of bodies that received resources from the CIA. On CIA funded organizations, see Kotek, Joël, *Students and the Cold War* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 210–211 and passim.

125 GARF, f. 8581, op. 2, d. 457, ll. 33–34. Pamiatka i nastavleniia inostrannym gostiam na Moskovskom festivalia molodezhi, New York, USA, Vostochno-evropeiskaia studencheskaia i molodezhnaia sluzhba. Pervod iz angliiskogo.

4. Try to buy a leading foreign non-communist newspaper or magazine in a kiosk.
5. Ask for a copy of the Soviet Encyclopaedia, part 40, which should have an official biography of Stalin.
6. Go to the Moscow main library and ask to see a couple of non-Soviet books on the Soviet Union. At the same time, look at how many books in foreign languages you can find even on such topics as philology or geography.
7. Buy a couple of new prints of Picasso's works, his famous "Peace dove".
8. Try to get hold of the whole text of Khrushchev's Secret Speech, which was given in February 1956 on "the cult of personality".
9. Take with you a couple of your favourite novels and try to exchange them for Soviet novels. Novels you may like to try include Dudintsev's last book *Not by Bread alone*.
10. While in Moscow, try to listen to radio broadcasts from your own country and from other countries.¹²⁶

If the list was made by the US organization, it illustrates what the main criteria were by which Westerners might draw conclusions about Soviet society's lack of freedoms and marks certain methods which American youth organizations employed in the cultural Cold War. For the Soviet authorities, the list was particularly beneficial, since it revealed Western tactics and might well have helped them develop methods of showcasing the more open aspects of the Soviet system.

Public opinion and the possibilities for free speech in Moscow were the hottest topics in Western media coverage. The most pressing question that ran around the festival was the possibility of genuinely free contact between Soviet people and foreigners. The observations of Western attendees filled the pages of non-communist papers with anecdotes about chatting with Muscovites. Spontaneous talks were held in the street on "life in the free world" and questions were raised concerning the weak points of the socialist system.¹²⁷ In *The New York Times* an American visitor told about his amazement at "ordinary Russians' great hunger for information".¹²⁸ *The Manchester Guardian's* report on the first days of

126 GAFR, f. 8581, op. 2, d. 457, ll. 49–50. Pamiatka i nastavleniia inostrannym gostiam.

127 See e.g. *The New York Times*, 4 August 1957, E2, "Youth to Moscow"; *The New York Times*, 11 August 1957, 169, Max Frankel, "Voices of America in Moscow"; *The Manchester Guardian*, 16 August 1957, 1, Victor Zorza, "Leaven of Western youth in Russia. Unforeseen ferment from the Moscow Festival". Similar issues were also the focus of contemporary travelogues. See e.g. Gunther, John, *Inside Russia Today* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), passim.

128 *The New York Times*, 11 August 1957, 2, Philip Benjamin, "Festival Participant Back".

the festival focused on telling readers about Muscovites' interest in foreign visitors' views on their country and on some political matters. The article rejoiced that "a 'speaker's corner', somewhat after the style of the Hyde Park one, was probably the most interesting by-product of the World Youth Festival". According to the article, young Westerners could freely walk and talk with local people.¹²⁹ Western journalists often denied that the festival had any effects on foreign youth: in fact, they tended to assert that the opposite scenario had transpired. As Max Frankel put it: "the foreign youngsters made a much deeper impression upon Russians than Soviet propaganda could ever make on them".¹³⁰

In his memoir, Raymond Garthoff (1929–), a Soviet specialist working for the Rand Corporation at the time who later became a CIA career officer, provides a somewhat different take on political talks with locals than the recollections of the foreign participants.¹³¹ Garthoff mentions having met with Soviet students and other youths at various occasions during and after the Moscow festival, including a meeting at an agricultural college at Puhskino (near Leningrad), where around 150 Soviet students eagerly asked him and his colleague about life in the United States and the Hungarian uprising. While other visitors had a hard time finding any locals to chat with, Garthoff not only found numerous students to talk with about politics, but also managed to gather enough material to come to the conclusion that the majority of Soviet people did not support their government. Moreover, he recalled that local students were ready to accept his versions of nuclear armament, NATO, as well as the trajectory of the Cold War from the late 1940s through the Berlin blockade to the Hungarian episode. "This general acceptance of the truth, and even the 'conservative' acceptance of half the blame for the Soviets, was a remarkable thing in view of the fact that these Russian youth had had nothing but the official line and their own doubts and scepticism."¹³² Garthoff's success could be partly explained by his Russian language skills and the fact that he spent more time in the country than ordinary festival

129 *The Manchester Guardian*, 1 August 1957, 1, "Free Speech in Moscow. No counter-revolution yet". According to *The New York Times*, *Sovetskaia Rossiia* had accused Abrams of being an agent of the US state department. See *The New York Times*, 9 August 1957, 2, "Soviet Chide U.S. Youth".

130 Frankel, Max, *The Times of my Life and My Life with The Times* (New York: Delta Trade Paperbacks, 1999), pp. 164, 175. For the role of correspondents in the Cold War, see Fainberg, Dina, *Cold War Correspondents: Soviet and American Reporters on the Ideological Frontlines* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020).

131 Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal*, 194.

132 Garthoff, Raymond, *Journey Through the Cold War: A Memoir of Containment & Coexistence* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 33.

attendees. That notwithstanding, Garthoff's recollection needs to be read against his background as a representative of the US regime. He, like many other American diplomats and journalists, was a full-blooded Cold Warrior, in the service of the "free world", whose aim was to find and encourage anti-regime opinions.¹³³ Therefore, he focused on finding and was inclined to emphasize critical views, especially in the post-Cold War context in which he wrote the memoir. It is telling that Garthoff saw no problem with the CIA funding young Americans during the festival. "It later became known that the CIA had paid the way of some participants, not of course to engage in espionage, but to observe attendees from around the world and to engage in the propaganda debate."¹³⁴

Consequences of Anti-Soviet Talks

While foreign participants, diplomats and journalists could engage in political debates without severe consequences, for some Soviet citizens testing the boundaries of the permissible prompted serious sanctions. In comparison with other crimes that Soviet citizens were arrested for during the festival, such as illegal trade, theft, or drunkenness, those convicted of voicing nonconformism were much fewer, but the punishments they received were far more serious. For engaging in speculation or loose behaviour, one was usually fined or reprimanded, but people jailed for political dissent received long sentences, from two to ten years in prison or labour camps. Based on the investigation files of the Soviet procuracy, fifteen Soviet citizens were convicted of anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda under article 58–10 in conjunction with the Moscow youth festival. These were cases in which dissenting activity not only took place in July–August 1957 but was directly related to the festival and the presence of foreigners.¹³⁵ These fifteen people make only a handful of the total amount of convictions for

133 Fainberg, Dina, "The Heirs of the Future: Soviet and American Foreign Correspondents Meeting Youth on the Other Side of the Iron Curtain", in *Winter Kept Us Warm: Cold War Interactions Reconsidered*, edited by Sari Autio-Sarasmo and Brendan Humphreys (Helsinki: Aleksanteri Institute, 2010), 126–136.

134 Garthoff, *Journey Through the Cold War*, 35.

135 These 15 cases were identified with the help of an annotated catalogue of sentences for political dissent from 1953–1991. Kozlov, V. A. and Mironenko, S. V. (eds), *58–10 Nadzornye proizvodstva prokuratury SSSR po delam ob antisovetskoi agitatsii i propaganda: annotirovannyi katalog mart 1953–1991* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi Fond Demokratii, 1999). Cases where someone was convicted for drunken outbursts of anti-Soviet sentiment during the festival have been omitted in cases where the investigation protocols did not demonstrate any other connection to the festival or its participants. There are also cases of people who had been

political dissent in the late 1950s. From 1956 to 1958 nearly 3,000 people were arrested and sentenced for dissenting activity.¹³⁶ Such a small number of cases at a period when sentences for dissent were on the rise suggests that the authorities allowed a broader scope for voicing criticism and discontent during the festival period than normally would have been the case.

In the late 1950s, the most frequently punished act of dissent was a single outburst against the regime by a lone individual. The majority of those convicted of anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda were Russian men between 24 and 40 years of age. Almost half of them were workers who acted alone and who were most often convicted for anti-Soviet oral expression. The reasons for their arrests included spreading letters and leaflets of an anti-Soviet nature and establishing contacts with foreigners.¹³⁷ What was notable in regard to anti-Soviet crimes at the festival was that there were more students and more highly educated people amongst offenders, they were younger than the average (the majority were between 16 and 26 years of age) and most arrests were for establishing contacts with foreigners. In addition, the accusations ranged from dissemination and possession of anti-Soviet literature and other materials to spreading lies about the Soviet Union to sending anti-Soviet letters to festival participants, foreign tourists and embassies. More than half of those convicted belonged to either the Komsomol (8) or the Communist Party (1). Among these cases we find represented three particular political groups. All of them had been established already before the festival and it is uncertain whether whole groups or only some individuals were involved in dissenting activity at the festival.

Characteristic of dissenting behaviour related to the youth festival was the number of Jews among those who were jailed (4 out of 15). All the convicted Jews were connected to Zionists from the Israeli delegation and were also found guilty of possessing anti-Soviet materials. The most famous case was that of Anatolii Rubin (1927–2017) from Minsk. Rubin had survived the holocaust by managing to escape the Minsk ghetto. He was an active Zionist and a dissident and had already endured one spell in a labour camp. According to his investigation file, Rubin had established contacts with the Zionists, had been in contact with an official at the Israel embassy and had told lies about Soviet conditions to American tourists. He duly received six years in prison. Rubin continued his activities

involved in dissident activity since before the festival, and their activities during the festival were only a part of the reason for their arrests.

136 Hornsby, Robert, *Protest, Reform and Repression in Khrushchev's Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 54, 134.

137 Hornsby, *Protest, Reform*, 1, 54, 134.

and was imprisoned several times before emigrating to Israel in 1969.¹³⁸ Another Jew arrested and convicted after the festival was David Khavkin (1930–). According to his file, Khavkin had contacted the Israel delegates, praised Israel and received some materials (leaflets, music records, calendar and souvenirs) and voiced a wish to travel to Israel.¹³⁹ Khavkin recounted in an interview that he was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. He had contacted the Israeli delegates first during the opening ceremony, when he had been smuggled into the stadium as part of a foreign delegation. There he had found the Israelis and learned that they were stopping in Ostankino. Khavkin remained with the Israelis for the whole period of the festival. In Khavkin's view, he was arrested because he had mingled with an Israeli whom the authorities considered a spy. According to Khavkin, this person, a leader of the Israeli sporting delegation, had been searching for missing Israelis in Europe after the war but was by no means involved in espionage.¹⁴⁰ The Israel delegation, its Zionist group and its contacts with the local Jewish population frequently appear in authorities' reports. The Soviet relationship with Zionism was especially difficult, because the creation of a Jewish state was supported by the United States, and therefore Zionism was seen as a bourgeois, reactionary nationalist movement.¹⁴¹

Most of the criminal cases were related to giving foreigners information, which was against the interests of the Soviet state, or else did not improve the image of the country. Dmitrii Kiselev, a 45-year old worker at *Trud* newspaper, was found guilty of sending 22 anonymous anti-Soviet letters to American, Italian and German delegates. According to the procurator records, these letters criticized the policy of the CPSU and maintained that the first secretary (Khrushchev) ought to be shot for his mistakes in leading the country. He had also written that Soviet people were living in hunger and that the CPSU was not interested in increasing the living standard of the country. Kiselev got five years in prison.¹⁴² Nikita Krivoshein, a 23-year-old former student of the Moscow pedagogical institute of foreign languages and an interpreter at *Novoe vremia* magazine, was accused of telling a foreign delegate that Komsomol workers were to report daily on the

138 GARF, f. 8131, op. 31, d. 85052, ll. 1–66. The investigation file of Anatoli Rubin.

139 GARF, f. 8131, op. 31, d. 84990. The investigation file of Khavkin.

140 Interview with David Khavkin, [http://www.angelfire.com/sc3/soviet_jews_exodus/Interview_s/InterviewKhavkin.shtml], (Accessed 4 January 2022).

141 Pinkus, Benjamin, *The Soviet Government and the Jews 1948–1967. A Documented Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 250.

142 GARF, f. 8131, op. 31, d. 79834, ll. 1–40. Investigation file of Kiselev; see also Aksutin, Iurii, *Khrushchevskaia "ottepel'" i obshchestvennye nastroyeniia v SSSR v 1953–1964 gg* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), 245.

moods of foreign delegates, which was considered to constitute revealing state secrets to the enemy. Furthermore, he had apparently met with foreign correspondents and given them information later used in articles about the youth festival. Krivoshein paid for his activity with three years in prison, and upon his release was not allowed to live closer than 100 kilometres to Moscow.¹⁴³ A similar case was that of the only woman among the convicts, Rimma Shorinkova, a 21-year-old unemployed girl who already had a record of anti-Soviet activity. Shorinkova was accused of having established contacts with American and West German correspondents and having told them lies about the Soviet Union, for example, that Soviet youth had been advised not to get in touch with representatives of the capitalist countries. Furthermore, she had wanted a war between the USSR and the USA, had continued her anti-Soviet activism after the festival and possessed a copy of *Time* magazine. For these offences, Shorinkova received four years in prison.¹⁴⁴

Among those prosecuted for offenses related to the youth festival, people involved in any kind of underground dissident group were the hardest hit. One such case was that of Vadim Kozovoi, a 20-year-old history student at Moscow State University (MGU), who was handed an eight-year sentence for anti-Soviet crimes committed before, during and after the youth festival. According to the investigation record, Kozovoi had established contact with an alleged British spy named Julian Watts and a French citizen named Lerasno. He had told them details about the CPSU plenum in July 1957, which had not yet been published in the Soviet newspapers, and offended the party leaders. His most serious crime, however, seemed to have been his participation in an illegal group formed by nine students and teachers at MGU.¹⁴⁵ This underground group to which Kozovoi belonged had been formed in the history faculty by a postgraduate named Lev Krasnopevets and included teachers, students and former graduates. They distributed anti-Soviet materials around Moscow and prepared materials for a “new history of the CPSU”.¹⁴⁶ Except for Kozovoi, other members of the group had temporarily left Moscow because of the risk that the festival posed to dissidents.¹⁴⁷

143 GARF, f. 8131, op. 31, d. 97391, ll. 1–135. Investigation file of Krivoshein; GARF, f. 8131, op. 31, d. 97392, ll. 1–36. Krivoshein.

144 GARF, f. 8131, op. 31, d. 84511, ll. 3–4. Investigation file of Shorinkova.

145 GARF, f. 8131, op. 31, d. 79865, ll. 1–166; GARF, f. 8131, op. 31, d. 79866; GARF, f. 8131, op. 31, d. 79867; GARF, f. 8131, op. 31; GARF, f. 8131, op. 31, d. 79867a; RGANI, f. 89, per. 6, dok. 8, ll. 1–5. KGB, I. Serov v TsK KPSS, 17.2.1958; RGANI, f. 89, per. 6, dok. 7, ll. 1–4. KGB v TsK KPSS P. Ivashutin.

146 Hornsby, *Protest, Reform*, passim; Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 77 and Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation*, 354–355.

147 Aksutin, *Khrushchevskaia "ottepel"*, 243.

It is important to note that political dissent in the Soviet Union and elsewhere in the socialist countries at this time did not fundamentally target the socialist system per se; rather, those voicing discontent aimed at improving the system and thought that bringing the difficult situation to foreigners' knowledge might be an effective way to facilitate change. In similar fashion, Czechoslovakian students supported the reforms of the Prague spring and the ideas of "socialism with a human face", and Polish students supported a Polish way to communism.

The Moscow festival was indeed much more open in terms of free and open speech than any similar event in Soviet society or any other of the World Youth Festivals before and after. Still it was only one short moment, which temporarily multiplied the volume of contacts. The festival hardly played a significant role in the emergence of the Soviet dissident movement, as has sometimes been speculated.¹⁴⁸ The experiences of meetings with foreigners certainly encouraged some people to voice nonconformism and to engage in dissenting activities. However, dissidence was a mass phenomenon already before the festival and the catalyst for dissident activism was something different: the Secret Speech, the Hungarian uprising or, more widely, new chances for Soviet young people to negotiate their identities and their place in Soviet society. The youth festival served merely as an instrument for channelling the thoughts of some Soviet people and enabling networking.¹⁴⁹ It is quite telling that only three memoirs written by well-known Soviet dissidents even mentioned the Moscow festival, and none of them raised the topic in relation to their own dissident activism.¹⁵⁰

The way the Soviet authorities promoted the image of a more open Soviet Union support arguments about the partial liberalization of the country under Khrushchev.¹⁵¹ Allowing thousands of foreigners to visit the country, go inside the Kremlin and discuss politics on Red Square, and letting Soviet people freely

148 Sinyavsky, Andrei, *Soviet Civilization. A Cultural History* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1988), 237; Rositzke, Harry, *CIA's Secret Operations: Espionage, Counterespionage, and Covert Action* (London: Westview Press, 1977), 163; Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 211.

149 Hornsby, *Protest, Reform*, 286–289; Tromly, Benjamin, "Soviet Patriotism and its Discontents among Higher Education Students in Khrushchev-era Russia and Ukraine", *Nationalities Papers*, 37, No. 3, 2009, 316.

150 Bukovsky, Vladimir, *To Build a Castle. My Life as a Dissenter* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1978); Plyushch, *History's Carnival; Vail'*, Boris, *Osobo opasnyi* (London: Overseas Publications, 1980).

151 Fürst, "The Arrival of Spring?", 145, 148–150; Hornsby, *Protest, Reform*; LaPierre, *Hooligans in Khrushchev's Russia*.

communicate with foreigners, demonstrated that something had changed in Soviet relations to the outside world after Stalin. Some of the freedoms allowed for the period of the festival were only temporary. The harmonious picture of two weeks of peace and friendship without conflicts or a fully transformed USSR was far from the truth. Even if the Soviet press promoted the idea of being friends even with those who did not share the same political stance, it was difficult to define who actually was an acceptable friend. The boundaries of permissible behaviour and contact were flexible depending on the issue and the people involved. First and foremost, the boundaries were different for locals and foreigners. While a few festival guests were arrested for drunkenness and other forms of petty hooliganism, Soviets faced arrests for illegal trading, loose sexual behaviour and incorrect illicit with foreign guests. The evidence shows that the most serious offences from the authorities' perspective were those that might impact negatively upon the image of the USSR. Photographing the wrong places, voicing oppositional views on the country, as well as creating an impression of disenchantment among Soviet youth all resulted in social control measures enforced either by the authorities or by fellow citizens. This control, however, was different from what obtained during Stalin times. Dancing, singing and having discussions with foreigners were allowed as long as these encounters remained within acceptable bounds and, given the massive number of imprisonments during the Stalin years, the amount of people convicted for crimes related to activities during the Moscow festival was much smaller. This suggests that even as the Soviet press promoted an unrealistically liberal attitude to the outside world than was accepted in reality, the official attitude towards foreigners and relations between Soviet people and foreigners had nonetheless altered in fact.

6 Immediate Impacts and the Legacy of the Festival

When the last foreign visitors were accompanied to the railway stations, harbours and airports, it was time to review whether the conscious risk had been worth taking. Public commentaries were glowing, like the editorial of *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, where Aleksander Shelepin touted the Moscow gathering as “the most important international event” in the history of the World Youth Festivals, adding that “nothing comparable was ever organized anywhere before”.¹ A more analytical, secret evaluation for the party followed in August 1957, when Shelepin sat down with his crew to read through all the monitoring reports penned by hundreds of Soviet bureaucrats in the Komsomol, ministries, KGB and the party. In the following months, the Moscow celebration was also under evaluation in the offices of the CIA. Hardly anyone could deny the enormous size and endless financial and material commitment that the event had demanded, not to mention the wide interest the opening of Moscow and other selected parts of the USSR had piqued. But what kind of impact had the festival had on the cultural Cold War, the battle of hearts and minds, and what kind of legacy did it leave in Russian society?

Who was Influencing Whom?

At the end of August 1957, Shelepin and his crew handed their review of the Moscow festival to the CPSU Central Committee. This final report was based on numerous reports, notes and remarks produced by various Party and state bodies during and after the festival.² Typical of official Soviet reports, it began with an overwhelmingly positive appraisal. The report boasted how the festival had “fostered the unification and strengthening of democratic forces, the dissemination of Soviet influence and authority among a wide strata of young people and world public”, and spread “the truth on the Soviet Union and the socialist camp”.³

1 *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 18 August 1957, 2, A. Shelepin, “Pod znamenem mira i druzhby”.

2 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, ll. 155–193. N. Bobrovnikov, A. Shelepin, S. Romanovskii, v TsK KPSS, 30.8.1957. An earlier version of the final report: RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 83, ll. 1–40. Otchet ob itogah VI Vsemirnogo festivalia molodezhi i studentov, 25.8.1957. Records of the Central Committee Prezidium might shed additional light on the evaluation of the festival, but these sources were still classified when the materials for this study were assembled.

3 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 155.

These standard phrases were typewritten in the Komsomol headquarters thousands of times over the years, but now they seemed to have more weight than before. Given the difficult circumstances, the outcome of the festival very much pleased Shelepin and Khrushchev.⁴ The international conflicts of 1956 had cast a shadow over the USSR and its peace agenda, which had complicated their chances of benefitting from the festival. Moreover, the Soviet organizers had feared possible provocations by “reactionary forces” – the non-communist Western press, Labour leaders in the UK, social democrats in Scandinavia, the US Congress, NATO bosses and the Vatican – who had used the cult of personality “for their dirty goals” in their anti-Soviet campaigns prior to the festival. To Shelepin’s relief, the attacks against the festival had been fewer than expected.⁵

Western counter-measures had failed in that a record number of individual participants and delegations had taken part in the festival. The report noted that Western propagandists had not been able to prevent people from travelling to Moscow, as had been the case with the Berlin festival six years earlier. Instead of losing support, the organizers had managed to attract new organizations and countries to the festival. This included several new countries, such as Afghanistan, Ghana, Libya, Ethiopia, Thailand, and Cambodia, as well as the expanded interest of religious youth organizations, non-communist attendees and Western media.⁶ Claims that the Moscow festival was the most representative event ever held is clearly exaggerated; however, it was quite diverse and sizable, whatever measurements one uses. When evaluated by the amount of participants, countries, and spectators, the Moscow festival was bigger than the Melbourne summer Olympics in 1956 (3,113 athletes, 72 countries, and 1.3 million spectators), but far smaller than the Brussels’ World Fair in 1958, with its tens of millions of visitors.⁷

The cost of the festival, including accommodation and services for the participants, was covered by the national festival lottery, which had brought in so much money (518 million roubles) that a sum of around 115 million roubles was left over after the costs of the festival (183.5 million roubles) and the lottery prizes (approximately 200 million roubles) were taken off. The final report suggested that the remaining money would be invested in building a Palace for

4 Adzhubei, Aleksei, *Krushenie illutsii: vremia v sobytiakh i litsakh* (Moscow: Interbuk, 1991), 187–188.

5 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, ll. 155–158.

6 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 155–159.

7 Keys, Barbara, “The 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games”, in 1956. *European and Global Perspective*, edited by Carole Fink, Frank Hadler and Tomasz Schramm (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2006), 287; Rydell, Robert, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-progress expositions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), passim.

youth in Moscow.⁸ Even though the budget allocated for the direct festival costs remained within the expected framework, the overall expenditures, which included renovations, the building of the Luzhniki stadium, hotels and other investments in infrastructure, made the project much more costly overall.

Historian Joël Kotek has asked “whether this [the World Youth Festivals] was not a colossal waste of money and whether it is not indeed one explanation for the bankruptcy of the Soviet regime”.⁹ If we look at the World Youth Festival, or other Soviet cultural diplomacy projects, narrowly as propaganda tools, we may well end up regarding such efforts as a total waste of resources. A broader cultural, political and social analysis shows that the meanings of the event cannot be evaluated solely by potential propaganda dividends, however. In addition to cultural capital and experiences at the grassroots level, the Moscow festival was an investment in Soviet tourism infrastructure, and thus benefited the Soviet economy and its image building in the long run.¹⁰ The Moscow festival cost the Soviet Union much more than it would receive financially in return, but its marketing value was immeasurable. When over 30,000 young people passed on their impressions of the country, and showed photographs and souvenirs back home, at least some of the money invested in these messengers was eventually paid back by growing foreign tourism and support to Soviet international fronts. The World Youth Festival as an institution, however, became an economic burden for the USSR as it was incapable of extending the financial responsibilities of organizing the festivals beyond the socialist orbit.

Viewing the festival and its international impact in the context of the cultural Cold War illuminates the importance and the potential the festival was afforded by the Soviet political leadership. Being able to organize an international event that reached a global audience far beyond the traditional communist orbit was something at which Soviet authorities themselves knew they had not always succeeded. Therefore, managing to put on such a massive show was a sign to the West that the World Youth Festival had to be taken seriously. Even though those who had organized the festival were definitely very proud of its outcome, and

⁸ RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 192; see also the financial statement RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 241, ll. 148–149. Otchet rashodov po podgotovke i provedenii VI vsemirnogo festivalia molodezhi i studentov v Moskve v 1957. G. Grigor'ian, P. Pshenichnyi, D. Mishev'tsev. Predsedatel' likvidkoma SPK. Chleny Likvidkoma SPK.

⁹ Kotek, Joël, *Students and the Cold War* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 212.

¹⁰ Hanson, Philip, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Economy: an Economic History of the USSR from 1945* (London: Longman, 2003), 72; Salmon, Shawn, “Marketing Socialism. Intourist in the Late 1950s and Early 1960s”, in *Turizm. The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism*, edited by Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 190–191, 193, 203.

certainly wanted to see it as a result of Soviet organization, the widened interest in the gathering was also understood as a new stage in the evolution of the World Youth Festival as a Soviet-invented institution. The Komsomol and the Party were confident that they had managed to rid the festival of its Stalinist image and had made it appealing beyond the communist orbit. This constituted a major factor in the plans to export the festival to the capitalist West next time out. Since Khrushchev seemed to be pleased with the organization of the festival, and he accepted Shelepin's proposal of holding the next event in Vienna, despite opposition within the Presidium.¹¹ The risk of allowing a meeting between the peace forces and the reactionaries had clearly been worth taking, so why not take it again?

The youth festival had two-fold impact on Soviet leadership's thinking on hosting international events. On one hand, the festival had proven that the Soviet Union could arrange mega-size events for global audiences and inspired confidence for hosting "Western" mega-events and for cooperating with the West more closely in the field of cultural exchange. On the other hand, hosting a large international event showed what kind of security risks were involved and how huge financial investment it required. Two years after the youth celebration, Moscow hosted an American National Exhibition in Gorky Park, and around the same period Moscow won the bid for the World Expo 1967 and was going to be the first socialist country ever to host an expo. In 1962, the USSR, however, withdrew from the project, apparently due to the astronomical cost of hosting. Aleksei Adzhubei noted in his memoirs that Khrushchev was shocked about the final price of the Moscow youth festival and that this is what made him deny resources for the forthcoming World Expo.¹² While the World Expo never ended up to the USSR, another iconic mega-event did. From the final years in which Khrushchev was in power, Soviet officials and politicians debated over whether they should bid for the Olympic Games. While Khrushchev's USSR did not consider the Olympic project lucrative enough in terms of political gain, during the *détente* both the Brezhnev regime and the International Olympic Committee were ready to see the USSR as an Olympic host. After one unsuccessful bid, Brezhnev managed to win the 1980 summer Olympic Games for Moscow. The legacy of the Moscow festival and the experiences of receiving thousands of foreign visitors had lasted within the organizational

¹¹ Interview with Nikolai Diko, 8 June 2008.

¹² Adzhubei, *Krushenie illutsii*, 187; see also Zubok, Vladislav, *Zhivago's Children. The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 111.

memory of the Soviet state, and it came in useful as a model for arranging the Olympic Games in 1980.¹³

On the other side of the Cold war divide, US authorities gave the USSR credit for a successful festival and became convinced of the potential for face-to-face interaction. A CIA report described the festival as “a world political event of major significance”, which “probably achieved most of the propaganda and organizational aims of its Communist sponsors”. These aims included impressing the world with the new look of the post-Stalin USSR, increasing its prestige in the non-communist world, and strengthening the loyalty of Soviet youth towards the Party. “In size and scope”, the report estimated “it surpassed even the epochal 40th Anniversary Celebration of the Bolshevik Revolution”.¹⁴ Also, US State Department documentation, which included the views of US ambassador to Moscow Llewellyn Thompson, maintained that the Moscow festival had shown that this kind of cultural diplomacy could be useful for influencing Soviet people. In addition to being useful, it seemed to have been less risky for US attendees than was initially assumed, as the festival had mostly aroused negative feelings among US students rather than leading them to support the Soviet cause.¹⁵ CIA officials estimated that most of the US youth which had attended the festival did so simply to see “the famed capital of the ‘major enemy’”, and those few who had actually travelled with a special goal in mind were graduate students of Russian studies and had actively promoted the free world point of view among locals.¹⁶ All in all, encounters between Soviet people and Westerners had shown US authorities that the West was benefitting from such contacts and that the US should rethink its policy on trade controls. “A rising standard of living was likely to make people somewhat more fond of eating well and somewhat less belligerent”.¹⁷ A concrete step towards increasing cultural contacts soon took place, as the USA concluded

¹³ Young, Simon, *Playing to Win. A Political history of the Moscow Olympic Games, 1975–1980* (Ph.D. diss., University of Winchester, 2015), 29–45, 237–240.

¹⁴ General CIA records, CIA-RDP80-01445R000100130001-3, Job no. 80-01445R, Box no. 1, folder no. 13, Report 1 December 1958, Between Two Communist World Youth Festivals: Moscow 1957–Vienna 1959, iv–1.

¹⁵ FRUS, Volume IV, 1955–1957, Western European Security and Integration, Ambassadorial meetings, Northern European Chiefs of Mission Conference, London September 19–21, 1957: Summary of proceedings, 615.

¹⁶ General CIA records, CIA-RDP80-01445R000100130001-3, Between Two Communist World Youth Festivals: Moscow 1957–Vienna 1959, 19–20.

¹⁷ FRUS, Volume X, 1955–1957, United States economic defence policy: United States interest in maintaining multilateral strategic controls on trade with the Soviet Union, the People’s Republic of China, and certain other nations, Memorandum of a conversation, Department of State, Washington, October 22, 1957, 501; FRUS, Volume XXIV, 1955–1957, Soviet Union, Eastern Mediterranean,

the cultural agreement with the Soviet Union in 1958, including programs for cultural and educational exchange.¹⁸

Reactions to and commentaries on the Moscow festival in the US and British presses were far more critical than those of authorities, but still suggested that attitudes towards the festival and the Soviet Union had improved to a certain extent. Actually, once American youth had arrived in Moscow, the US press had no difficulty in employing these youngsters for their own ends. US participants, labelled “the defenders of the free world”, were portrayed as “bearers of a free voice in a stifled land” and “defenders of subjected peoples in the Soviet sphere”. Even those who deliberately broke Soviet laws were shown in a heroic light.¹⁹

The dominant narrative in many Western liberal and conservative newspapers was that the Soviet Union had failed in its attempts to induce Western youths to support Soviet style socialism. An American visitor, Shelby Tucker, commented to *The New York Times*: “We have been getting red flag and red carpet treatment; that is certainly interesting but not always good.”²⁰ *Life* described the festival as “Communism’s sugar-coated device for mass brainwashing of youngsters from everywhere”, which had turned against its aims, punching “myriads of holes in the Iron Curtain”.²¹ More often than not the conclusion was drawn that while the Soviets had attempted to impress foreigners with their peace propaganda, Soviet youngsters had been much more influenced by Western exports: abstract art, jazz, freedom of speech and “truths” about many political conflicts, such as the Hungarian uprising.²² *The Manchester Guardian* took a more approving stance, pondering who was actually influencing whom at the festival, which had enabled much freer contacts between East and West than many Western observers, who had initially opposed Western participation in the festival, had expected.²³

East-West exchanges, Report on proposed government programme for student exchange with Soviet Union and other countries of Eastern Europe, October 14, 1957, 263–264.

18 Hixson, Walter L., *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945–1961* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1997), 153–154; Richmond, Yale, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War. Raising the Iron Curtain* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 14–20.

19 Peacock, Margaret, “The Perils of Building Cold War Consensus at the 1957 Moscow World Festival of Youth and Students”, *Cold War History* 12, No. 3, 2012, 12–14.

20 *The New York Times*, 31 July 1957, 4, “2 U.S. Youths Quit Rally in Moscow”.

21 *Life*, 12 August 1957, 22, Flora Lewis, “Youth from 102 Lands Swarms over Moscow”.

22 *The New York Times*, 30 July 1957, 22, “Moscow’s Youth Festival”.

23 *The Manchester Guardian*, 1 August 1957, 1, “Free Speech in Moscow. No counter-revolution yet”.

The idea of increasing understanding between nations via person-to-person contacts was not completely ignored in the often-sensational revelations about life in the USSR and the discovery of critical attitudes among the local people. In *The Washington Post*, Malvina Lindsay wrote that such a festival was in principle a good idea, but the fact that only the communists organized this kind of activity gave the impression that only they were interested in supporting peace. “While the hullabaloo of a world festival might be of doubtful value, yet smaller gatherings of world youth might well be encouraged, also more visits from Russian young people – if their government would permit.”²⁴ Canadian observer Alex Jupp, convinced of the concept of the event, concluded his travelogue by pondering about holding a Western World Youth Festival.

For the price of about two nuclear weapons the United States could host an international youth festival in any of their major cities. [. . .] I am convinced that such a festival would do more to create goodwill and cost much less than all the military aid shipments of the past five years.²⁵

Similar thoughts about a non-communist youth festival were voiced by Christopher Mayhew, British Labour Party politician and Prime Minister Ernest Bevin’s secretary at the foreign office in the 1950s. Mayhew reminisced in his memoirs about having suggested to the British foreign office that they hold “properly organized East-West international youth festivals” either under the auspices of the United Nations or jointly between the WFDY and the World Assembly of Youth.²⁶ Joël Kotek has concluded that a Western equivalent to the World Youth Festival never saw the light of day because the CIA’s primary goal in the realm of international youth and student organizations “was to break the communist monopoly”, and because the Western counterparts to the WFDY and the IUS, the WAY and the ISC/COSEK, had nowhere near the same resources available to them.²⁷ The Western organizations formed a more fragmented and heterogeneous group than the centrally governed democratic youth movement, but it was also the case that the USSR had managed to create a successful cultural event that was not so easy to compete with.

Even though the United States was still officially against the Moscow festival and had advised its citizens not to get involved with it, a clear change in the

²⁴ *The Washington Post*, 15 August 1957, A18, Malvina Lindsay, “Communists Seek Corner on Youth”.

²⁵ Jupp, G. Alex, *A Canadian Looks at the U.S.S.R. A Firsthand View of Russian Life during the World Youth Festival* (New York: Exposition Press, 1958), 58.

²⁶ Mayhew, Christopher, *A War of Words. A Cold War Witness* (London: I.P. Tauris, 1998), 70.

²⁷ Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 210–213.

attitudes had taken place. This change could be seen in the way that the US press reacted to some its citizens' deciding to accept an offer to travel onward to China after Moscow. China, where Mao's communists had come to power in 1949, represented a more unpredictable communist country than Khrushchev's Soviet Union. Even though it was not in the best interests of the US government to see American youngsters celebrating in Moscow, it would have been even worse if they were used for the propaganda of "Red China", with whom the US government had not even established diplomatic relations. The US state department banned travelling to China because it was seen as undermining American foreign policy and broke US passport regulations. The assumption again was that American youths would be used as "tools of Communist propaganda".²⁸ According to *The New York Times* correspondent Max Frankel, the possible consequences of travelling to China in defiance of the ban ranged from one's passport revoked to being fined for misusing travel documents.²⁹ Those who took the chance to see communist China defended their decision by insisting on the principle of freedom to travel. One of the group told *The Manchester Guardian* that "I believe we are tools of Communist propaganda but I am going because I believe in the right to travel".³⁰ *The New York Times* held that even though citizens of democratic countries should have the right to travel – in contrast to the travelling restrictions that faced people in socialist countries – and that breaking travel bans could be understood as a form of protest, it would be wiser to send American newspaper men to China to report on the country, stating that "a mature newspaper man is certainly a better interpreter than are these free-riding young people".³¹ In the Soviet Union and in the West alike, when young people allied their activities to the "correct" causes, they were viewed in favourable terms, yet when they turned in directions that were regarded as problematic, youths could be portrayed as vulnerable and susceptible to bad influences.

²⁸ *The Manchester Guardian*, 15 August 1957, 1, "Young American Leave for China. Officials defied".

²⁹ *The New York Times*, 11 August 1957, 2, Max Frankel, "5 U.S. Youths Drop China Trip; Others Reconsider Peiping Offer".

³⁰ *The Manchester Guardian*, 15 August 1957, 1, "Young Americans Leave for China. Officials defied".

³¹ *The New York Times*, 14 August 1957, 24, "Problem in Diplomacy".

No Iron Curtain

Getting rid of the Stalinist stigma had been one of the fundamental aims of the festival and in this the organizers had clearly succeeded. As an official of the Soviet Information bureau, M. Iakovlev, concluded in his report, the guests had been able to see the genuine truth (*nastaiashchaia pravda*) about Soviet life and that that *no* kind of iron curtain existed.³² This goal was achieved first and foremost by giving foreign visitors totally free access to explore Soviet society. “They could go anywhere they wished and speak with anybody they liked”, the final report emphasized.³³ This assessment was based on vast and meticulous reporting on the discussions, perceptions and thoughts of thousands of foreign visitors. The data was collected by the Komsomol city committee, the Soviet Information Bureau, as well as various ministries, including the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Culture.³⁴ These materials gave the authorities a wealth of data that could be employed in evaluating and adjusting their propaganda, improving their tourist facilities and services, correcting and redirecting the Komsomol’s youth education and analyzing the development of the socialist youth movement.³⁵

Soviet reporters stronger emphasized positive remarks and seemed to be very content with the perceptions of foreign visitors.³⁶ One of the most glowing responses came from an Italian delegate, who claimed to feel pity for the organizers of the next festival: “It is probably impossible to do more. I feel sorry for those who are to hold the next festival. What I saw [. . .] is impossible to beat. I was in Warsaw. In comparison with what I saw there, it would be 10–0 to the Soviet Union”.³⁷ According to the reports, foreign visitors were extremely interested in the Soviet Union, its way of living and its people. Foreign participants, especially those from capitalist countries, colonies and non-independent countries, had stated that they came to the sixth World festival to get a personal view of the Soviet Union.³⁸ More than 100 participants were so impressed by the Soviet Union and its educational system that they expressed a wish to stay in the

32 GARF, f. 8581, op. 2, d. 457, l. 1. M. Iakovlev, predsedateliu gosudarstvennogo komiteta po kul'turnym sviaziam s zarubezhnymi stranami, Tov. Zhukovu G. A.

33 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 162.

34 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 84, ll. 110–118. L. Sav'ialova.

35 See GARF, f. 8581, op. 2, d. 457, ll. 16–43. Kratkaia informatsionnaia spravka, chem ostalis' dovol'ny i chem nedovol'ny uchastniki VI Vsemirnogo festivalia molodezhi i studentov, I. Shumskii.

36 GARF, f. 8581, op. 2, d. 457, l. 18.

37 TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, l. 45. Informatsiia 9, 20.7.1957, V. Zaluzhnyi.

38 TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, l. 61. Informatsiia 11, 1.8.1957, V. Zaluzhnyi, A. Ratanov.

country to study there, including Americans, Australians, Canadians, Italians, Finns, and Syrians.³⁹ One of those who later studied in the USSR was a Danish youth named Erik Jensen, who became interested in communism through a classmate and duly signed up for the Moscow festival. The festival made such an impression on him that he joined the Danish Communist Youth organization (DKU) after returning home, and two years later studied at the Higher Party School in Moscow.⁴⁰

Critical observations by foreigners were not completely ignored in the reports; however, they were “buried under the ecstatic praises that could be heard everywhere about the festival and about the reality the guests had seen”, as a Sovinformburo official, M. Iakovlev, put it.⁴¹ The reports listed concerns about women’s employment in physically demanding jobs, expensive prices for consumer goods, the unfashionable clothing of Soviet people, the high number of *militsoners* in Moscow and the fact that only a few Soviet citizens allowed visitors into their private apartments.⁴² Critical comments came most likely from Western Europeans and Polish, Czechoslovak, and Latin American youths. To give an example, a Norwegian youngster considered the Soviet standard of living to be much worse than in Norway: “Soviet people have worse clothes than Norwegians”, he had pointed out.⁴³ What is interesting about these reports is that one can infer a kind of astonishment at foreigners’ enthusiasm toward the Soviet Union and its citizens. Soviet authorities naturally hoped that the visitors would have positive thoughts about the country; still, suspicion of foreigners and their motives had been deeply rooted in Soviet attitudes. Facing friendly foreign visitors who were genuinely attracted to the country and showed respect towards its citizens was the opposite of what official sources had led people to anticipate. Therefore, foreigners’ reactions caused both satisfaction and a certain level of bewilderment.

It is difficult to say what the balance between positive and negative remarks was. The nature of the commentaries depended upon the situation in which comments were given. A comparison between different types of reports shows that there were distinctions as to how critical opinions were recorded by the Soviet authorities. Those reporters who mingled with various groups and in various events did not find much in the way of critical thinking, unlike those people who were assigned to work with national delegations, such as interpreters and special guides designated for each group. These people spent most

³⁹ TSAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, l. 170. Sekretariu MGK KPSS, tov. Marchenko, 11.8.1957.

⁴⁰ Jensen, Erik, *Et liv i politik* (København: Demos, 2009), 13.

⁴¹ GARF, f. 8581, op. 2, d. 457, l. 8.

⁴² RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 167.

⁴³ GARF, f. 8581, op. 2, d. 457, ll. 5–6, 8.

of the time at the festival with the same visitors, which increased their probability of hearing a wider spectrum of what people discussed, and also such comments as were not meant for everybody's ears. A comparison between archival reports, oral histories and published memoirs shows that even though people might have been critical of some aspects of the country, they often still stated that their opinion of the USSR had changed for the better, and they considered the festival an important forum for cultural exchange. For example, the Canadian delegate Koozma J. Tarasoff said that "the festival has demonstrated that people can get together despite their various differences. People can communicate with one another even if they don't speak the same language or follow the same customs." He suggested, however, that the festival should be taken over by UN organizations to allow for more neutral involvement from different parts of the world.⁴⁴

The primary purpose of the monitoring reports had been to find out what foreign people thought about the Soviet Union. Besides that, the vast amount of data also provided a multifunctional source for widening knowledge on the thinking of young people and youth organizations in different countries. The reports made by guides and interpreters who spent their time with one or more delegations offered particularly valuable information on the political opinions, attitudes and different political groups inside the delegations, as well as on young people's behaviour at the festival. Judging by the amount of space devoted to the different categories of participants, the youth of capitalist countries was the most important target group for the Komsomol leadership. While the young people and youth organizations of the socialist countries received surprisingly little attention, there was a growing interest in the participants from the Global South.

In trying to analyze and understand the opinions and behaviour of Western youth, the authorities used a tri-level categorization. The first category comprised "genuine and sincere friends of the Soviet Union", who mostly came from the ranks of the communist and democratic organizations. The second group, to which the majority of festival delegates belonged, were those who had formed their views of Soviet life under the influence of "reactionary propaganda" but who "whole-heartedly sought to see what was going on in the Soviet Union and to clarify what socialism was in practice". The third group, which was described as an insignificant group of foreign participants, were those whose attitude toward the Soviet Union was hostile and was not transformed by the visit. Although there

⁴⁴ Tarasoff, Koozma J., "Impressions of my visit to the Soviet Union 1957", *The Inquirer*, 4, No. 6, 1957, 4–10.

were only a few of these people, they entailed serious risks. This group had attempted to influence other delegates, had provoked small disturbances and disseminated anti-Soviet propaganda among Muscovites. It was remarked that some governments, especially that of the US, had put much effort into including people of this category in their festival delegations.⁴⁵

The second category, the “converted Western youths”, formed the most significant group from the perspective of Soviet cultural diplomacy. The stories about young Westerners whose preconceptions were largely influenced by bourgeois propaganda were centred upon the transformative force of the Moscow festival. These “conversion narratives” described how the festival had changed perceptions on the country and its people. They praised the socialist system that had given developed social care for its citizens, were interested in the revolutionary past and enthusiastically watched the building of the future. Foreign guests were particularly fascinated by the lack of unemployment, equality among the sexes and age groups in work, free education and health-care.⁴⁶ One of those “conversion narratives” was written by a British festival delegate on his way home.

Moscow is now already far away. The train speeds ahead. We are very tired, we sit, lay and go around the coaches. The festival ended and we are quietly talking or just sitting and thinking in silence. At first, the trip to Moscow turned out to be for many a trip to wholly another world. They say that there is an iron curtain between our nation and theirs. At the moment, after having been there myself, we can only draw the conclusion that it [the iron curtain] exists far above us, in the governmental circles. Our systems differ from each other, in certain basic issues we can have quite contradictory views, however, we all live on the same planet. Cooperation is based on these possibilities, which prevailed at the festival: the possibility to meet, openly talk with each other, dance, sing and have fun together. And now, when all this is left behind we may say that should this remain the same, cooperation would be easy to carry out.⁴⁷

Commentaries of this kind were perfect for Soviet purposes. While it brings forward the transformative impact of the visit, it is not blatantly flattering of Soviet society. Furthermore, the author rightly stressed the significance of face-to-face interaction and cooperation, without praising socialism or the Soviet Union. These kinds of stories served similar purposes as had the testimonies of Western fellow travellers. These non-communist friends of the USSR had been valuable

⁴⁵ RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, ll. 159–161.

⁴⁶ RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, ll. 160–166.

⁴⁷ RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 197, l. 76. Spravka o rabote delegatsii Velikobritanii na VI Vsemirnom festivale molodezhi i studentov, 22.8.1957.

disseminators of positive impressions about the country and important contributors to Soviet cultural diplomacy in the 1920s and 1930s.⁴⁸

Guests had not only changed their own opinion about the country but, as many ensured, they were ready to share their new views back home, and some even joined their local communist party. For example, Barbara Perry, the US delegate known to the Soviet people through *Komsomol'skaia pravda's* articles, was pleased about her reception in the Soviet Union and promised to do everything she could to tell American people about the country and the festival.⁴⁹ Some of these promises to spread the word later took concrete form in the shape of published newspaper articles, travelogues, and photographs, such as those of Charles Bresland, Carlos Fonseca Amador, Sally Belfrage, Alex Jupp, Gabriel García Márquez, and Leo Weismantel. Although irrefutable evidence has not been found to suggest that such sources had been ordered by the Komsomol or the CPSU, there are reasons to believe that some accounts had not been produced completely out of sheer curiosity towards the USSR or devotion to peace work. The use of peace and friendship rhetoric, unconditional support for the CPSU line and the attention devoted to describing the events of the festival in texts by the likes of Fonseca Amador, Weismantel, and Bresland might well suggest that they had been commissioned by either their native communist parties or by the CPSU/Komsomol. They emphasized exactly the points that were crucial for the Soviet organizers: they stressed that the festival was not only a communist gathering, they depicted freedom of religion and freedom of speech, and supported the Soviet version of events in the Hungarian uprising.⁵⁰ Carlos Fonseca Amador's account was not only fully in line with the peace and friendship discourse; it also explained key political changes, such as Khrushchev's Secret Speech, and the Hungarian events, according to the official Soviet view. On the other hand, Fonseca Amador's support for Stalin was not in line with the prevailing political climate in the USSR. Later, in seeking to widen his popular support in Nicaragua, Fonseca publicly denied his commitment to Marxism-Leninism and stressed that the positive views on the USSR in *Un Nicaragüense en Moscú*

48 Stern, Ludmila, *Western intellectuals and the Soviet Union, 1920–40. From Red Square to the Left Bank* (London: Routledge, 2007), 121–122, 128–129, 204–205; David-Fox, Michael, *Showcasing the Great Experiment. Cultural Diplomacy & Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921–1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 46.

49 TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, ll. 152–153. Informatsiia 19, 9.8.1957, V. Zaluzhnyi.

50 Se e.g. Fonseca Amador, Carlos, *Un Nicaragüense en Moscú* (Managua: Silvio Mayorga, [1958] 1981), 41–42, 47–48, 58–59, 60; Bresland, Charles, *Moscow Turned It on! Story of Australians at 6th World Youth Festival* (Sydney: Coronation Press, 1957), 1, 4–5, 30–31; Weismantel, Leo, *Tagebuch einer skandalösen Reise* (Neumünster: Weltkreis Verlags, 1959), 104, 290–301.

did not mean he accepted communism.⁵¹ Charles Bresland's account was as favourable for the Soviet Union as were Fonseca Amador's and Weismantel's books. He praised Soviet achievements uncritically and highlighted the correct points of the festival. As in Fonseca Amador's text, there was, however, a short passage that did not fully fit the ideal Soviet picture, making his account look less like it was written for Soviet purposes. In Bresland's case, the main distinction between his line and the Soviet line was the attitude towards jazz. Unlike his Soviet colleagues, Bresland openly supported jazz music and, as the head of the Eureka Youth League, he had even encouraged the Australian jazz band, the Southern Cross, to attend the Moscow festival and participate in its jazz competition.⁵² Fonseca Amador and Bresland were not named in the authorities' reports; however, publishing fairly uncritical accounts on the USSR fits the interpretations of them having been Soviet spies. Professor Weismantel instead was acknowledged in the final report for his help in facilitating the "mobilization of popular opinion for the festival in West Germany and for the formation of a widely representative delegation", which hinted at a close relationship between Weismantel and the CPSU.⁵³

Alex Jupp, Gabriel García Marquez, Sally Belfrage, and Pradip Bose took a more critical view of the USSR than did Fonseca Amador, Bresland and Weismantel, yet none of them can be described as openly hostile or anti-Soviet. Sally Belfrage's book is an interesting case because her eyewitness narrative on Soviet society seemed to fit fully neither side's metanarrative of the cultural Cold War. In February 1959, the head of the censorship and state secret protection organ, Glavlit, R. Polianov, informed the CPSU Central Committee about Belfrage's book, which the members of the central committee found openly anti-Soviet.⁵⁴ In his review on *A Room in Moscow*, Marvin L. Kalb considers Belfrage's travelogue a relatively balanced account, though offering at times "astoundingly naïve" and contradictory reflections about Soviet society. Kalb maintains that staying five months and getting a large room on the tenth floor of a skyscraper in Moscow at the time of poor housing conditions would not

51 Fonseca Amador, *Un Nicaragüense*, 39–40, 58–59. Hodges, Donald C., *Intellectual Foundations of the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 187–188. Matilde Zimmermann, the author of Fonseca Amador's biography, ponders the lack of criticism in *Un Nicaragüense en Moscu*. According to her, Fonseca Amador's other writings addressed socialism and the Soviet Union far more critically.

52 Bresland, *Moscow Turned It*, 1–30, 15; McCardell, Terry, *Jazz Speaks All Languages. The Southern Cross Jazz Band in Soviet Russia and the People's Republic of China, 1957* (Sydney: Australian Jazz Convention Trust Fund, 1985), 4.

53 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 157. Weismantel, *Tagebuch einer skandalösen Reise*.

54 RGANI, f. 5, op. 33, d. 221, ll. 1–11. R. Polianov v TsK KPSS, 2.2.1959.

have been possible without unofficial Kremlin hosts, calling into question Belfrage's motives of writing.⁵⁵

The third category, anti-Soviet and hostile youth and youth groups, was an element, whose presence the Soviet authorities had anticipated in advance. Giving these groups free entrance into the country had been a sacrifice the authorities had been willing to make in order to promote their political goals. The final report noted that hostile elements were recognized in the US, UK, French, Italian, West German and some Scandinavian delegations. These people had been in close contact with their respective embassies in Moscow and attempted to find facts for anti-Soviet propaganda.⁵⁶ For example, the guide of the British delegation related that some British participants thought everything was orchestrated just for the festival in order to make foreigners believe that the Soviet system was the best in the world. They had visited and photographed places where ordinary people lived and planned to uncover the true side of Soviet society. "We now have good shots of half run-down houses, in which poor Russian are packed, so we do have things to show and tell back home."⁵⁷

Outside of European groups, the authorities gave the most attention to the Zionist section of the Israel delegation, which the report maintained had come to Moscow to conduct Zionist propaganda and to influence local Jews. They had brought with them a large amounts of nationalistic literature, produced especially for the festival in Russian, English and Spanish, and the delegation had consisted of special propagandists, who had focused on holding conversations with local Jews. Although the operations of Zionists were disrupted, they nonetheless "managed to do something".⁵⁸ For example, the actions of the Zionist group resulted in rumors about discrimination of Jews being spread during the festival, including claims that Jews were not accepted into higher educational institutions, were not promoted at work and were not allowed to open Jewish theatres.⁵⁹ While the authorities had managed to successfully utilize the presence of Western Christian organizations to improve the picture of religion in the country, they had not been able to prevent the Zionists from

55 *The New York Times*, 19 April 1959, BR10, Kalb, Marvin L., "Five Months Among the Russians".

56 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, ll. 160–161.

57 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 197, l. 77. Spravka o rabote delegatsii Velikobritanii na VI Vsemirnom festivale molodezhi i studentov, 22.8.1957.

58 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 160.

59 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 187; RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 83, ll. 7, 35.

using the festival for their aims, even though the Soviet leadership had been aware of the risks related to the delegation of Israel in advance.⁶⁰

The most striking results for the Soviet authorities were the dissonant voices from within the international communist community. This came up in relation to the divergent interpretations of the Hungarian rising and reactions to the Secret Speech. It was not only about different interpretations of communist ideology or the Secret Speech, but about far more deeply rooted differences in the way that youth activities and youth culture in general were viewed. The British and Polish delegations in particular caused concern because of their political views, cultural preferences and “inappropriate” behaviour. The guide of the British delegation reported that most of the British delegates did not take part in the big mass events but instead just wandered around on their own. The delegates organized parties at their hotel, drank and misbehaved. When Soviet officials and hotel staff complained about this, the leadership of the delegation stated that this was normal youth behaviour in Great Britain, insisting that “Rock and roll is a part of the life of English young people”. When a Soviet official pointed out that the British delegations lacked discipline, they replied that they were not Germans and not soldiers. The guide lamented that British delegates, “even communists”, were sceptical of Egyptian leader Nasser and announced this openly. Moreover, an English participant had said that they were “building socialism in Britain with different methods than in the Soviet Union”, with a strong working class and partly nationalized industry.⁶¹

The British way of approaching communism and political culture is well captured in an ironic song, which songwriter Leon Rosselson, together with a couple of other British musicians, wrote after the Moscow festival. The song, called *Talking Moscow Blues*, beautifully fuses together their experiences: the atmosphere of a joyous and colorful youth gathering and perspicacious commentary on current events in Soviet political life. One of the verses gives credit to Khrushchev for his liberal attitude towards music, ending with a reference to one of the most popular Western songs among the festival folks: *See you later, Alligator*.⁶²

Well Britain sent, God bless my soul,
Skiffle, jazz and rock'n'roll.
Said Comrade Shepilov “Man alive!
I don't dig that bourgeois jive”

⁶⁰ Kostyrchenko, G. V., *Tainaia politika Khrushcheva. Vlast', intelligentsia, evreiskii vopros* (Moscow: “Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia”, 2012), 273–274.

⁶¹ RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, 197, ll. 59–61, 66. Spravka o rabote delegatsii Velikobritanii na VI Vsemirnomo festivale molodezhi i studentov, 22.8.1957.

⁶² Interview with Leon Rosselson, 13 april 2018.

But Nikita Khrushchev, he's the man
 Who wants more skiffle in the Five Year Plan
 And that's why Shepilov's been sent
 To a washboard factory in Outer Tashkent.
 See you later . . . deviator.⁶³

Among the socialist countries, on which the final report said very little, the Polish delegation was described as “revisionist and nationalistic”, whereas the specially selected and trained Hungarian delegation was praised for its ability to defend the “truthful picture of the 1956 happenings”.⁶⁴ Polish delegates instead had questioned the Soviet (and Hungarian) way of explaining the uprising, had shown interest in the Yugoslav model of socialism and displayed “unhealthy tendencies” in art. For example, in the student meetings Poles had openly spoken about the problems in their social services, had spoken against socialist realism, supported Western modernist art, and held dissenting views on some ideological questions, positioning the Polish delegation against the other people’s democracies and the USSR.⁶⁵

Young people devoted to communism and members of the communist and democratic parties and youth leagues formed a more heterogeneous group than Soviet authorities had expected before the festival. Based on this, it seemed that the Soviet Union still had lots of friends and enthusiasts amongst young foreigners. What needs to be stress here, however, is that even many of the most loyal allies were uncertain about their unconditional support for the Soviet cause. Khrushchev’s Secret Speech at the 20th Party Congress as well as the Hungarian and Polish events the same year had torn the international communist movement, and the same had happened in the socialist youth movement. Although Shelepin, Romanovskii and Bobrovnikov rejoiced at the enormous interest that young people in the ranks of the WFDY and IUS showed in the Moscow festival, taking it as evidence of the strength of the democratic youth movement, at the same time they had to

63 The song has several authors and lyrical versions. According to Rosselson, this one was definitely written by him. Another author of the song was folk musician Ewan MacColl. See Harker, Ben, *Class Act. The Cultural and Political Life of Ewan MacColl* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 121.

64 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, ll. 169–171. Similar observations were given in Radio Free Europe monitoring reports. See e.g. HU OSA, 300-8-3-13128, 5 August 1957, Polish Youth’s “Magnetism” in Moscow, [<http://hdl.handle.net/10891/osa:996249dd-8e15-4a23-bb26-cb3e41424f61>]; HU OSA, 300-8-3-6054, 13 August 1957, The Hungarian Delegation and the Moscow Festival, [<http://hdl.handle.net/10891/osa:8b78c9f8-23e7-411d-8760-ec32a3e6ae8>] (Accessed 19 February 2008).

65 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, ll. 169–171; RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, ll. 129–132. N. Mikhailov v TsK KPSS, 13 August 1957; TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, l. 79. Informatsiia 13, 3.8.1957.

admit that the discipline and ideological loyalty of the late Stalin period was gone. Being a communist fit into one formula no more, if indeed it ever had.

While conversion stories and praise were taken as proof of the festival's success, critical comments and the broader general opinion among different national delegations were used as indicators of the state of the socialist youth movement. In particular, the reports of the delegation guides and interpreters offered Soviet authorities an important window into the opinions of foreign youths and youth organizations. This information was crucially important in terms of further developing the youth movement and for plans of widening Soviet political influence.

Whereas socialist and capitalist youth and youth organizations were familiar to the Soviet authorities, the Global South countries formed a new and increasingly important target group for Soviet cultural diplomacy. Due to the passive approach to the colonial and post-colonial world during the Stalin era, Soviet authorities had scant knowledge of these countries and their people. The interest in these areas revived, as in so many other spheres of life, after 1953 when the new leadership started to establish diplomatic, economic, political and cultural relations with the countries of Asia, Latin America, and Africa.⁶⁶ The new policy introduced by Nikita Khrushchev was based on new thinking about the developing world. Unlike Stalin, who had regarded leaders like Egypt's Nasser and India's premier Nehru as "imperialist lackeys", Khrushchev considered them potential allies.⁶⁷ At the time of the festival, many of the Global South countries were still much less known than the capitalist and socialist countries, and therefore the Moscow festival provided a useful learning process for the Soviet authorities.

The reporters noted that Global South delegations were enthusiastic about Soviet socialism, its educational system, freedom of religion, equality between men and women, and healthcare services. Many delegations were interested in meeting and making contact with leaders of the CPSU and the Komsomol, such

⁶⁶ Rupperecht, Tobias, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin. Interaction and Exchange between the USSR and Latin America during the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Wishon, Jeremiah, "Peace and Progress: Building Indo-Soviet Friendship", in *Exploring the Second World. Socialist Internationalism in the Cold War*, edited by Patryk Babiracki and Austin Jersild (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 251–272; Kanet, Roger E., "Soviet Attitudes Toward Developing Nations Since Stalin", in *The Soviet Union and the Developing Nations*, edited by Roger E. Kanet (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1974), 32, 26–50.

⁶⁷ Hopf, Ted, *Reconstructing the Cold War. The Early Years, 1945–1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 199, 235–242.

as Khrushchev, Shelepin, and Furtseva.⁶⁸ The USSR seemed to impress young Asians, Africans and Latin Americans, but they themselves did not fully live up to the expectations of their Soviet hosts. The reports complained that Latin American and Arab delegations contained more businessmen than cultural people and that instead of participating in peace and friendship events, they devoted most of their time to establishing commercial contacts with Soviet enterprises, or to simply having fun.⁶⁹ The most important point for the Soviet authorities, however, was that according to their evaluation, the festival had managed to strengthen anti-imperialist and anti-American sentiment and sympathies for the USSR among Global South visitors.⁷⁰

The Soviet regime also acquired new information on some Asian and African countries, particularly concerning their ideas on state-building. Monitoring reports related that the Arab delegates discussed establishing a Pan-Arab state, and there were also analogous calls made among Central and Western African delegates who refused to represent their “man-made states”, whose forms had been decided by the colonial powers, and instead wished to form united delegations on a regional basis. A report noted that some African delegates were defensive if referred to by their existing state, e.g. representatives of Senegal or Chad. “Those delegates do not exist, there are delegates of Black Africa”, they had commented. Another group that rhetorically reformulated their delegation were the representatives from Western African countries (Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Gambia). The “Black” African delegates had aimed at fighting French colonialism by participating in the festival, after which they were going to get acquainted with the building of socialism in China.⁷¹ This kind of information was important not only for the development of a Global South agenda within the WFDY and the IUS, but also for the Soviet leadership in forming their foreign policy strategies amongst developing nations.

The main impact of the Moscow youth festival with regard to the area then known as the Third World was in acknowledging and establishing relations with these countries. Accepting colonial and post-colonial countries, the festival organizers gave strong support to the new independent and soon-to-be-independent

68 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 165; GARF, f. 8581, op. 2, d. 457, l. 1–3; GARF, f. R-9518, op. 1, d. 8, ll. 237–238. Zapis' besedy s delegatom frantsuzkogo Kameruna na VI Vsemirnom festivale molodezhi i studentov Abessalo Nukulu. V. Iaroslavskii, 12.8.1957; RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 193, ll. 28–39. Voprosy dlia resheniia na plenumе SPK (no date).

69 RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 83, l. 5; RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 205, ll. 29–36. Otchet o rabote s delegatsiei Peru na VI VFMS. I. Vlasova.

70 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, ll. 161–162.

71 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, ll. 161–162.

countries. Consequently, the visible presence of African delegations in Moscow revived African studies in the country, as a result of which a research institute for African studies was created and a Friendship university, named after Congolese independence fighter and first post-independence leader Patrice Lumumba, was established for African, Asian and Latin American students in Moscow in 1961.⁷² Later Soviet support for the Global South widened as African capitals were twice chosen as the venues for the World Youth Festivals: Algeria in 1965 and Ghana in 1966. Both of these prospective hosts failed to materialize in the end, because of coup d'états that overthrew the pro-Soviet governments of Ahmed Ben Bella and Kwame Nkrumah respectively.⁷³

A New Attitude toward the West

In many ways, the Moscow festival served as a mirror for Soviet state and society, offering a prism through which to view Soviet relations with the outside world. As a Komsomol secretary described it in a report outlining the results of the gathering, the youth festival had characteristically been an encounter of two worlds: capitalism and socialism.⁷⁴ This encounter had served as a fruitful test of the quality of youth league cadres and their organizational skills, as well as the socio-economic standards achieved by socialist society in comparison with its Western capitalist rivals. Even though the Moscow festival reports tended to downplay the influence of foreigners on Soviet society, they still reflected a new kind of thinking about the outside world. Unlike the reports of the Stalin period, which mechanically repeated the superiority of the Soviet Union and the socialist system, rejecting any criticism whatsoever, evaluations of the Moscow gathering implied that the tendency was no longer to turn one's face completely against everything that came from the outside world. According to reports by the Komsomol and other authorities, Muscovites and other Soviet citizens had fulfilled their duty as "true propagandists of the Soviet way of living".⁷⁵

72 Matusevich, Maxim, "Probing the Limits of Internationalism: African Students Confront Soviet Ritual", *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, 27, No. 2, 2009, 19–21.

73 Klinghoffer, Arthur Jay, "The Soviet Union and Africa", in *The Soviet Union and the Developing Nations*, edited by Roger E. Kanet (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1974), 51–77.

74 TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, l. 199. Otchet ob itogakh VI Vsemirnogo festivalia molodezhi i studentov za mir i druzhbu.

75 GARF, f. 8581, op. 2, d. 457, l. 19.

In the final report, Shelepin and his group thanked the Soviet people for the active role they played in helping foreign visitors change their opinion about the USSR. Their conclusion was that, in terms of promoting the new image of the country, “the great majority of Soviet people passed the ‘test’”.⁷⁶ Touting the new picture of the USSR was, however, only one part of what the festival involved. As the reports also showed, the impact of the festival on Soviet society was much more mixed.

Because the main responsibility for organizing the gathering had belonged to the Komsomol, the organization and execution of the festival tested the capability of the youth league to carry out such a massive event with such a huge crowd of foreigners. Post-festival discussions highlighted a number of failures in the work of Komsomol activists in particular, and among Soviet youth in general. Many of these problems were rooted in their scant experience of contact with foreigners. Typical complaints included lack of knowledge of foreign languages and of some basic understanding of world history, weaknesses in political discourse and passiveness in propagandizing the socialist motherland.⁷⁷ For example, at the plenum of the Komsomol Moscow city committee in August 1957, comrade Pavlov evaluated the festival from the perspective of the political education of Soviet youth. He pointed out that the festival had shown that some Komsomol activists had not been able to talk with the foreigners in a right way, to truly debate, polemize and prove their arguments with facts and figures. Another weakness was that Soviet young people had been educated to respect black people as less fortunate, which had caused unforeseen problems. Young people could not differentiate the reactionary and progressive elements among black participants, but treated them all equally, in accordance with the idea that all black people were automatically poor and oppressed.⁷⁸ Materials from local level Komsomol meetings also indicated that attitudes toward organizing the festival varied between the younger and older generations of the Komsomol. One of the speakers at a meeting of Komsomol first secretaries was amazed that some young Komsomol activists had asked for money for a trip to the countryside in order to relax after the huge festival project. For the speaker, who was a veteran of the October revolution, this suggestion sounded absurd, especially because soon after the

76 TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, l. 162. Informatsiia 20, 10.8.1957, V. Zaluzhnyi.

77 TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 113, d. 23, l. 131. Dom kul'tury 1-go GIZ imeni L. M. Kakanovicha; RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 200, l. 62. Otchet o rabote s delegatsiei Frantsii na VI Vsemirnom festivale molodezhi i studentov. L. Grigor'ev; TsAOPIM, f. 635, op. 13, d. 551, ll. 11–12. Stenogramma pervykh sekretarei RK VLKSM g. Moskvy ot 20 avgusta 1957 goda.

78 TsAOPIM, f. 635, op. 13, d. 526, ll. 13–14. Protokol plenuma MGK VLKSM ot 29.8.1957.

festival, there was going to be another big celebration: the 40th Anniversary of the October revolution.⁷⁹

The organization of the festival was also discussed in regard to foreigners' feedback. One speaker noted that he had heard foreign participants complaining that Soviet young people did not know how to have fun. These foreigners had said that everything was carefully planned and interesting, people had worked hard but had also said that "we do not know how to enjoy ourselves, how to have a good time." The speaker agreed with this criticism and suggested that allowing young people themselves to host get-togethers and gatherings might bring better results in terms of creating a celebratory atmosphere. He also pointed out that it had been embarrassing to realize that "foreigners knew our Soviet songs and sang them together with us, but we did not know any song from other countries".⁸⁰

In addition to evaluating Komsomol cadres, the festival reports used the details of festival experiences to improve the dissemination of information through printed materials. Soviet publishing houses had produced altogether 738 different titles in 7.5 million copies as well as radio broadcasts in 33 languages. After the festival, the Central Film Studio made films on the festival for movie theatres and television. All this seems to have been insufficient, since the final report called for an increase in the amount of foreign propaganda (books, magazines, radio broadcasts etc). According to the report, foreigners would have been interested in the USSR and its people, but Soviet publications and broadcasts did not seem to meet the needs of this target audience. For example, Syrian delegates had mentioned the lack of Marx's works in Arabic, and that the Soviet radio programs were often very boring compared to that of the BBC and the American radio stations. Many Western guests considered printed materials on the Soviet Union "dry, abstract and schematic", which was taken to be why they were rarely read by Western readers. The final report concluded that individual Soviet citizens should be better utilized to influence Westerners, in, for example, stories of ordinary people and their contributions to the building of socialism.⁸¹

The experiences of contact with the outside world and foreign visitors' comments also proved important for the authorities in terms of evaluating Soviet tourist infrastructure, services and consumer goods. Comments on accommodation, food, services and other dimensions concerning the organization of the festival indicated how different institutions had managed to carry out such a

⁷⁹ TsAOPIM, f. 635, op. 13, d. 551, l. 14.

⁸⁰ TsAOPIM, f. 635, op. 13, d. 551, l. 7.

⁸¹ RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, ll. 181–184.

massive international event, providing useful material for Soviet tourist administration before the expansion of foreign tourism to the USSR in the early 1960s.⁸² Commentaries on Soviet people's appearance, especially their clothes, the selection of goods in shops and the overall physical space of Moscow and its street scenes showed Soviet state and society through the eyes of foreigners. This certainly offered fruitful material for developing the Soviet system so that it could better compete with the capitalist system and offer better living conditions for its people. The reports also reflected the changes that had taken place in the thinking of the outside world. Unlike during the Stalin years, foreigners' critical views on the Soviet Union, socialism and Soviet delegates were not simply judged as anti-Soviet, yet they were not praised either. This, however, showed that the West and the capitalist system that had earlier been viewed mostly as a source of corruption now appeared as a source that Soviet leaders and authorities could use for the improvement of the socialist system. Foreign visitors' comments on consumer goods, hotels, tourist services and sight-seeing showed Soviet authorities how they might modify the Soviet system so that it could compete with the capitalist one. For example, based on the experiences of self-service canteens at the festival, the final report suggested that the self-service system should be taken used in Soviet public canteens. The minister of trade was advised to prepare plans to increase the automated selling of water, cigarettes, a variety of haberdasheries and cosmetics, as well as to increase the production of "cheap, beautiful, and original souvenirs and gifts", and to start mass production of "light, simple, comfortable and cheap clothes for young people".⁸³

In more general terms, the hundreds of pages of observations of the encounter between the two worlds show where the socialist project stood at that moment. Foreigners compared Soviet society with that of the West in terms of technological development and consumerism. Although the famous "Kitchen debate" between premier Khrushchev and vice-president Nixon and Khrushchev's slogan of "catching up with and overtaking the West" were still to come, one of the implicit purposes of the Moscow gathering was to demonstrate that the Soviet system was capable of offering a competitive – and a realistic – alternative to the capitalist lifestyle.⁸⁴ The same strategy was later used with the Brussels World's Fair in 1958, and with the Soviet National Exhibition in New York in 1959, where Soviet technical achievements as well as cultural highlights were displayed to

⁸² Salmon, "Marketing Socialism", 190.

⁸³ RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, ll. 191–192.

⁸⁴ Reid, Susan E., "Cold War in the Kitchen: Gender and the De-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev", *Slavic Review* 61, No. 2, 2002, 211–252.

foreign audiences.⁸⁵ The Moscow festival can be seen as a moment of evaluating Soviet society in comparison with the West. Besides being a concrete example of trying to revive cultural connections with the outside world, the festival allowed comparisons with the West in terms of the systems' ability to provide a good life for their respective citizens. This meant a tremendous change to the Stalinist view of the West solely as a source of reactionary elements that could not be a model for the most progressive system in the world. But, as Susan Reid has noted, the American way of life served as model for learning how to beat the West, "not in order to throw in the towel and converge with capitalism but to strengthen and advance the project of building communism".⁸⁶

Soviet Youth and Culture

On the home front, the largest section in the final report was devoted to the cultural impact of the festival. Such a strong emphasis on cultural factors indicates the important role that culture, cultural values and cultural practices played in the Soviet project and in the Cold War. Paying more attention to the cultural, as opposed to political, impacts of the festival did not, however, mean that the party and the Komsomol were not interested in young people's political thinking. Most of the fundamental political issues were systemic taboos that Komsomol officials simply could not systematically discuss in their reports. Unlike with many political questions, where everyone was obliged to follow the official party line, the room for discussing cultural tastes was much wider and more permissive.

The Komsomol had been well aware of the risks that the encounter with foreign cultural influences entailed, and it had begun to pay attention to the aesthetic tastes of young people already in late 1956 and early 1957.⁸⁷ What remained largely unknown until the festival kicked off was the reaction of Soviet youth at large. How would the masses of young people behave? Would they be fascinated by jazz, or would they defend Soviet culture, thumbing their noses

⁸⁵ Reid, Susan E., "Who Will Beat Whom?: Popular Reception of the American National Exhibition in Moscow, 1959", *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 9, No. 4, 2008, 855–904; Siegelbaum, Lewis, "Sputnik goes to Brussels: The Exhibition of Soviet Technological Wonder", *The Journal of Contemporary History* 47, No. 1, 2012, 120–136.

⁸⁶ Reid, "Who Will Beat Whom?", 220.

⁸⁷ For the Komsomol's Aesthetic upbringing campaign see Tsipursky, Gleb, *Socialist Fun: Youth, Consumption, & State-Sponsored Popular Culture in the Soviet Union, 1945–1970* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016), 134–162.

at the capitalist decadence? Allowing a fairly open display of Western culture and the opportunity for Soviet youth to interface with “bad influences” in Moscow helped Soviet authorities see the magnitude of the problem they were facing.

The final report framed the encounter between Soviet youth and Western culture as a Cold War cultural battle that had ended in favourable terms for the Soviet system. According to the report, Soviet youth had met face to face with the representatives of the bourgeois world, observed their spirituality or worldview and manners, and confronted a wide spectrum of Western cultural products: abstract art, jazz, as well as contemporary dances like rock’n’roll and boogie-woogie.⁸⁸ Contrary to the claims made by Western media, the report stated that Soviet youth had by no means become tempted by Western culture.

In encounters with young people from the capitalist countries Soviet people acknowledged the narrowness of their Western view, the poverty of their spirituality, the banality and decadence of their morals. Moreover, many foreign delegates even admitted that Soviet people had a much richer spiritual world than that which existed in the capitalist world.⁸⁹

In fact, as the report explained, the experience of bourgeois cultural elements had worked in favour of Soviet culture: having been in contact with the Western world and its representatives, young people had realized the superficiality of Western culture and the superiority of Soviet tradition. Besides reflecting foreigners’ views on Soviet culture, or Soviet young people’s attraction to Western popular culture, this quotation and the report illustrate the broader Soviet thinking on culture and the cultural Cold War. The report shows how central the role of culture, as a system of arts, values, and spiritual beliefs, was in Soviet cultural diplomacy. The evaluation of the Moscow event and also the previous World Youth Festivals within the Komsomol and Party apparatuses indicates that the meaning and consequences of cultural encounters like these youth rallies were about far more than disseminating propaganda or competing to see whose artists or athletes won more medals. The cultural Cold War was ultimately a battle between two different ways of viewing and interpreting the existing world and the world to come.

Why was Western cultural influence so feared? The way the reporters highlighted the superiority of Soviet culture in comparison with that of the West actually suggested that rather than feeling secure about the status of Soviet culture, authorities were concerned for its future among young people.

⁸⁸ RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 185. This is noted in an earlier report by V. Zaluzhnyi: TsAO-PIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, l. 162. *Informatsiia* 20, 10.8.1957, V. Zaluzhnyi.

⁸⁹ RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 185.

Fear of Western cultural influence was not solely based on the latter's bourgeois and thus corruptive nature, but on the fear that young people might cease to value and support their own cultural traditions and the socialist view of the world. Turning away from Soviet culture could in the worst-case endanger the whole project of building communism by way of decreasing the cohesion and integration of young people within the Soviet project. This kind of fear was actually quite a widespread phenomenon throughout Europe in the Cold War, when countries tried to preserve their national cultures against foreign, often American, influence. Older generations considered American popular culture and Americanization a threat in many countries, such as Austria and West Germany.⁹⁰ The final report argued that this problem concerned only a marginal group of students and intellectuals, who found Western culture attractive and had begun to imitate its specific habits and trends.⁹¹ Fully booked concert halls for jazz performances and visitors' astonishment at Soviet youth's fascination with everything Western, however, told another story. The encounter with Western culture had by no means been a clear-cut triumph for the Soviet system, and far more than just a marginal group of young people had found Western culture attractive.⁹²

Consequently, the encounter with the Western world forced the Komsomol to review their policies on youth and culture. One of the fields that was particularly widely discussed in post-festival meetings was that of jazz. As before the festival, opinions on jazz polarized the Soviet cultural establishment. While conservatives preferred proscribing the genre altogether, more liberally-minded officials maintained that there was no need to prohibit jazz. However, they stressed that it was extremely important to make it clear where the line between "good" and "bad" jazz stood.⁹³ Shelepin, Romanovskii and Bobrovnikov provided an analogous opinion in their report, suggesting that instead of banning jazz from the country, efforts should be directed at establishing estrada orchestras, or big bands, and suggested organizing a national competition for such groups.⁹⁴ In a

⁹⁰ Wagnleitner, Reinhart, *Coca-colonization and the Cold War. The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria After the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 208–220; Poiger, Uta, *Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 31, 96.

⁹¹ RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 186.

⁹² TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, ll. 222–223; Belfrage, Sally, *A Room in Moscow* (London: Pan Books Ltd, 1959), 78; Turner, Bruce, *Hot Air, Cool Music* (London, Melbourne: Quartet Books, 1984), 154–155.

⁹³ TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, ll. 222–223; Starr, S. Frederick, *Red and Hot: the Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union 1917–1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 248–251.

⁹⁴ RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 190.

meeting dedicated to discussing the cultural impact of the festival within the Ministry of Culture, Leonid Utesov (1895–1982), one of the leading estrada singers of the country, also defended jazz as a genre but underlined that instead of imitating American jazz musicians and styles, Soviet jazz bands should cultivate jazz music for Soviet conditions. They should sing in Russian, and compose their own songs: in other words, they ought to strive to create a Soviet version of jazz.⁹⁵ The same idea was stressed in one of the few festival-related articles that dealt with jazz or abstract art in the Soviet press. In the article, the Hungarian composer and jazz competition jury member Kalman Bor argued that jazz should be primarily national. “This does not mean that orchestras cannot play works of foreign composers; however, the core of a repertoire should consist of national works.”⁹⁶

The discussion on jazz reflected an important change that was taking place in the minds of Komsomol officials and cultural authorities in terms of youth culture and Western influence. Although the festival reports highlighted the event as a great success story, the authorities had to admit that young people were much more attracted to Western cultural trends than they had expected. In contrast to the Stalin years, the solution was no longer to ban everything Western, but instead to put more effort into state-sponsored youth culture by creating new Soviet forms or, as with jazz, Sovietizing Western art genres and forms of culture, in order to challenge enthusiasm for the exports of the capitalist system. They understood that young people would need specially tailored cultural activities: not just culture, but *youth* culture.

In order to challenge the attraction of Western cultural trends in the USSR, the final report emphasized two things. First, the report suggested that the Komsomol should pay more attention to educating youth in the spirit of Soviet patriotism: to be proud of Soviet achievements and to fight against bourgeois tendencies among young people.⁹⁷ Second, the report proposed intensifying youth culture by increasing the number of youth clubs and clubs for amateur art as well as investing in new forms of youth culture, such as regional and local music societies; mass film screenings; mass youth celebrations dedicated to important points in Soviet history; marches in honor of revolutionaries and war heroes; student and youth carnivals; as well as dancing and singing festivals. The report also suggested establishing two new events: an all-union youth festival to be held every two years and an annual day of Soviet youth. The idea

95 RGALI, f. 2329, op. 3, d. 590, ll. 49–57. Stenogramma obsuzhdeniia itogov mezhdunarodnykh konkursov na VI Vsemirnom festivale molodezhi i studentov, 13.8.1957.

96 *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 4 August 1957, 4, Kal'man Bor: “Dzhaz dolzhen byt' natsional'nym”.

97 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, l. 186; TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 104, d. 31, ll. 222–223.

was to educate Soviet youth about patriotism, foster hatred towards the enemies of the Soviet system and instill pride in one's fathers and brothers. On the proposed day, Komsomol and pioneer organizations would organize processions to the graves of revolutionaries and heroes of the civil war and Great Patriotic War. The report suggested that the first day of Soviet youth would be celebrated in 1958, on the first Sunday of June.⁹⁸

Revived enthusiasm for establishing new forms of youth culture was not solely linked to the festival. The Komsomol had already started paying more attention to state-orchestrated youth activities since the mid-1950s. This was a response to the growing demand from below for special cultural activities for young people, but at the same time it was a way to prevent the Komsomol from losing its grip on young people. The Thaw-era official youth culture meant a shift from the stiff and bureaucratic forms of youth activities typical of the Stalin period toward an approach that stressed the more autonomous position of young people and things that were truly attractive to youth. This kind of increased cultural consumption was part of a wider trend in the changing consumer culture, which remained in the Brezhnev era even though the Thaw-era model of active young people shifted to a model of passive, obedient receivers of officially prescribed culture. Towards the end of the Brezhnev era, young people began to feel disappointed and alienated with the official cultural activities and, in the end, with the whole Soviet project.⁹⁹

Some previous studies have reviewed the repercussions of the Moscow youth festival as astonishing and unintended for the Soviet political establishment and have noted that Soviet officials were surprised at the scope of enthusiasm young people showed for Western bourgeois culture. Richard Cornell understood the warnings about "harmful bourgeois influences" made in the Soviet press after the festival as an indicator that the foreigners' impression on Soviet youth had been stronger than the authorities had expected.¹⁰⁰ Timothy Ryback has called the festival a "complete rehabilitation of jazz", and according to Yale Richmond, "Soviet youth [. . .] were infected with the youth styles of

⁹⁸ RGASPI, f. M-3, op. 15, d. 83, ll. 27–40; RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 233, ll. 188–189.

⁹⁹ Tshipursky, *Socialist Fun*, 222–234; Fürst, Juliane, *Stalin's Last Generation. Soviet Post-war Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 200–209; Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 197.

¹⁰⁰ Cornell, Richard, *Youth and Communism. An Historical Analysis of International Communist Youth Movements* (New York: Walker and Co., 1965), 145.

the west and the Soviet Union was never the same again".¹⁰¹ These arguments about the unintended consequences of the festival were based on published Soviet materials, which were intended to send a specific message to Soviet and international readers. What was written in the Soviet press did not fully reflect wider thinking about Western culture within the Komsomol or the Party. Moreover, the published picture quite intentionally gave the impression that there was a single, official attitude toward Western culture.

As earlier chapters have demonstrated, the repercussions of the youth gathering were far more complex than have been previously argued. Soviet authorities were aware of the potential difficulties that the festival might bring into the country, such as political provocation, jazz performances, or works of abstract art. Soviet festival organizers and authorities themselves decided not to censor any of these elements. Even though there were a few occasions when the organizers tried either to postpone performances or limit their audiences, these kind of practices were rare. Rather than indicating astonishment at unexpected happenings during the festival, the authorities' reports implied bewilderment that so little in terms of challenges to Soviet life and culture actually surfaced in the end.

Furthermore, the argument about the festival's impact on the transformation of Soviet youth culture is overly simplistic. The authorities' reports do suggest that the Komsomol was concerned about the tastes and interests of the younger generation. The assessment that interest in Western popular culture and fashion among Soviet youth was marginal was clearly an idealized picture written in the typical Soviet genre of bureaucratic reports. The fact that the authorities devoted so much space to considering how to improve youth culture shows that they took challenge of Western cultural influences seriously. This did not, however, mean that the authorities were very surprised that the festival brought Western trends to the country. Fascination with all things Western and youth subcultures such as *stiliagas*, *bitniks*, and *shtatniks*, influenced by Western cultural trends, were there already before the summer of 1957.¹⁰² The youth festival did not need to bring the idea of jazz, fashionable clothes, or new dancing styles to Moscow, because Soviet youngsters had begun to jive before Shelepin had even suggested that a World Youth Festival could take place in the USSR.

¹⁰¹ Ryback, Timothy W., *Rock around the Bloc. A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 18, 30; Richmond, *Cultural Exchange*, 11.

¹⁰² Fürst, Juliane, "The Arrival of Spring? Changes and Continuities in Soviet Youth culture and policy between Stalin and Khrushchev", in *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization. Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era*, edited by Polly Jones (London: Routledge, 2006).

This does not mean to say that the festival was insignificant for local youth. The value of the festival was to provide updated information about these things from a first-hand source – to see and hear jazz and rock and roll played on the spot. If there was one thing that shocked the Komsomol establishment, it was the scope of young people’s enthusiasm for youth cultures and Western popular culture. In much greater numbers than the Komsomol leaders had expected, young people were more interested in committing themselves to Western youth cultures than to the building of socialist society. But again, the festival did not bring Western popular culture to the USSR, it only helped Shelepin and his Komsomol crew to realize its scope. Even if the consequences of the youth festival did not shock Komsomol and Party functionaries, the festival forced them to admit that they could not efficiently stop foreign influences from entering the USSR and therefore to refashion their strategies for tackling its popularity.

“The Festival” as One of the Symbols of Thaw

The most lasting impact of the 1957 festival has been its place in Russian cultural memory. In post-Soviet memoirs and oral history, the Moscow 1957 World Youth Festival was one of the most frequently mentioned symbols of Khrushchev’s Thaw. The youth festival, or simply just *festival*, has been viewed as a moment when the Soviet Union was reattached to the rest of world culturally, socially and politically. Allowing people to celebrate and mingle with visitors from all over the world made the festival a positive moment of the Soviet past, with concrete cultural imprints. The 1957 festival made *Moscow nights (Podmoskovnye vechera)* a hit not only in the USSR but also abroad; it left *Café Youth* on Moscow’s Gorky street, a haircut called the *molodezhnaia* (youth) and a road in central Moscow that still exists today: Prospekt mira – the avenue of peace.¹⁰³

Besides Khrushchev’s Secret Speech, the Hungarian rising, the Picasso exhibition, the American National exhibition, and the launch of Sputnik, the youth festival can be included in the list of what might have constituted formative experiences for the first post-war Soviet generation. For Yevgeni Yevtush-

¹⁰³ Papernyi, Vladimir, *Architecture in the Age of Stalin. Culture Two* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 64; Zubok, *Zhivago’s Children; The Moscow Times*, 1 February 1997, “Read City’s History in Its Road Names”. A large exhibition of the Thaw, organized by the Tretyakov gallery, had a section on the 1957 festival and part of the visual imagery is included in the exhibition catalogue: *Ottepel’*. (Moskva: Gosudarstvennaia Tret’iakovskaia galeriia, 2017), 340–350.

enko, the Moscow festival meant “a blueprint of the future”.¹⁰⁴ Soviet dissident Vladimir Bukovsky associated it with the optimism of the Thaw: “The atmosphere of those years was one of springtime, hope and expectation. There was the World Youth Festival in Moscow in 1957, then the American exhibition in 1958 [sic!] – the first swallows from the West in our entire Soviet history. All this talk about ‘putrefying capitalism’ became ridiculous. The importance of these events was comparable to the exposure of Stalin. Moscow was transformed before our very eyes.”¹⁰⁵ In an article published in *Izvestiia* on the 50th anniversary of the Moscow festival, the writer Anatolii Makarov defined the meaning of the festival precisely in generational terms. “In thoughts, emotions, in the songs and dances of the festival my generation regenerated during the festival days. All Russian free-thinkers, all the specialists of jazz and modern art, the fashion-conscious and the polyglots have their roots in the summer of 1957”.¹⁰⁶ For Viktor Slavkin, the youth festival, along with Stalin’s death and Khrushchev’s speech, provided an important impetus, yet according to Slavkin, “something had started already before that”, and despite wartime childhood, poor living conditions in the post-war period and a lack of knowledge about their foreign peers, the generation of the 1950s was already “modern youth”.¹⁰⁷ The festival’s importance was not only in meeting foreign youth; it also made young Soviet artists, musicians, Jews, dissidents and members of the liberal intelligentsia aware of their global peers. As a result of this awareness, Soviet youngsters started to organize poetry evenings, disseminate samizdat and tamizdat literature, and read domestic literature that had been banned during Stalin times, such as Anna Akhmatova, Osip Mandelstam, Marina Tsvetaeva – activities which had existed in smaller circles already during the 1950s.¹⁰⁸

One of the reasons for the popularity of the festival lay in its organization. Unlike traditional Soviet celebrations, the World Youth Festival with its numerous individual events and huge amount of visitors genuinely provided space for informal and free face-to-face encounters. According to Vladimir Papernyi, the youth festival thus echoed the “horizontalism” of the Bolshevik culture of

104 Yevtushenko, Yevgeni, *A Precious Autobiography* (London: Collins & Harvill Press, 1963), 118.

105 Bukovsky, Vladimir, *To Build a Castle. My Life as a Dissenter* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1978), 113. Mistake with the year of the American Exhibition is in the original.

106 *Izvestiia*, 10 July 2007, Makarov, Anatolii, “Deti festivalia”.

107 Slavkin, Viktor, *Pamiatnik neizvestnomy stiliage* (Moscow: “Artist. Pezhisser. Teatr”, 1996), 48.

108 Zubok, *Zhivago’s Children*, 197–199.

the 1920s.¹⁰⁹ Unlike Stalinist celebrations, which were orchestrated from above and highlighted the leader cult, the Moscow 1957 World Youth Festival was considered as something meant for young people. In this sense, the festival was radically different from the festal moods of the Stalin period, which emphasized the vertical structures of celebration.

The end of the 1950s and the early 1960s witnessed an increasing number of international contacts, a growing number of tourists and a new flood of information through television. Therefore, it is difficult to identify the exact impact that the World Youth Festival had on Soviet society and individual people. Sometimes people relate their other experiences of the Thaw years to the festival or talk about the festival without their own personal experiences of it. Matthew Jackson remarked in interviews with Russian painters that many underground artists tended to refer to “the festival” when talking about various art exhibitions of the late 1950s and early 1960s.¹¹⁰

The cultural Thaw in the Soviet Union was embodied in myriad events and happenings, such as the Secret Speech, the Picasso exhibition in 1956, the launch of Sputnik in 1957, the publication of Boris Pasternak’s *Doctor Zhivago* in 1957, and the American National exhibition in 1959, to mention only few. As studies on the thaw era have shown, there was not just one essential aspect of the thaw that signified this generation, but numerous. The post-war generation was shaped by the Secret Speech, the proclaimed return to Leninist principles and the liberalization of arts and culture. The people of this generation have been called *shestidesiatniki* (the generation of the 1960s), children of the 20th Congress, the Thaw generation and Zhivago’s Children, among other things.¹¹¹ Some of these people also identified themselves as children of the youth festival.

109 Papernyi, *Architecture in the Age of Stalin*, 64.

110 Jackson, Matthew Jesse, *The Experimental Group. Ilya Kabakov, Moscow Conceptualism, Soviet Avant-Gardes* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 19, 253.

111 Vail, Petr and Genis, Aleksandr, *60-e: Mir sovetskogo cheloveka* (Moscow: “Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie”, 2001); English, Robert, *Russia and the Idea of the West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Zubok, *Zhivago’s Children*, 66–67, 315–317; Bittner, Stephen, *The many lives of Khrushchev’s Thaw. Experience and Memory in Moscow’s Arbat* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 44–46; Roger, D. Marckwick, “Thaws and Freezes in Soviet Historiography, 1953–64”, in *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization. Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era*, edited by Polly Jones (New York: Routledge, 2006), 179. Other Soviet generations named in studies on Soviet society include Stalin’s last, the last Soviet generation, the Cold War generation and the Sputnik generation. Raleigh, Donald J., *Russia’s Sputnik Generation. Soviet Baby Boomers Talk about Their Lives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), Fürst, *Stalin’s Last Generation*; Yurchak, Alexei, *Everything Was Forever, until It Was No More. The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University press, 2006); Kozlov, Denis

It must be noted, though, that the World Youth Festival was not something that touched the whole generation of people born between 1925 and 1940. First and foremost, it was a significant moment for Moscow’s young intelligentsia. In the Russian provinces and the other Soviet republics, the festival seems to have aroused much less interest than in Moscow-Leningrad. For example, in a collection of Estonian life stories on the Soviet period, the Moscow festival was not mentioned at all.¹¹² Few people from other parts of the Soviet Union participated in the festival, which partly explains why the festival meant much less outside of the capital. However, there is also a question of what was (and is) meaningful and worth remembering to former Soviet citizens in the post-Soviet era. In Estonia, for example, the collective trauma of Soviet occupation has left little room for talking about positive aspects of Soviet life. Even though for some individual Estonians, like Lola Liivat, the Moscow festival opened up a new world through Western artists, and thus formed an integral part of their life stories, the festival does not seem to be a part of the collective memory and collective story of Estonia under Soviet rule.

Besides the optimistic tone of the recollections and representations of the Moscow festival as part of the collective Russian past, it is characteristic of the post-1991 accounts and interviews to view the gathering as the beginning of the destruction of the Soviet system. Journalist Olga Kuchkina called the festival “the first step in demolishing the Iron Curtain”.¹¹³ Aleksei Kozlov considered the festival a huge mistake for the Soviet leaders, since it was “the festival of 1957 that started the doom of the system”.¹¹⁴ According to Vitalii Skuratovskii, “the result of the Moscow festival was not the victory of the ‘powers of peace and socialism’, but reciprocal acquaintance between the free West and Soviet Eurasia that was being released from the path of Stalinism.”¹¹⁵ These views present a relatively one-dimensional way to interpret the impact of the Moscow festival. They are clearly products of the post-1991 craving to find the reasons for the collapse of the USSR, but stray rather far from the historical context of the Moscow festival. It is also typical to describe the

and Gilburd, Eleonory, “The Thaw as an Event in Russian History”, in *The Thaw. Soviet Society and Culture during the 1950s and 1960s*, edited by Denis Kozlov and Eleonory Gilburd (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 18–59.

112 Kirss, Tiina and Hinrikus, Rutt (eds), *Estonian Life Stories* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009), 319.

113 Interview with Olga Kuchkina, 19 April 2009.

114 Kozlov, Aleksei, “Kozel na sakse” – *i tak vsiu zizhn’* (Moscow: Vagrius, 1998), 100.

115 *Drugoe iskusstvo. Moskva 1956–1988* (Moscow: Galart. Gosudarstvennyi tsentr sovremennogo iskusstva, 2005), 25.

festival's impact in Western Cold War terminology, where it appears as a propagandist spectacle which failed to block the cultural exports of the "free world". For example, the painter Anatolii Brusilovskii shares the idea that the festival's results were unintended.

The so-called Festival of youth in Moscow in 1957, planned as a pompous propagandist spectacle, unexpectedly to the organizers produced completely different results. The Kremlin puppeteers wished to demonstrate their wonderful "socialism" to the world. But the world showed itself to the beaten, dumbfounded "citizens of the country of soviets".¹¹⁶

Even some people who served in the Komsomol and the Party later viewed the festival from this perspective. A Soviet IUS-representative, Nikolai Diko, viewed the Moscow gathering as a "Trojan horse" for the totalitarian system as it spurred the thinking that started to erode the socialist system from within.¹¹⁷ Only Aleksei Adzhubei, Khrushchev's son-in-law and a member of the political elite that had made the festival possible, gave Soviet political leaders credit for the Moscow festival, which in his opinion was a step towards a free society, opening "a wide gate" in the Iron Curtain and showing that the Soviet leadership was no longer frightened of openness.¹¹⁸

The way that Russians have characterized the festival in the post-Cold War context is an illustrative example of how history is moulded by prevailing context, and how historical events take on new meanings in different contexts. Now that Soviet socialism is no more, it is tempting to interpret the festival through a deterministic lens, as something that inevitably led to the Soviet collapse. Viewing the festival as concurrently liberating and empowering, yet also as something that enabled the destruction of the system, helps one to cherish "the positive past". Explaining the decision to hold the festival as a mistake by the political leaders is a way to disassociate oneself from support for the system while still being able to cherish one's positive memories of the political regime.

Despite widespread consensus about its contribution to the downfall of the socialist system, whether concrete or symbolic, the Moscow 1957 World Youth Festival is still widely considered a positive moment in the socialist past. In comparison with the "second Moscow youth festival", the twelfth one, held in 1985, the 1957 festival is *the* festival in both Soviet collective memory and in Western and Russian historiography on the Soviet Union. It is interesting that while both the Thaw and perestroika periods were times of reform and revision, only the

116 Brusilovskii, Anatolii, *Vremia khudozhnikov* (Moscow: "Magazin iskusstva", 1999), 2.

117 Nikolai Diko, unpublished memoir, 2008, 13.

118 Adzhubei, *Krushenie illutsii*, 186–7; Adzhubei, Aleksei, *Pelon hinta* (Helsinki: SN-kirjat, 1988), 111.

1957 festival is remembered with enthusiasm and optimism. While the 1957 Youth Festival has continued to attract a degree of media attention ever since, that of 1985 has been largely forgotten in the post-Soviet press.¹¹⁹ For example, in 2007, the 50th anniversary of the 1957 festival was commemorated with an exhibition at the State Historical Museum, a clutch of articles in central newspapers and the establishment of a restaurant complex in GUM, including *Café festival'naia* (see Figure 20) imitating the visual style of the festival decorations



Fig. 20: Café festival'naia at the GUM department store in Moscow.

Photo: Pia Koivunen.

119 TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 220, d. 1126, ll. 77–84. Sekretariu MGK KPSS tov. Grisinu V.V. 7.5.1985. Spravka o khode podgotovki k VFMS; TsAOPIM, f. 4, op. 220, d. 1126, ll. 65–67. Teksty lozungov i prizyvov dlia khudozhestvenno-politicheskogo oformleniia g. moskvy, ob'ektov i meropriiati XII Vsemirnogo festivalia molodezhi i studentov; Interview with Nikolai Diko, 8 June 2008; *XII Vsemirnyi: den' za den'* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1985). See also Popov, Aleksei, “Uchastie SSSR v organizatsii i provedenii vsemirnykh festivalei molodezhi i studentov”, in *Sovetskaia kul'turnaia diplomatiia v usloviakh Kholodnoi voiny*, Oksana Nagornaia et al. (Moscow: Rosspen, 2018), 121–168.

in 1957, and *Stolovaia no. 57* made in the 1950s style. One explanation for this could be that while in 1957 people still had optimism that the socialist system would produce a better life, by 1985 the belief in the system had already diminished and the second World Youth Festival appeared as merely a repetition of state-orchestrated celebrations that Soviet people were already sick of. Also, in 1985, foreigners and foreign information were not new things, and influences were already available from so many different sources that the festival as a bridge between East and West was not as desirable as it had been in 1957.

Epilogue

Dazzled by the successful spectacle in Moscow, the Komsomol and CPSU leaders saw unlimited potential for taking the next step with the World Youth Festival and exporting it across the East-West divide to the capitalist world. The wind was blowing in their favour at the time, they thought. The launch of Sputnik, the first artificial satellite, just after the festival in October 1957; the signing of a cultural agreement with the United States in 1958; welcoming the American National Exhibition in Moscow in 1959 and Khrushchev's visit to the United States that same year, all indicated that the Soviet Union was on the rise and on the way to catching up with the West.¹ In this atmosphere of optimism, Aleksander Shelepin suggested that the next World Youth Festival be held on capitalist soil, and Khrushchev, who had been pleased with the Moscow gathering overall, agreed. But not all were as hopeful as Khrushchev and Shelepin were. Some WFDY member organizations criticized the plan, since a capitalist location made the festival more costly to participants, and many festivalgoers were keener to visit socialist than capitalist cities.² The Party's chief ideologist, Mikhail Suslov, warned that aggressive antagonism against the festival would be expected if it was arranged in the West.³ The temptation of transferring the Soviet cultural export to the Western side of the geopolitical divide to prove its universal significance was, however, so seductive that criticism and warnings fell on deaf ears.

Shelepin was awarded to the post of the head of KGB in December 1958, some eight months before the next festival, which was to take place in Vienna, Austria. Shelepin's new post in the secret police gave him wider access to scan possible threats against the festival, but the other side of the coin was that the nomination helped the West associate the peace gathering ever more closely to the Soviet party-state apparatus. Western observers speculated that the festival in Vienna was so risky in the eyes of Soviet apparatchiks that they needed the KGB chief to take care of it. They also imagined that Shelepin was hardly promoted to his new post without any earlier experience in the secret police and security matters, thereby inferring about the KGB's clandestine involvement with the youth festivals.⁴ Shelepin had extensive experience with the festivals

¹ Taubman, William, *Khrushchev. The Man and His Era* (London: Free Press, 2003).

² RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 4c, d. 416, ll. 1–28. Informatsiia o khode podgotovki k VII Vsemirnomu festivaliu molodezhi i studentov v Vene.

³ Interview with Nikolai Diko, 8 June 2008.

⁴ *The New York Times*, 22 April 1959, 4, William Jordan, "Soviet Hand seen in Vienna Rally".

and a wide international network, and now access to intelligence as well, but still he somehow failed to take Suslov's warnings seriously and foresee how vigorously anti-communist and non-communist groups would oppose bringing the festival into capitalist soil.

The Vienna (1959) and Helsinki (1962) festivals caused great difficulties for the USSR. Both Austrian and Finnish popular opinion were against holding a Soviet-sponsored festival, the organizers lacked state subsidies, national non-communist papers almost completely ignored the events and Western anti-communist youth and student groups arranged alternative activities, forming a competing counter-festival to showcase the culture of the "free world". Soviet and people's democracies authorities, e.g. Czechoslovakian secret police, managed to gain information on the counter-measures prior to the festivals, learning that opponents would attempt to encourage East European youth to emigrate to the West, disseminate illegal and anti-Soviet literature and attempt to prevent a successful festival by disturbing the public events. They also learned about the plans of Austrian authorities not to issue group visas to socialist delegations in order to make sure that those attempting to defect would have individual travel documents ready in hand.⁵ One of the most active groups in planning anti-festival activities was the Independent service for information on the Vienna Youth Festival (ISI), an organization funded by the CIA and established especially to fight against communism at the Vienna festival. The ISI's anti-festival plans included disseminating around 30,000 books critical of the USSR and communism in different languages. Copies of *Animal Farm*, 1984, *The God That Failed*, and above all the Nobel prize winner Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*, published in Italy in 1958, were distributed to East European youths in kiosks, hotels, museums, movie theatres, and on the streets.⁶ In Helsinki, the CIA organized a special program, or counter-festival, "Young America presents . . .", which offered an exhibition of abstract art and architecture in the National Art museum and two jazz clubs, featuring such avant-garde bands as the Charles Bell Contemporary Quartet. In cooperation with the CIA, Swiss students put together a Swiss centre, presenting life in a "free world country" and offering cash for foreign festival delegates. Local opposition to the festival climaxed in a mass fight in the centre of Helsinki. One evening, tensions

5 RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 4c, d. 416, ll. 1–28. Informatsiia o khode podgotovki k VII Vsemirnomu festivaliu molodezhi i studentov v Vene; Archiv Ministerstva vnitra České republiky, ABS, Zpráva o p̣řipravovaných nep̣ratelských akcích proti Světovému festivalu mládeže ve Vídni.

6 Finn, Peter and Couvée, Petra, *The Zhivago Affair. The Kremlin, the CIA and the Battle over a Forbidden Book* (London: Vintage, 2014), 218–222.

between the festival crowd and local anti-communist youngsters erupted into physical clash which the police finally had to end with tear gas.⁷

Soviet media acknowledged the anti-festival acts in Vienna and Helsinki but belittled their impact. In both cases, Soviet newspapers framed the counter-measures as Cold War tactics that had accrued to the success of the festival and the pro-Soviet forces. They laughed at and pitied the activities of the *antifestivalniki*, which in their view had failed in their attempts to disseminate anti-communist leaflets, demonstrate anti-festival slogans and disturb the festival with a plan of setting loose rats at the opening ceremony. After a few days, citizens of Vienna and Helsinki had begun to embrace the respective celebrations and their foreign visitors, ultimately demonstrating that the World Youth Festival had “continued its victorious path on Earth, inspiring new forces to the crowd of peace fighters”.⁸

After the successful spectacle in Moscow, Vienna brought unfavourable fame to Shelepin abroad, as his KGB post was utilized to prove the festival’s propagandistic nature. Two months after the youth gathering, an even more fatal incident took place, something that would finally put an end to his career. As the head of KGB, Shelepin ordered the assassination of Stepan Bandera, a Ukrainian nationalist leader, in Munich in October 1959. The murder was committed by KGB officer and spy Bogdan Stashinsky, who later defected to West Berlin and confessed to the crime, uncovering its commissioners, Shelepin and Khrushchev, in a trial in Munich in 1961–62. This exposé blemished Shelepin’s reputation abroad and a warrant by West German police blocked his travels to the West for years.⁹ Meanwhile, his political career was in the ascendant at home. In 1962, Shelepin was promoted to first deputy prime minister, and two years later he became a full member of the Presidium. In 1964, when Shelepin together with Leonid Brezhnev and Vladimir Semichastnyi ousted Khrushchev, Shelepin was among the top candidates to become the new Soviet leader. Brezhnev,

7 Krekola Joni and Mikkonen, Simo, “Backlash of the Free World. The US Presence at the World Youth Festival in Helsinki, 1962”, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 36, No. 2 (2011), 240–244; Wilford, Hugh, *The Mighty Wurlitzer. How the CIA Played America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 142–147.

8 *Komsomols’kaia pravda*, 6 August 1959, 1 “Festival’ pobedil!” (editorial); *Komsomols’kaia pravda*, 10 August 1959, “Ogromnyi uspekh”; *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 4 August 1959, 3, “Alles gut, antifestival kaputt”; *Komsomols’kaia pravda*, 6 August 1959, 1, “Festival’ pobedil!” (editorial); *Izvestiia*, 1 August 1959, 3, “Kto rukovodit provokatorami”; *Komsomol’skaia Pravda*, 8 August 1962, 1, “Kiitos Suomi! – Spasibo Finljandiia!”. Komsomol and party reports on the Vienna and Helsinki festivals were still classified in RGASPI in October 2018.

9 Plokhyi, Serhii, *The Man with the Poison Gun. A Cold War Spy Story* (London: Oneworld, 2016), 220, 253, 301–302.

however, won the game and used Shelepin's spoiled reputation abroad to get rid of his main political rival. In 1975, after a long break of traveling, Shelepin, now the leader of the trade unions, accepted an invitation from the British trade union. To his shock, his reputation as a grand designer of political assassinations had not been forgotten. On the streets of London, Shelepin faced 3,000 furious protesters, mainly from the local Ukrainian community, and was duly forced to end his journey earlier than planned. After the trip, Brezhnev could easily remove Shelepin from the politburo, and just like that his political career was over.¹⁰

After Vienna and Helsinki, the World Youth Festival was in crisis, struggling with where to find suitable hosts and how to widen its support. The gatherings in capitalist cities had surely been mistakes; however, the Komsomol still kept trying to widen the festival's geopolitical scope and thus turned its eyes on Africa. The plans to stage the festival first in Algiers, Algeria in 1965 and then in Accra, Ghana in 1966 both failed as the pro-Soviet governments of Ahmed Ben Bella and Kwame Nkrumah were overthrown. After two failed attempts to export the festival to Africa, opportunities to disentangle the youth festival from the wider socialist system finally dried up. The youth gathering was forced back to the socialist sphere, but, unlike Western observers speculated, its story was not over yet, and, unlike a CIA report predicted, the Sofia 1968 gathering did not become "the final face-saving jamboree".¹¹ Five years later, in 1973, Erich Honecker's GDR brought the youth festival to East Berlin in order to support the identity of the newly recognized state, to showcase its blooming socialist society and to get the world spotlight after West German's

10 Mlechin, Leonid, *Shelepin* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 2009), 285, 312–316; Fursenko, Aleksandr and Naftali, Timothy, *Khrushchev's Cold War. The Inside Story of an American Adversary* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006), 537; O'Connor, Kevin, *Intellectuals and Apparatchiks: Russian Nationalism and the Gorbachev Revolution* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), 51, 52, 73; Zezina, M. R., *Sovetskaia khudozhestvennaia intelligentsiia i vlast' v 1950-e–60-e gody* (Moscow: Dialog-MGU, 1999), 254; Plokhyy, *The Man with the Poison Gun*, 220, 253, 301–302.

11 General CIA Records, CIA-RDP79-00927A006500070002-4, July 19, 1968, The Ill-Starred Ninth World Youth Festival. See also Sigmund, Paul E., "Helsinki – the Last Youth Festival?" *Problems of Communism* 9, No. 5, 1962, 58–62. For the festivals in the 1960s, see Slobodian, Quinn, "What Does Democracy Look like (and Why Would Anyone Want to Buy It)? Third World Demands and West German Responses at the 1960s World Youth Festivals", in *Cold War Cultures. Perspectives on Eastern and Western European Societies*, edited by Annette Vowinkel, Marcus M. Payk and Thomas Lindenberger (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 254–275 and Rutter, Nick, "Look Left, Drive Right: Internationalism at the 1968 World Youth Festival", in *Socialist Sixties. Crossing Borders in the Second World*, edited by Anne E. Gorsuch & Diane P. Koenker (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013), 193–212.

Olympic Games in Munich the year before.¹² After Berlin, the USSR and the socialist bloc continued to sponsor cheap politically-flavoured trips abroad for young people, but now less often. The festival concept was still popular and appealing, but the problem was that finding hosts had become increasingly difficult among socialist states, too. Due to the economic problems in many socialist countries, it was difficult to find voluntary hosts that could organize the peace and friendship spectacle without major support from the USSR. An event that required typical mega-event resources and huge amount of state commitment but could not guarantee wide positive media publicity did not appear as a tempting offer. While cities competed for the right to host the Olympic Games, potential and realistic hosts to the World Youth Festival did everything to avoid this dubious honour.

The last three World Youth Festivals before the collapse of the socialist system were largely paid for and taken care by the USSR. Fidel Castro's Cuba, which had wished to host the festival many times before, was completely dependent on the help of Soviet comrades, who shipped tons of fruits, meat and dairy products, fabrics, steel, aluminium, glass and paper to Havana in order to put the 11th festival together in 1978.¹³ The 1985 festival in Moscow, just before Gorbachev's perestroika began its radical transformation of Soviet society, was an only bleak version of the 1957 festival. Before the Cold War came to an end, the last performance of peace and friendship was staged in Pyongyang, North Korea in the epoch-making year of 1989. Unable to utilize the global spotlight of the 1988 Olympic Games awarded to Seoul, Kim Il-Sung decided to respond by putting up his own international spectacle. The thirteenth World Youth Festival was a real extravaganza, with huge investments in a new stadium, but it only worsened the poor economic situation of the country, something which finally led to a famine in the early 1990s.¹⁴ The Pyongyang World Youth Festival was one of the last state-orchestrated spectacles of the collapsing communist empire, which within only a few months saw the fall of the Berlin wall in GDR.

¹² Schiller, Kay, "Communism, youth and sport. The 1973 World Youth Festival in East Berlin", in *Sport and the Transformation of Modern Europe. States, media and markets 1950–2000*, edited by Alan Tomlinson, Christopher Young and Richard Holt (London: Routledge, 2011), 50–66. See also Rossow, Ina, "Rote Ohre, roter Mohn. Sommerheiße Diskussion. Die X. Weltfestspiele der Jugend und Studenten 1973 als Möglichkeit für Vielfältige Begegnungen", in *Fortschritt, Norm und Eigensinn. Erkundungen im Alltag der DDR* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 1999), 251–256.

¹³ RGASPI, M-1c, op. 1c, d. 1113c, ll.1–83.

¹⁴ Armstrong, Charles K., *Tyranny of the Weak. North Korea and the world, 1950–1992* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 259–271.

Somewhat unexpectedly, the World Youth Festival, unlike the socialist system that supported it, outlived the Soviet collapse and is still being held today. The new Russian federation that inherited the Soviet Union's place in many international organizations and institutions did not continue to patronize the youth festival. Rather, it was, along with the WFDY and the IUS, taken over by African and Latin American anti-capitalist leftist youth groups.

The post-Cold War World Youth Festivals took place in Havana, Cuba (1997), Algiers, Algeria (2001), Caracas, Venezuela (2005), Tshwane, South-Africa (2010), and Quito, Ecuador (2013), but without significant global publicity. The latest one was organized by Putin's Russia in Sochi in October 2017. The centennial of the October revolution, 70th anniversary of the World Youth Festival and the 60th anniversary of the 1957 Moscow gathering offered prospects for building the Sochi festival on its historical legacies, but instead, many communists and WFDY activists realized that a trade fair of the sponsoring Russian companies had taken over the space from the original agenda and the traditional program.¹⁵ In terms of publicity, the Sochi festival was overshadowed by the Sochi Winter Olympics 2014 and the FIFA world cup 2018. The once grandiose spectacle that the Western governments so vigorously battled against in the Cold War years went largely unnoticed, with hardly any publicity in the global media, on its 70th birthday.

The Soviet Union managed to create a unique cultural product, with all the potential to engage in the battle for the hearts and minds of young people. Unlike the Spartakiads or the Intervision Song Contest, the World Youth Festival was not a socialist version of well-known international events, but an original cultural concept. Especially during the first postwar decades, its peace agenda and programme specially tailored for young people spoke to the generation that had personally lived through the war in their childhood or youth. Particularly tempting was the Moscow 1957 festival, which managed to demonstrate a new face of the country to foreign audiences and opened Soviet society to contact with the wider world.

But even if the concept was appealing, it did not bring the expected outcomes for the USSR in the end. Soviet involvement with the World Youth Festivals

¹⁵ *The Calvert Journal*, 1 November 2017, Ball, Tom, "Red Sochi: Why did 10,000 communists turn up to a trade fair on the Russian Riviera"; Koivunen, Pia, "International events in the service of cultural statecraft. The Sochi Olympics and the World Festival of Youth and Students", in *Russia's Cultural Statecraft*, edited by Tuomas Forsberg and Sirke Mäkinen (London: Routledge, 2021), 184–205.

demonstrates that structural problems within the Soviet party-state bureaucracy made it difficult to develop the youth festival so that it would become a genuinely global institution. As we have seen, Soviet propaganda machinery was fully effective in gathering information on the moods among young foreigners and on developments taking place in youth and student organizations abroad. Thousands of pages of detailed observation would have offered significant resources for refining the World Youth Festival to best fit the tastes of its potential participants. Efficient data collection did not, however, translate into efficient propaganda in terms of content adjustment for the target audience. This resulted in Komsomol's inability to extend the influence of the World Federation of Democratic Youth, the International Union of Students and the World Youth Festival beyond leftist circles in the West. In fact, it could not shift the responsibilities of organizing and financing the festival even within the socialist world and communist youth organizations. Becoming a youth tourist agency sponsoring cheap package tours for communists and sympathizers to socialist capitals had not been the initial goal of Moscow. These findings support Rósa Magnúsdóttir's argument about the Soviet propaganda machinery's inability to tailor the content of cultural propaganda to its target audiences in the USA and Western Europe, and David Brandenberger's conclusion that the Soviet propaganda machinery started to flounder already in the late 1930s and was incapable of reaching the Soviet populace with its propaganda.¹⁶ If the Soviet political establishment could not convince its own people of the supremacy of the socialist system, how could it succeed in selling it to the others?

The Soviet leadership's view of the world was based on a Marxist-Leninist vision, in which the future would belong to communism. Khrushchev in particular embraced this idea, famously proclaiming in 1959 that the socialist system would eventually defeat the Capitalist one. The paradox lies in that while the USSR along with its socialist little brothers attempted to create an alternative to the Western world based on market economy, liberalism and human rights, they gradually began to integrate into the US-led global order they were so hard trying to beat. At the same time as the West managed to damp down Soviet efforts to make an impact in the cultural Cold War, the USSR did not

¹⁶ Magnúsdóttir, Rósa, *Enemy Number One. The United States of America in Soviet Ideology and Propaganda, 1945–1959* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Brandenberger, David, *Propaganda State in Crisis. Soviet Ideology, Indoctrination, and Terror under Stalin, 1927–1941* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 2, 256–258.

manage to block its citizens' attraction to Western consumer and popular culture.¹⁷ The same happened with international sporting and cultural events, where the USSR joined the Olympic movement in the 1940s and finally won the right to host the Olympic Games in Moscow in 1980.¹⁸ The Soviet attempt at making a global peace and youth movement failed, whereas the Olympics, a product of “the capitalist enemies”, managed to transcend the Cold War dichotomy.

The inability to cross the systemic divide with the World Youth Festival, or any other Soviet-invented international event or celebration, was one of the shortcomings of the Soviet Union in the cultural Cold War. To apply David Caute's term, the World Youth Festival failed to become “an agreed field of play” for the cultural Olympics between the Cold War enemies. While the “official West” was ready to combat the Soviet Union and other socialist countries in the Olympic Games, at World's Fairs and cultural competitions such as the Cannes Film Festival or the Tchaikovsky Competition, it refused to attend the youth festival, which would have offered all of these events in one package.

The overtly political nature of the event, underlined in slogans and rhetoric deriving from Soviet foreign policy doctrines, made it difficult to sell the product beyond the socialist world. The excessively politicized framework of the festival was constantly criticized not only by Western opponents but also by the leaders and member organizations of the WFDY and the IUS. The politicized nature of organized youth activities was, however, embedded in the Soviet state-party system, making it very difficult to reform it. Moreover, even though the festival provided a number of cultural forms that were rooted in Western cultural traditions, it simultaneously manifested Soviet cultural conceptions and proclaimed Soviet political messages, providing the Western propagandists, cultural diplomats and journalists all the means to frame the festivals as propaganda spectacles and treat them as a foreign propaganda mission. While the Soviet system was capable of training top artists and winning individual cultural battles against the West, it could not create cultural events that the West needed to take seriously, and thus it had limited opportunity to compete. Similar thinking can be applied to the Soviet project more broadly. While the Soviet socialist system succeeded in besting its Cold War rivals in some specific fields such as sports and high culture, while it seriously challenged the West in the

17 Tomoff, Kiril, *Virtuosi Abroad. Soviet Music and Imperial Competition during the Early Cold War, 1945–1958* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); Sanchez-Sibony, Oscar, *Red Globalization. The Political Economy of the Soviet Cold War from Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2014).

18 Parks, Jenifer, *Red Sport, Red Tape. The Olympic Games, the Soviet Sports Bureaucracy, and the Cold War* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017).

space race, and while its military power posed a serious threat, the Soviet project ultimately failed in its most important aim: to create an alternative societal system that would outlive capitalism.

Whereas Soviet cultural diplomacy did not, in the end, achieve its main aims through the World Youth Festival, young people's experiences and memories demonstrate that these multinational peace gatherings became Cold War hubs, bridging not only the East and the West, but also the North and the South. Young people embraced the festival, which opened the world in miniature before their eyes. Alongside the internationalism designed by the Kremlin bureaucrats, participants encountered other forms of international and transnational communication. They challenged social norms and dogmatic rituals, learned the existence of a variety of communisms, believed in peace, were disappointed when confronted with socialism in reality, and found their own ways to perform peace and friendship. When the British songwriter Leon Rosselson, more than 60 years back, reminisced on his trips to Bucharest, Warsaw, and Moscow, he emphasized the agency of young people and the platform that the World Youth Festivals offered to youth.

I still think the festivals were a good idea. The Cold War warriors in Britain were totally hostile and believed they were just a propaganda exercise on behalf of the Soviet Union. Maybe that's what they were intended to be. But that's not how I experienced them. Young people are not robots. When they gather together in their thousands, across the political divide, it is impossible to control how they communicate, where they go, who they meet, what ideas they exchange. At all three festivals, but especially in Moscow, I would say that what happened was largely out of the control of the Communist Party apparatchiks.¹⁹

At the time, Rosselson's story would have pleased neither Soviet authorities nor British conservative politicians, who wished to see their youth live up to their expectations for the future. The significance of Rosselson's and other festival-goers' memories lies in the fact that they challenge the aims of macro-level political projects and widen our understanding of cultural exchange: how ordinary people perceived, experienced and felt about cross-cultural and transsystemic interactions in the Cold War world.

¹⁹ Interview with Leon Rosselson, 13 April 2018.

Abbreviations

AKSM	Anti-fashistskii komitet sovetsoi molodezhi (<i>Anti-Fascist Committee of Soviet Youth</i>)
CC	Central Committee (of the CPSU or of the Komsomol)
COSEC	Coordinating Secretariat
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
d.	Delo (<i>File</i>)
dok.	Dokument (<i>Document</i>)
GDR	German Democratic Republic
f.	Fond (<i>Holding</i>)
FDJ	Freie Deutsche Jugend (<i>Free German Youth</i>)
FISU	Fédération Internationale du Sport Universitaire (<i>International Federation of University Sport</i>)
GARF	Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi federatsii (<i>State Archive of Russian Federation</i>)
gorkom	Gorodskoi komitet (<i>City Committee</i>)
IPC	International Preparatory Committee
ISC/COSEC	International Student Conference/Coordinating Secretariat
ISC	International Student Conference
IUS	International Union of Students
IUSY	International Union of Socialist Youth
KansA	Kansan arkisto (<i>People's Archive</i>)
KGB	Komitet gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti (<i>Committee for State Security</i>)
KIM	Kommunisticheskii internatsional molodezhi (<i>Communist Youth International</i>)
KMO	Komitet molodezhnykh organizatsii (<i>Committee of Youth Organizations</i>)
Kominform	Kommunisticheskoe informatsionnoe biuro (<i>Communist Information Bureau</i>)
Komintern	Kommunisticheskii internatsional (<i>Communist International</i>)
Komsomol	Kommunisticheskii soiuз molodezhi (<i>Communist Youth League</i>)
KPSS	Kommunisticheskaiia partiia sovetsoego soiuza (<i>Communist Party of the Soviet Union</i>)
l./ll.	List/listy (<i>Sheet/sheets</i>)
MGK	Moskovskii gorodskoi komitet (<i>Moscow City Committee</i>)
MGU	Moskovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet (<i>Moscow State University</i>)
MID	Ministerstvo inostrannykh del (<i>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</i>)
Mossovet	Moskovskii gorodskoi sovet deputatov (<i>Moscow City Council of Deputies</i>)
MPK	Mezhdunarodnyi podgotovitel'nyi komitet (<i>International Preparatory Committee</i>)
MSS	Mezhdunarodnyi soiuз studentov (<i>International Union of Students</i>)
MVD	Ministerstvo vnutrennykh del (<i>Ministry of Internal Affairs</i>)
ob.	Oborot (<i>Reverse</i>)
op.	Opis' (<i>Register</i>)
OSA	Open Society Archive
NSA	National Student Association (USA)
NUS	National Union of Students (UK)
per.	Perechen' (<i>List</i>)

PSN	Partido Socialista Nicaragüense (<i>Nicaraguan Socialist Party</i>)
RGALI	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva (<i>Russian State Archive of Literature and Art</i>)
RGANI	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishii istorii (<i>Russian State Archive of Contemporary History</i>)
RGASPI	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (<i>Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History</i>)
SDNL	Suomen demokraattinen nuorisoliitto (<i>Finnish Democratic Youth League</i>)
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschland (<i>Socialist Unity Party of Germany</i>)
SKK	Sovetskaia kontrol'naia komissii (<i>Soviet Control Commission</i>)
Sovinform	Sovetskoe informatsionnoe biuro (<i>Soviet Information Bureau</i>)
SPK	Sovetskii podgotovitel'nyi komitet (<i>Soviet Preparatory Committee</i>)
SSSR	Soiuz sovetskikh sotsialisticheskikh respublik (<i>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics</i>)
TsAOPIM	Tsentral'nyi arkhiv obshchestvenno-politicheskoi istorii Moskvyy (<i>Central Archive of Socio-Political History of Moscow</i>)
TsAE i ADM	Tsentral'nyi arkhiv elektronnykh i audiovizual'nykh dokumentov Moskvyy (<i>Central Archive of Electronic and Audio-Visual Documents of Moscow</i>)
TsDRI	Tsentral'nyi dom rabotnikov iskusstva (<i>The Central House of Workers of Art</i>)
TsK	Tsentral'nyi komitet (<i>Central Committee of the VKP(b)/CPSU or the Komsomol</i>)
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VDNKh	Vystavka dostizhenii narodnogo khoziaistva (<i>Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy</i>)
VFDM	Vsemirnaia federatsiia demokraticeskoi molodezhi (<i>World Federation of Democratic Youth</i>)
VFMS	Vsemirnyi festival' molodezhi i studentov (<i>World Festival of Youth and Students</i>)
VKP(b)	Vsesoiuznaia kommunisticheskaia partiia (bolshevikov) (<i>All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)</i>)
VLKSM	Vsesoiuznyi Leninskii kommunisticheskii soiuz molodezhi (<i>All-Union Leninist Communist Youth League, the Komsomol</i>)
VOKS	Vsesoiuznoe obshchestvo kul'turnykh sviazei s zagranitseiu (<i>All-union Society of Cultural Relations abroad</i>)
VSEHB	Vsesoiuznyi sovet evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov (<i>All-union Soviet of Evangelical Christian Baptized</i>)
WAY	World Assembly of Youth
WFDY	World Federation of Democratic Youth
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
WIDF	Women's International Democratic Federation
WPC	World Peace Council
WYC	World Youth Council
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

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