Interfacing the Soviet Bloc: Recent Literature and New Paradigms

Patryk Babiracki

Patryk BABIRACKI

INTERFACING THE SOVIET BLOC:
RECENT LITERATURE AND NEW PARADIGMS*

Introduction

Historians have given considerable attention to the relationship between space, travel, and power for some time now. Perhaps one of the more interesting recent developments has been the movement of thinking about these issues from the margins of history closer to the mainstream. Scholarship on the post–World War II Soviet Union and Eastern Europe has yet to find a comfortable fit within this new canon – and there are good reasons for this hesitant start. The Marxian "specter of communism" may not have needed a passport or special clearance to haunt all corners of Europe in the mid-nineteenth century, but by the middle of the twentieth century most people, objects, and ideas inhabiting the Soviet bloc certainly did. "There are boundaries one must not cross," the Polish communist General Wojciech Jaruzelski told the striking Solidarity activists in July 1981, as he warned

independent trade union leaders against trying to take over power in the country.[1] According to anecdotal evidence, the more cynical observers repeated this line as a humorous commentary on the difficulties involved in travel abroad under communism.

Indeed, during the Cold War, the communist party-states emerged as the enforcers and beneficiaries of the increasing isolation between citizens. Individuals who wished to stay in touch via channels other than those sanctioned by the state found themselves transgressing moral and legal boundaries. This was true, above all, of international contacts. The border between East and West earned the infamous nickname "the Iron Curtain" precisely because it impeded traffic of goods, people, and ideas between the communist camp and the outside world on an unprecedented scale. Mobility within the Soviet bloc was likewise severely restricted, particularly during the first decade after World War II.

Up to 1956, commentators tended to focus on the scope and scale of oppression and uniformity behind the "Iron Curtain," as did later scholars working on the immediate postwar decade.[2] The combined momentum of events in the Soviet bloc and in researchers' home countries in the West spurred a wave of reassessments.[3] After 1956 in Poland and Hungary,

---

[1] General Jaruzelski delivered his speech during the ninth extraordinary Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party in Warsaw, which took place on July 14–20, 1981. Wojciech Jaruzelski. Przemówienia, 1981–1982. Warsaw, 1983. P. 126.

[2] Hugh Seton-Watson. The East European Revolution. New York, 1956. 2d ed; Czesław Miłosz. The Captive Mind / Trans. Jane Zielonko. New York, 1953; Dennis Healey. (Ed.). The Curtain Falls: the Story of the Socialists in Eastern Europe. London, 1951; P. D. Ostović. The Truth About Yugoslavia. New York, 1952; Dana Adams Schmidt. Anatomy of a Satellite. Boston, 1952; Vernon Bartlett. East of the Iron Curtain. London, 1949; George N. Shuster. Religion Behind the Iron Curtain. New York, 1954; Siegfried Kracauer and Paul Berkman. Satellite Mentality: Political Attitudes and Propaganda Susceptibilities of Non-Communists in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia. New York, 1956; Samuel L. Sharp. New Constitutions in the Soviet Sphere. Washington, DC, 1950.

[3] David C. Engerman. The Ironies of the Iron Curtain: The Cold War and the Rise of Russian Studies in the United States // Cahiers du Monde Russe. 2004. Vol. 45. Pp. 465-496; Abbot Gleason. Totalitarianism: An Inner History of the Cold War; for an interesting discussion, see Revisionism in Retrospect // Slavic Review. 2008. Vol. 67. Pp. 682-724; and the online supplement at: http://www.slavicreview.illinois.edu/discussion/; Andrzej Nowak. A "Polish Connection" in American Sovietology, or The Old Homeland Enmities in the New Host Country Humanities // Ab Imperio. 2007. Vol. 4. Pp. 237-259; Mark von Hagen. Empires, Borderlands, and Diasporas: Eurasia as Anti-Paradigm for the Post-Soviet Era // The American Historical Review. 2004. Vol. 109. Pp. 445-468; Nigel Gould-Davies. The Logic of Soviet Cultural Diplomacy // Diplomatic History. 2003. Vol. 27. P. 195.

and through the American 1960s, "liberal," resisting, or not quite passive subjects became visible actors in the literature on East European communisms.[4] Zbigniew Brzezinski's concern with stability in the Soviet bloc (as opposed to oppression) was exceptional by Cold War standards. Still, it was trumped by the emphasis on a system of top-down controls and practical concern with the undoing of communism.[5] Emotive concepts like "rape," "captivity," "empire," "Sovietization," and references to George Orwell's work continued to shape the popular opinion and sometimes even the imagination of the Western academic community as long as the communist regimes remained in place.[6] In more or less dramatic fashion,

[4] Robert Finley Delaney (Ed.). This Is Communist Hungary. Chicago, 1958; Leslie Balogh Bain. The Reluctant Satellites: An Eyewitness Report on East Europe and the Hungarian Revolution. New York, 1960; C. A. Macartney and A. W. Palmer. Independent Eastern Europe: A History. London, New York, 1962; Nish Jamgotch, Jr. Soviet – East European Dialogue: International Relations of a New Type? Stanford, 1968; James F. Brown. The New Eastern Europe: The Khrushchev Era and After. New York, 1966; Jack Raymond. New Era in Eastern Europe? New York, 1957; Hansjakob Stehle. The Independent Satellite: Society and Politics in Poland since 1945 / Trans. D. J. S. Thompson. New York, 1965; Irwin Isenberg (Ed.). Ferment in Eastern Europe. New York, 1965; Ghita Ionescu. The Breakup of the Soviet Empire in Eastern Europe. Baltimore, 1965. A notable exception was François Fejtö's. Behind the Rape of Hungary. New York, 1957, an incisive analysis of the ways in which the Hungarian rebels organized themselves.

[5] Zbigniew Brzezinski. The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict. Cambridge, 1960; for another treatment in which "stability" plays an important role (though without the USSR), see also, Richard Voyles Burks. The Dynamics of Communism in Eastern Europe. Princeton, 1961.

[6] George Kennan's "long telegram" to the secretary of state from February 22, 1946, contains multiple references to Soviet "penetration;" he also compares the USSR to a "rapist." See http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm. See also Frank Costigliola. Unceasing Pressure for Penetration: Gender, Pathology and Emotion in George Kennan's Formation of the Cold War // The Journal of American History. 1987. Vol. 83. Pp. 1309-1339; The Sovietization of Culture in Poland; collective work. Paris, 1953; Richard F. Staar. Poland 1944–1962: The Sovietization of a Captive People. New Orleans, 1962. On the term's Soviet usage after 1917, see Tarik Cyril Amar. Sovietization as a Civilizing Mission in the West // Balázs Apor et al. (Eds.). The Sovietization of Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on the Postwar Period. Washington, DC, 2008. Pp. 29-46; Delaney (Ed.). This Is Communist Hungary; Staar. Poland 1944–1962; Nicholas Halasz. In the Shadow of Russia. New York, 1959; Hawthorne Daniel. The Ordeal of the Captive Nations. Garden City, 1958; Jan Librach. The Rise of the Soviet Empire: A Study of Soviet Foreign Policy. New York, 1964; Seton-Watson. The New Imperialism; Alexandre Cretzianu (Ed.). Captive Rumania: A Decade of Soviet Rule. New York, 1956; Seymour Freidin. The Forgotten People. New York, 1962; Hélène Carrère d'Encausse. Big Brother: the Soviet Union and Soviet Europe / trans. George Holoch. New York, London, 1987. The original French version was published in 1983.

they also reinforced the notion – a well-grounded one, in my view – that the tension between freedom and oppression was key to understanding the relationship between the USSR and Eastern Europe. The revolutions of 1989 and subsequent collapse of the Soviet system further helped to consolidate the binary categories.

The thrust of this analytic focus had two mutually reinforcing consequences. On the one hand, it underscored a stark contrast between Soviet (or communist) perpetrators who forced their East European victims into their seemingly unnatural state of subjection. On the other hand, it created a peculiar map of the Soviet bloc as an isolated island of unfreedom. The states included in the "bloc" spanned areas between West Germany and the Soviet Pacific Ocean, the Baltic Sea and Yugoslavia, and the "international relations" focus of most analyses identified the Soviet agency largely with the Kremlin.[7] Implicitly, it was defined by the absence of traits usually associated with liberal democratic systems rather than by things that individuals living under communism did, shared, and experienced. It was a map on which Eastern Europe had triple status: that of an agglomerate of atomized states, of a victim, and also of a moral battleground between the vilified Soviet forces and the West, which claimed much of Latin Europe as its own. Most of the travelers in this story – and on this imaginary map – were agents of Soviet westward expansion, notably the Red Army, Soviet advisers, and East European communists, as well as their inanimate fellow-travelers, disguised as policy recommendations from Moscow, propaganda materials, or artistic inspiration from the country of "socialist realism." The reluctant characters who traveled in the opposite direction included political prisoners sentenced to death or to hard labor in the Far East – and that, too, very rarely after the Stalin era. The Soviet bloc seemed like a container akin to an hourglass: it was walled off from the rest of the world, and, although

---

[7] Literature on the subject often implicitly follows the definition of "the Soviet bloc" as "those states of Eastern Europe that acknowledge the primacy of the Soviet Union's leadership in foreign policy and in the basic tenets of their commonly held ideology." See: Soviet Bloc // Barbara P. McCrea et. al. The Soviet and East European Political Dictionary. Santa Barbara, 1984. Membership in the "Soviet Bloc," as used formally, varied: after the war it included Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia but by the late 1960s neither Yugoslavia nor Albania belonged to it. Robert L. Hutchings remarked on the vagueness of the term "the Soviet bloc" and its traditional connotations: first, it is closely bound up with the notion of "Sovietization"; second, its "very nature" excludes the spontaneous, voluntary integrative activity typical of Western institutions. Robert L. Hutchings. Soviet–East European Relations: Consolidation and Conflict. Madison, 1983. P. 6.

integrated within, influence, like sand, seeped downward from Moscow, and rarely the other way around.[8]

It is quite unlikely that "traditional transnationalism" – if it is not too early to use this phrase – will ever define the historiography of the Soviet bloc in quite the same way that it has changed historical writing about nineteenth-century Britain, Germany, or America. Yet it also seems increasingly difficult to understand "the other Europe" and its Soviet patron during the Cold War without thinking about networks of people, flows, circulations, and exchanges that functioned out of alignment with the official channels of repression or affirmation, or the boundaries of national states.[9] The traditional ways of conceptualizing East European communisms can no longer fully accommodate the emerging empirical research dealing with various aspects of travel and exchange within and across the Soviet bloc.

One useful way of viewing the Soviet bloc, other than "an hourglass," is to compare it to a composite "interface." The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the word as "a means or place of interaction between two systems, organizations, etc.," and as "a meeting point between two parties, systems, or disciplines." The verb "to interface" sets no limits on the number of points of contact.[10] An interface is a device that connects to others and yet preserves

---

[8] Here, the exception to that rule was the collection of essays edited by Roman Szporluk: The Influence of East Europe and the Soviet West on the USSR. New York, 1970. As Amir Weiner remarked three decades later, Szporluk's example had not been followed. Amir Weiner. Empires Pay a Visit: Gulag Returnees, East European Rebellions, and Soviet Frontier Politics // Journal of Modern History. 2006. Vol. 78. P. 333. fn. 1. See also a special issue of Cahiers du Monde Russe. 2006. Vol. 12. No. 1. One of the issue's chief themes is the complicating impact of the increased interactions with the outside world on the Soviet state–society relations. See also Patryk Babiracki. Enemy to Friend: Soviet Union, Poland, and the Refashioning of the Imperial Identity in *Pravda*, 1943–47 // Rachel Beatty Riedl et.al. (Eds.). Bridging Disciplines, Spanning the World: Approaches to Inequality, Identity, and Institutions. Princeton, 2006. Pp.132-154; idem. Imperial Heresies: Polish Students in the Soviet Union, 1948–1957 // Ab Imperio. 2007. No. 4. Pp. 199-236; Austin Jersild. The Soviet State as Imperial Scavenger: "Catch Up and Surpass" in the Transnational Socialist Bloc, 1950–1960 // American Historical Review. 2011. Vol. 116. Pp. 109-132; Michael David-Fox. The Iron Curtain as Semi-Permeable Membrane: Origins and Demise of the Stalinist Superiority Complex // Patryk Babiracki and Kenyon Zimmer (Eds.). Cold War Crossings: International Travel and Exchange Across the Soviet Bloc, 1940s–1960s. College Station, forthcoming in 2013.

[9] For an illuminating discussion of problems involved in defining "transnational history," see AHR Conversation: On Transnational History // American Historical Review. 2006. Vol. 111. Pp. 1441-1464.

[10] Interface // Oxford English Dictionary. 2d ed. www.oed.com (last time consulted on September 15, 2011).

its own physical integrity. And indeed, the former Soviet bloc was a web of multiple, overlapping spaces, geographies, political and intellectual projects, and identities rather than a clearly circumscribed and isolated system of state communisms. Now the Soviet bloc can be seen as a nexus of competing systems of power that often crisscross the formal political boundaries; power, more than before, appears to result from a good fit, compatibility, or "synergy" between these various systems and networks and different actors' ability to compromise. Concerned with problems of mobility, compatibility, and stability of networks, the new analytic framework complements the hitherto dominant pattern of interpretation without necessarily invalidating all its premises or usefulness in answering important questions.[11]

Recent scholarship suggests that the Soviet bloc was far more than a military–political–economic alliance. Instead, it can be understood as an imperial space where a distinct set of twentieth-century modernities clashed; where a defined set of Soviet-controlled institutions produced a unique set of human identities and experiences; and finally, an imperial space in which power and identities were mediated and contested by transfers and exchanges, but not necessarily defined by their substance or modus operandi. I hope to show, in this article, that a broader historical understanding can be found by examining some recent works on the Soviet bloc's western stretches during the Cold War**.** "Sovietization" was the defining process for late twentieth-century Eastern Europe, but it was accompanied by other forms of cross-border interaction. Integrating various national historiographies of Soviet-style communism into a shared narrative of empire and modernity underscores interactions and exchanges within the Soviet bloc as well as between it and the outside world. On a macro level, it helps us locate the experience of Cold War communism within the larger history of the region's empires.

The End of Communism and the Search for Synergy

Recently, a new generation of scholars has begun to explore the foreign dimensions of the communist projects beyond the level of top policy, while historians of the Cold War and high diplomacy have turned their attention

---

[11] I understand a "paradigm" to be a pattern of interpretation that reflects a set of underlying questions and assumptions, but does not by principle exclude alternative analytic frameworks, which may well serve to address different problems. See Odd Arne Westad. The New International History of the Cold War: Three (Possible) Paradigms // Diplomatic History. 2000. Vol. 24. Pp. 551-552.

to the importance of culture, meaning, and individual perceptions in shaping international relations.[12] The new scholarship built on Brzezinski's work, which emphasized both the importance of top-down controls and diversity in the region. But it challenges his overarching model by showing that key sectors of society – workers, intellectuals, youth, and women, for example – were able to negotiate the terms of mutual coexistence with their states.[13] However, in these pioneering works of social and cultural history, themes of travel and exchange had marginal significance. For those authors who sought to debunk the officially propagated myth about East European friendship with Moscow, travels and exchanges continued to be constructed primarily as various dimensions of unwelcome and illegitimate Soviet interventions into East European societies and cultures.[14]

---

[12] John L. Gaddis. The New Cold War History // http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/AD_Issues/amdipl_9/gaddis_coldwar.html (last consulted on August 19, 2011). Akira Iriye. Culture and International History // Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson (Eds.). Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations. Cambridge, 1991. Pp. 214-225; Gould-Davies. The Logic; Patrick Major and Rana Mitter. East Is East and West Is West? Towards a Comparative Socio-Cultural History of the Cold War // Cold War History. 2003. Vol. 4. Pp. 1-22.

[13] For a representative sample covering different periods and states, see: Padraic Kenney. Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists. Ithaca, NY, 1996; John Connelly. Captive University: The Sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish Higher Education, 1945–1956. Chapel Hill, 2000; Mark Pittaway. Workers, Management and the State in Socialist Hungary: Shaping and Re-Shaping the Socialist Factory regime in Újpest and Tatabánya, 1950–1956 // Christiane Brenner and Peter Heumos (Eds.). Sozialgeschichtliche Kommunismusforschung. Tschechoslowakei, Polen, Ungarn und DDR 1948–1968. Munich, 2005. Pp. 105-131; on youth see Katherine Lebow. Socialist Leisure in Time and Space: Hooliganism and Bikiniarstwo in Nowa Huta, 1949–1956 // Brenner and Heumos (Eds.). Sozialgeschichtliche Kommunismusforschung. Pp. 527-542. Still, for many Western historians concerned primarily with East Central Europe, the years 1989–1991 mattered chiefly as a long-awaited happy ending to the nationalist or liberal narrative about the oppression and struggle for freedom of the region's people. See, for example, Joseph Rothschild and Nancy Wingfield. Return to Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe Since World War II. 3d ed. New York, 2000. For interdisciplinary and popular-scientific perspectives, see, for example, Marju Lauristin et al. Return to the Western World: Cultural and Political Perspectives on the Estonian Post-Communist Transition. Tõravere, 1997; Brown. Surge to Freedom: The End of Communist Rule in Eastern Europe. Durham and London, 1991. Paraphrasing Anna Krylova, once could say that two years before "the triumph of the resisting human spirit" defined the Western scholarship on the USSR in 1991, it dominated the body of works on Eastern Europe. Anna Krylova. The Tenacious Liberal Subject in Soviet Studies // Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History. 2000. Vol. 1. No. 1. P. 141.

[14] For example, Andrzej Skrzypek. Mechanizmy uzależnienia: stosunki polsko-radzieckie, 1944–1957. Pułtusk, 2002 is reflective of the trend; for a more recent treatment, see also

Consider the triangle of the USSR, Eastern Europe, and the West: who traveled, when and where during this revolutionary period? In the last years of the war and the immediate postwar years, those who traveled were the hoards of people affected by the great catastrophe. Millions of Red Army soldiers saw Europe for the first time, many of them from the depths of the USSR; some stayed for good, others returned home. Entire populations moved across state borders (which were often quite fluid during the war) in the area that encompassed the future Soviet bloc. They included hundreds of thousands of voluntary refugees, millions of forced deportees, émigrés, migrants, displaced persons, and settlers as well as victims of postwar ethnic cleansing.[15] Conversely, millions of people from the Baltic states and former Polish territories had to assume Soviet citizenship without ever having to travel. The upsurge of academic interest in problems of displacement, migration, and refugeedom in the region partially reflects our present

Konrad Rokicki and Sławomir Stępień (Eds.). W objęciach wielkiego brata. Sowieci w Polsce 1944–1993. Warsaw, 2009.

[15] Jan Gross noted that from 1943 through 1948, 20 million Europeans were "on the move;" as regards East Central Europe: "To fill the space vacated by 2.5 million Sudeten Germans, 1.8 million Czechs and Slovaks were transferred into the area. In Poland four million settlers were sent to the 'Western' lands. In Germany a steady westward flow of refugees and drained the Soviet zone of the most qualified manpower. In 1950 almost one third of the population of the Bundesrepublik had not been born in the territorial area of the existing state." See Social Consequences of War: Preliminaries to the Study of Imposition of Communist Régimes in East Central Europe // East European Politics and Societies. 1989. Vol. 3. Pp. 203-204. On Soviet internal and international forced migrations, see Pavel Polyan. Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR / Trans. Anna Yastrzembska. Budapest, New York, 2004. Of note are the following: In 1945–1946, 112,480 ethnic Germans were sent to the USSR from Southeastern Europe to perform forced reparation labor in major industrial centers and another 148,540 arrived from Germany (259-278, 363-364). Some 5.2 million Soviet citizens had been repatriated from the former German Reich (they included 1.8 million former POWs and 3.4 million "Ostarbeiter"). See Nick Baron. Remaking Soviet Society: the Filtration of Returnees from Nazi Germany, 1944–1949 // Peter Gatrell and Nick Baron (Eds.). Warlands: Population Resettlement and State Reconstruction in the Soviet-East European Borderlands, 1945–1950. New York, 2009. P. 92. Nearly half a million Ukrainians were resettled to Ukraine and 787,675 ethnic Poles moved to Poland as a result of the Polish-Soviet population exchanges in 1944–1947. See Kateryna Stadnik. Ukrainian–Polish Population Transfers, 1944–1946: Moving in Opposite Directions // Gatrell and Baron (Eds.). Warlands. Esp. Pp. 177-178; also Timothy Snyder. "To Resolve the Ukrainian Problem Once and For All": The Ethnic Cleansing of Ukrainians in Poland, 1943–1947 // Journal of Cold War Studies. 1999. Vol. 1. Pp. 86-120; essays in Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak (Eds.). Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944–1948. Cambridge, UK, 2001.

preoccupation with travel and connectedness. On the other hand, there is a new tendency to play down the national dimensions of World War II more generally – in the extreme version, to place it in a line of victims' and perpetrators' shared experiences in twentieth-century mass murder and turmoil.[16] Both approaches help set the stage for thinking about the Soviet bloc as an interface. Yet despite the merging of wartime and postwar histories of the region, few studies probe the impact of the transnational dimension of pre–Cold War Eastern Europe in the Soviet bloc.[17]

In 1944–1945, dismantled factories and private property traveled from Central Europe to the USSR, sometimes as legitimate German "trophies," but often as a result of robbery from local populations and from states nonaligned with Axis powers. As a consequence of bilateral treaties**,** raw materials left Eastern Europe for the USSR (as was the case with Polish coal – at vastly "discounted" prices). Then there were all the agents of Soviet expansion: each fledgling communist state would host dozens of Soviet diplomats, hundreds of "advisers" to key ministries and institutions, including the military.[18] In 1948–1954 visitors from the Soviet Union to Eastern Europe included hundreds of professors, scientists, journalists, cultural figures, and political activists. All of them were closely guarded by the security police. Handshakes, pictures, and performances notwithstanding, these individuals also sent information to various institutions in Moscow. The source of cultural traffic at the time was by and large the USSR. Human traffic in the opposite direction included arrested members of the anticommunist opposition (in the immediate postwar years), as well as official delegations of politicians, cultural elites, and organizers. Among the most numerous East European travelers to the USSR were hundreds of students and even farmers sent to learn about Marxism, engineering, and collective farms in the most advanced country in the world.[19]

East–West contacts existed more or less openly until 1947–1948. Especially in Eastern Europe, several Western governments (notably the United

---

[16] Gatrell and Baron (Eds.). Warlands; Timothy Snyder. Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin. New York, 2010.

[17] In "The Social Consequences of War" Gross was concerned with the fit between wartime social transformations and the postwar regime changes in Eastern Europe.

[18] Albina F. Noskova. Sovetskie sovetniki v strankah Tsentral'noi i Vostochnoi Evropy, 1945–53 gg. // Voprosy istorii. 1998. No. 1. Pp. 104-113; Mirosław Golon. Ambasadarowie Stalina – radzieccy dyplomaci w Europe Środkowo-Wschodniej i na Bałkanach w latach 1944–1953 // Czasy Nowożytne. 2005. Vol. XVIII-XIX. Pp. 129-178.

[19] Babiracki. Imperial Heresies; Benjamin Tromly. Brother or "Other"? East European Students in Postwar Soviet Higher Education. Unpublished manuscript.

States and Great Britain) disseminated news and propaganda via embassies, radio, press, and government-related organizations such as the British Council. International relief organizations such as the UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) continued to represent the West in the new communist states throughout 1946–1947. They stayed out of politics in order to get anything done at all, but had to leave by the late 1940s nonetheless.[20] Four youth festivals took place in major East European capitals between 1947 and 1955, and thousands of young people participated. But here, too, the divisions were stark – it was not until the 1957 festival (in Moscow) that the Russians outnumbered the Finns![21] Soviet social organizations like the anti-Fascist committees charged with international outreach were still active in the immediate postwar years, but they were soon dissolved, and some of their leaders shot.[22] Thereafter, even the most sympathetic Western observers had trouble entering the USSR (or, once in, leaving their assigned hotel). Western governments tried to undermine communist regimes via broadcast and printed propaganda; the effects of some of these initiatives in the USSR and Eastern Europe have been studied recently.[23] In early 1954, tens of thousands of Poles – in effect, the "entire country" – were listening to RFE (Radio Free Europe) broadcasts by a senior security police official about the (often juicy) backstage tales of his organization and the communist party. The year before, their author Józef Światło used an official visit to East Berlin to flee to America via West Germany – thus joining hundreds of thousands of East Germans who managed to flee by 1961 when the Berlin Wall was built.[24] Perhaps the biggest fiasco of the time was a series of U.S.-run paramilitary operations

---

[20] Jessica Reinisch. "We Shall Rebuild Anew a Powerful Nation": UNRRA, Internationalism and National Reconstruction in Poland // Journal of Contemporary History. 2008. Vol. 43. Pp. 451-476; Andrzej Paczkowski. The Spring Will Be Ours: Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom / Trans. Jane Cave. University Park, PA, 2003. P. 180.
[21] Pia Koivunen. The 1957 Moscow Youth Festival: Propagating a New, Peaceful Image of the Soviet Union // Melanie Ilič and Jeremy Smith (Eds.). Soviet State and Society Under Nikita Khrushchev. London, 2009. P. 49.
[22] See, for example, N. K. Petrova. Antifashistskie Komitety v SSSR: 1941–1945 gg. Moscow, 1999.
[23] On recent work, see A. Ross Johnson, R. Eugene Parta. Cold War Broadcasting: Impact on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Budapest, 2010.
[24] Paczkowski. Pół wieku. P. 294. People began leaving from 1949 on; in April alone, 9,307 refugees left East Germany via Berlin, followed by 270,440 in 1953, 173,279 in 1954, 270,115 in 1955, and 316,000 in 1956 (Soviet data); see Hope Harrisom. Driving the Soviets Up the Wall: Soviet–East German Relations, 1953–1961. Princeton, 2003. Pp. 22, 72.

on the Albanian border, after which nearly all CIA-trained East European refugees were arrested. Several big names and a few hundred refugees managed to flee to the other side of the Iron Curtain, at least eight of them in a homemade tank.[25]

Even official border crossings could cause personal distress. Before crossing the border into Poland, during his first trip abroad, the future Soviet consul in Szczecin, Iurii Vladimirovich Bernov, felt "quivering and anxiety," probably because foreign travel under Stalin was a big deal.[26] Crossing borders was always fused with tension between freedom and constraint. But for those few who did travel then it was also an occasion to draw all kinds of other distinctions: between the different ways in which people lived, dressed, and behaved; it was a chance to glimpse the world abroad – even if for a brief moment, make sense of it; it was, finally an opportunity to draw comparisons and make inner choices about one's place in the world and how to frame a desired future.[27]

With the petering away of Stalinism by 1955, Moscow intervened less in East European affairs (especially domestic ones). Despite occasional cooling-off periods, and even the "second Cold War" (1979–1985), the East–West relationship was much warmer than it had ever been under Stalin. In the new climate of relative openness, the superpowers shifted much of their competition to the expanding field of "cultural diplomacy" – an unprecedented range of initiatives that subsumed artistic, academic, and scientific exchange led by governments and nongovernmental organizations.[28] Soviet and East European governments eased travel restrictions for their citizens; particularly travel within the bloc became both politically permissible and financially more affordable. Sometimes the communist authorities preferred to let un-

---

[25] Arch Puddington. Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. Lexington, 2000. Esp. Pp. 51, 62-69. RFE also sponsored sending thousands of balloons across the Iron Curtain. On pp. 53, 58, Puddington mentions Radio Free Europe broadcasts targeted at the peasantry – "a natural audience for RFE," and the party elites. Also: Kracauer. Satellite Mentality.

[26] Iu. V. Bernov. Zapiski Diplomata. Moscow, 1995. Pp. 7-8.

[27] For scholarship dealing with the Stalin era, see discussion below, as well as essays in Patryk Babiracki and Kenyon Zimmer (Eds.). Cold War Crossings.

[28] Yale Richmond. US–Soviet Cultural Exchanges 1958–1986: Who Wins? Boulder, 1987 provides a useful overview, but with little statistical information; see also: Idem. Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain. University Park, PA, 2003; Idem. Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: How the West Won // American Communist History. 2010. Vol. 9. Pp. 61-75. Richmond was a former government administrator of American–Soviet exchanges; his treatment can be somewhat triumphant and self-indulgent, but is a good general overview.

desirable individuals go abroad rather than persecute them at home – as was the case with Soviet Jews in the 1970s, or Poles before martial law was declared in December 1981. Also in the late 1970s, several states began sending workers to other Comecon countries. Apart from the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961, a travel-centered history of communist Eastern Europe would be a narrative of progress.[29] On the one hand, the dramatic upsurge of official contacts within and across the bloc put millions of people in touch with cultures and societies abroad. This happened directly via travel (millions of foreign and East European tourists crossed international borders within the Soviet bloc at the end of the 1970s), or vicariously through film, literature, and so on.[30] But the initiating of such formal channels of interaction, and the relaxation of social control more generally, also opened many unofficial points of direct cross-border contact between opposition groups, black-market entrepreneurs, and artists. Nearly anyone determined to gain access to a product or culture from abroad was able to do so. It is thus no wonder that so much of recent scholarship devoted to travels, transfers, and exchanges concentrates on the post-Stalin period.

There are at least two ways in which the theme of movement across national and systemic borders became a destabilizing trope to the Sovietization paradigm. The first has to do with the successes and failures of Soviet and East European communists in creating an attractive official culture. The emerging consensus among researchers is that the Soviet authorities in particular failed to impress the majority of East Europeans and even fewer Westerners with what they had to offer. Most historians agree that the Soviets paid a political price for this failure; they also concur that the failure was inevitable, because it had been hardwired into the Soviet system to begin with. Norman Naimark has shown that the Soviet inflexibility in shaping

---

[29] In the last decade of "real socialism" approximately 6,000–7,000 Polish laborers worked various sites in Hungary. Poles were also the largest group of foreign laborers within the Comecon: their numbers in Czechoslovak enterprises rose from about 4,000 in 1964 to about 20,000 in the early 1970s. See the essays by Éva Kovács and Ondřej Klípa in Włodzimierz Borodziej and Jerzy Kochanowski (Eds.). Bocznymi drogami. Nieoficjalne kontakty społeczeństw socjalistycznych 1956–1989. Warsaw, 2010. Esp. Pp. 259, 280, 290. The book is a result of a large collaborative project based in Jena of Czech, German, Hungarian, and Polish historians titled "Schleichwege. Inoffizielle Kontakte sozialistischer Staatsbuerger 1956–1989." It examines three areas of cross-border interactions: mass tourism, illegal trade, and independent cultural transfer.

[30] On tourism, see the table in Bocznymi drogami. P. 121; V. E. Bagdasarian et al. Sovetskoe Zazerkale: Innostrannyi turizm w SSSR v 1930–1980-e gody. Moscow, 2007. Pp. 92-94; Randolph Siverson et al. Soviet Tourism and Détente, 1958–1977 // Studies in Comparative Communism. 1980. Vol. XIII. Pp. 356-368, and below.

political life in its zone of German occupation between 1945 and 1949 was a direct result of the Soviet officials' inability to imagine another way of organizing society. Their failure to buttress their Sovietizing mission with a sufficient quantity of cultural exports of good quality also had a negative impact.[31] Ultimately, it was the German communists "who won the right to govern the zone through their loyalty, dedication, flexibility, and understanding of Soviet sensibilities." Yet these same communists, ultimately, became victims of their own success: they "lost any chance they may have had for exerting popular influence on the development of postwar Germany," since "they would always be seen as the tools of Moscow."[32] Naimark's emphasis on the lack of fit between Soviet approaches and German needs underscores an important aspect of this essay's argument. The "interfaced Soviet bloc" is an analytic framework that reflects a recognized porousness of borders (which was minimal in the USSR in Stalin's last years). But it is also a lens that examines the quality of cross-border interactions, equating the power of the communists with their ability to cope with systemic heterogeneity. Paul Hollander's Western intellectuals who traveled to communist countries "in search of good society" remain a rare counterexample to the story of

---

[31] Norman Naimark. Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation. Cambridge, 1995.

[32] Ibid. P. 467; on a similar note, see Vladimir Pechatnov. Exercise in Frustration: Soviet Foreign Propaganda in the Early Cold War, 1945–1947 // Cold War History. 2001. Vol. 1. P. 16; on Soviet failures in international tourism, see Shawn Salmon. Marketing Socialism: Intourist in 1950s and 1960s // Turizm: The Russian And East European Tourist Under Capitalism and Socialism. Ithaca, 2006. P. 192; on Soviet broadcasting, see Simo Mikkonen. Stealing the Monopoly of Knowledge? Soviet Reactions to U.S. Cold War Broadcasting // Kritika. 2010. Vol. 11. Pp. 771-805. Mark Pittaway similarly remarks on the Hungarian case: "Ironically one of the few successes of the Stalinist regime's policy towards consumer goods created a mass audience for Western radio propaganda." See: The Education of Dissent: the Reception of the Voice of Free Hungary, 1951–1956 // Cold War History. 2003. Vol. 3. P. 99; on youth festivals, consult Koivunnen. The 1957 Moscow Youth Festival. Esp. Pp. 59-60; idem. Overcoming Cold War Boundaries at the World Youth Festivals // Sari Autio-Sarasmo and Katalin Miklóssy (Eds.). Reassessing Cold War Europe. London, New York, 2011. Pp. 175-192. The Soviet difficulties in asserting itself on the international scene during the Thaw constitutes another chief theme of the special issue of Cahiers du Monde Russe. 2006. Vol. 12. No. 1. Recent work on East European students in the USSR in the immediate postwar period likewise emphasizes the two sides' inability to connect. For different treatments, see my Imperial Heresies; and a helpful reframing of the problem around Soviet agency and perceptions by Tromly. Brother or "Other"? Revealingly, Tromly indicates the benefits of "study[ing] mechanisms of trans-national integration within the Soviet bloc rather than episodes of division and crisis alone."

Soviet failures. But even here, as Hollander pointed out, the essential factor contributing to success was the intellectuals' positive predispositions, and not Soviet artfulness, much less the genuine vitality of the communist system at large.[33] Recently, György Péteri referred to the Soviet project's "ambiguous globality," that is, its "self-defeating attempt to create an alternative civilization without ever being able to define genuinely new terms and standards of economic, social, and cultural progress."[34] The Soviet project did get an enthusiastic hearing in many parts of the world. What the Soviets squandered more than anything else, I would argue, is the chance to put many good ideas into practice.[35]

Several authors went further recently, and argued that ideology, a major pillar of the Soviet system, was to blame for the Soviet inability to connect with the broader world on its own terms. In his *Failed Empire,* Vladislav Zubok explored the ideological constraints of the top Soviet leaders, but he also argued that for many lower-ranking Russian officials in East Central Europe after World War II, "the distinction between the expansion of Soviet borders and influence for ideological and security reasons and the traditional Russian chauvinism became increasingly blurred."[36] Zubok documented Soviet officers' and generals' widespread looting of the liberated territories not in order to catalog instances of East European suffering, but to underscore how their self-interest easily fed into this confusion, thus providing "Stalin's project of a postwar Pax Sovietica with the energy it required."[37] More explicitly, he described Mikhail Gorbachev's "new thinking," which drove perestroika as "a big messianic formula for *integration* of the world," a tool that failed to work in the end, bringing down the empire.[38] Ideology

---

[33] Paul Hollander. Political Pilgrims: Western Intellectuals in Search of the Good Society. 4th ed. New Brunswick, 2007. P. 6.

[34] György Péteri (Ed.). Nylon Curtain. Transnational and Transsystemic Tendencies in the Cultural Life of State-Socialist Russia and East-Central Europe. Trondheim, 2006. P. 10.

[35] For a southern perspective on the Soviet engagement with the "third world" during the Cold War, see Odd Arne Westad. The Global Cold War. Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times. New York, 2005; for an overview of literature, see David Engerman. The Second World's Third World // Kritika. Vol. 12. No. 1. Pp. 183-211.

[36] Vladislav M. Zubok. Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev. Chapel Hill, 2007. P. 9.

[37] Ibid. P. 10.

[38] Ibid. P. 341. The emphasis is mine. Compare this with Westad's interpretation: "In the end, Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika* project was about being included into the world that the satellite channels represented while upholding a degree of ideological challenge to the system that had created them. His was no surprising failure, although the consequences of that failure rightly stunned the world." Westad. The New International History. P. 560.

also limited Soviet attempts to advance its state projects through tourism, argue authors of a recent monograph devoted to Intourist, the Soviet agency in charge of this "traditional" means of travel. On the one hand, the prism of Marxist economic theory, which viewed tourism as nonproductive "services," and therefore as "surplus value," prevented the Soviet authorities from applying market mechanisms to it. On the other hand, when international tourism in the Soviet Union became a mass phenomenon under Nikita Khrushchev, ideological explanations proved inadequate in preventing thousands of foreigners from growing disappointed with poor standards of Soviet life, or Soviet tourists from becoming impressed with good material conditions abroad.[39] The above examples do more than revise the balance sheet of Soviet successes and failures in reshaping the globe in their own image. They underscore the shift in scholarly attention to the Soviet inability to connect with the broader world – thus reflecting a project in which the study of traveling people, objects, and ideas assumes an important role.

The trope of travel and exchange has also unhinged the Sovietization paradigm as we knew it, by bringing into relief a converse problem. This question has to do with the ways and extent to which the inhabitants of the Soviet bloc participated successfully in cultures other than the official, communist, and national ones – either independently of the state-sponsored projects or by appropriating such initiatives to their own ends. The international crises in the communist camp likewise created opportunities for transnational cross-fertilization of anticommunist and anti-Soviet ideas.[40] Youth festivals and student exchanges were occasions for such reappropriations – to smuggle, have a good time away from parents, or reestablish family contacts.[41] For example, several recent studies have explored the communist societies' uneasy relationship with international consumer culture. Soviet tourists who traveled to Eastern Europe in the late 1950s and 1960s officially did so to promote the Soviet way of life and to experience the fuzzy feeling of cultural superiority that came with visiting countries in the earlier stages of socialist development. In practice, such visits turned

---

[39] V. E. Bagdasarian et al. Sovetskoe zazerkal'e. Pp. 95, 104.

[40] Johanna Granville. Satellites or Prime Movers? Polish and Hungarian Reactions to the 1965 Events: New Archival Evidence // East European Quarterly. 2002. Vol. 35. Pp. 435-471; Weiner. Empires Pay a Visit; Rachel Applebaum. A Test of Friendship: Soviet–Czechoslovak Tourism and the Prague Spring / Unpublished manuscript.

[41] Kristin Roth-Ey. Loose Girls' on the Loose? Sex, Propaganda and the 1957 Youth Festival // Melanie Ilič et al. (Eds.). Women in the Khrushchev Era. Basingstoke, 2004. Pp. 75-95; Babiracki. Imperial Heresies; Pia Koivunen. Overcoming Cold War Boundaries.

out to be shopping sprees for goods, often of Western provenance, that were unavailable in the USSR, while the realization that East Europeans had access to these goods was likely to disabuse any notions of Soviet superiority vis-à-vis its junior partners. From the 1960s on, individual smuggling and international mail became avenues for illegal private initiative. By the 1970s "shopping tourism" was a mass phenomenon and a "transnational" private market even developed around the visas and host-country invitations necessary for travel.[42] Summarizing a larger interdisciplinary research project on "shopping tourism" in Eastern Europe, another scholar refused to view this phenomenon as popular resistance against authoritarian regimes.[43] At the same time, her interpretation of shopping tourism as only a set of "strategies of adaptation," to domestic contexts distracts from the fact that it was also a *positive commitment* on the part of these traveling consumers to a culture that transcended the boundaries of their home regimes.

Other international cultures competed for the hearts and minds of citizens in the Soviet bloc. By 1965, Soviet citizens owned 37 million wireless radio sets, as a consequence of which "many Soviet citizens had the technical facilities for listening to foreign broadcasts if they so desired."[44] Modernist art beckoned and some groups in the Soviet bloc welcomed it warmly.[45] In some cases, these individuals and groups of people negotiated with their regimes, often successfully, the ability to participate in international cultures. Timothy Ryback has demonstrated how Western rock bands (and their music) traveled across the Iron Curtain. They produced nearly unanimous euphoria among the youth, millions of whom identified with what they perceived to be a culture of freedom and rebellion. Some of the communist establishments tolerated these Western incursions in order to avert unnecessary social tensions, or tried to co-opt rock and roll by sponsoring national bands (Poland,

---

[42] Mikołaj Morzycki-Markowski. Jak przekraczano granice w socjalizmie. Przykład PRL // Borodziej and Kochanowski. Bocznymi drogami. P. 58; Jerzy Kochanowski. Pionierzy wolnego rynku? Nieoficjalna wymiana handlowa między społeczeństwami krajów socjalistycznych. Lata siedemdziesiąte i osiemdziesiąte // Ibid. Pp. 109-144.

[43] Anne Gorsuch. Time Travelers: Soviet Tourists to Eastern Europe // Turizm. Pp. 205-226; Anna Wessely. Travelling People, Travelling Objects // Cultural Studies. 2002. Vol. 16. P. 6.

[44] Mikkonen. Stealing the Monopoly of Knowledge? Pp. 780-781.

[45] On informal artistic exchanges, see, for example, Patryk Wasiak and Agata Witerska. Przestrzeń swobody. Wystawy "zakazanych" artystów z krajów socjalistycznych w Polsce po 1956 roku // Borodziej and Kochanowski (Eds.). Bocznymi drogami. Pp. 167-218; on artistic crossfertilization in between the West and the USSR see also Eleonory Gilburd. Picasso in Thaw Culture // Cahiers du Monde Russe. 2006. Vol. 12. No. 1. Pp. 65-108.

Hungary). But the inflexible rulers of the USSR and the GDR waged wars against the unwanted musical invaders.[46] Youth countercultures are rarely willing to speak the language of their country's establishment**.** What is both remarkable and important in Ryback's account is that the youths "around the bloc" were better synchronized with the international rock culture than the communist governments were with one another. Fast-forward to 1989: border crossings are a key theme of Padraic Kenney's seminal account of anticommunist revolutions in Central Europe. Grassroots social movements, including "radical environmentalists, hippies, performance artists, and pacifists" participated in the culture of international protest in myriad ways. The more serious "revolutionary tourists" networked with Western environmentalists to gain political clout at home. Other activists, in contrast, exported the ludic iconoclasm of absurd performance to the streets of neighboring socialist states.[47] Those who managed to link up to this transnational movement of protest and subversion, to paraphrase Kenney's compelling argument, can help explain the extraordinary force and vitality of the revolutions of 1989 in a way that narratives of domestic oppositions cannot.

To be sure, several authors have used "Sovietization" to examine processes that transcend the Cold War concerns and frameworks in an interesting way. The new works raise important questions about the analytic significance and the very future of the concept. They privilege narratives of negotiation – multichanneled, "entangled," and sometimes detoured influences – over stories of direct Soviet and communist interventions in East European societies. They cast East Central Europe as a terrain of structural and cultural contestation, not simply of political and moral struggle. In doing so, the new works present a challenge to the "hourglass" model of isolated communisms and point to the continued utility of "Sovietization." Yet on the other hand, they remain fixed within the epistemic dyad implicit in the term that thematizes them, by suggesting that on a deep level they are stories about how East Central Europe became (or did not become) Soviet-like.[48] Further, "Sovietization" fails to provide an overarching framework for thinking about travels and exchanges across the region that necessarily disturbed local power ar-

---

[46] Timothy Ryback. Rock Around the Bloc: A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. New York, 1990; see also Sergei I. Zhuk. Rock and Roll in the Rocket City: The West, Identity, and Ideology in Soviet Dniepropetrovsk, 1960–1985. Washington, DC, and Baltimore, 2009.

[47] Padraic Kenney. A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989. Princeton, 2002.

[48] As several scholars pointed out, Sovietization is ultimately about "transfer" from the USSR to the "peoples' democracies." See Rittersporn et al. Open Spaces and Public Realm. P. 433.

rangements but were not explicitly about power struggles, such as tourism (shopping or the "traditional" kind), certain forms of cultural transfer and exchange, and so on.[49]

Mapping travelers' real and imaginary footprints onto the familiar topography of the Soviet bloc has led some to seek new concepts and language to describe the reimagined landscape. Stephen Kotkin's "Eurasia" is a vast "arena" across which agents of historically overlapping empires interacted and exchanged – via institutions and often in coercive circumstances. The term "socialist world" is rapidly gaining traction. That historians use it to put forth claims about transnational cohesiveness without sounding contrived or cynical reflects new attitudes. Communities of people bound by affection, a common sense of purpose and belonging move about in worlds that do not correspond to the political boundaries around them. Drawing on Alfred Rieber's work, Marsha Siefert spoke of a "symbolic frontier society" connecting American film director Frank Capra with his Soviet colleagues. It is a society, she argued, in which filmmakers "communicate with each other, sometimes directly, in friendly rivalry, commerce and camaraderie through their art," despite the pressure to contribute to political projects designed to set them apart. People involved in illegal market activities were likewise connected via "a thick network that covered the entire eastern bloc, and that branched out only into and beyond the European continent," wrote Jerzy Kochański in his introduction to a new volume of essays on the subject. György Péteri raised the possibility of "multiple nylon curtains." He thus drew attention to the cultural fragmentation of the Soviet bloc, and its constituent states' different levels of complicity with the West**.** Michael David-Fox urged "to capture not merely the sphere of cross-cultural contact but also the intersection of distinct ideological and cultural systems, each with its own internal-external nexus." Though issued in the context of his own pioneering work on Soviet interactions with the West in the 1930s, the challenge of mapping out transnational institutional spaces and links is equally pertinent to the history of the Soviet bloc.[50] The time may then be

---

[49] For innovative works on Sovietization, see John Connelly's magisterial work "Captive University"; and essays in Apor et al. The Sovietization of Eastern Europe.

[50] Stephen Kotkin. A Mongol Commonwealth? Exchange and Governance Across the Post-Mongol Space // Kritika. 2007. Vol. 8. Pp. 491-492; On the "socialist world," see, for example, Cristofer Scarboro. The Brother-City Project and Socialist Humanism: Haskovo, Tashkent and "Sblizhenie" // Slavonic and East European Review. 2007. Vol. 85. Pp. 522-542; Jersild. The Soviet Union; on the "socialist second world," see the discussion below; Marsha Siefert. Allies on Film: US-USSR Filmmakers and The Battle of Russia // Marsha Siefert (Ed.). Extending the Borders of Russian History: Essays in

ripe to pause over the broader significance of what seems to be an emerging research paradigm.

Toward a New Narrative?

There are at least two reasons why the focus on travel and synergy matters. First, the new optics can help challenge earlier assumptions about individual agency, power, and causality. Individuals who traveled within and outside of the Soviet bloc broke down and reconfigured the boundaries of power contestation. Once we understand better who traveled where, why, and how in the Soviet bloc, we can also get a better sense of why the communist project lasted for so long, and why it ran out of steam when it did. That the communists often failed to achieve the transnational synergy necessary to succeed points to fateful limitations of their repressive regimes. Yet the academic interest in this modality of power accumulation that is potentially available to them reflects the shift from thinking about Sovietization to broader problems of integration.

Second, attention to transnational experiences, networks, and connectedness can lead the way to a rethinking of the identity of communist societies in the Soviet bloc. The fall of communism had an impact on the political geography of the past that seems both useful and problematic. Some scholars used it to challenge the conceptual limitations of the Cold War. They suggested that, considered in their *longue durée*, movements, transfers, and interactions across the Soviet bloc have been just as constitutive of the region's identity as various political divisions superimposed upon it during the Cold War.[51] But other observers were quick to reimagine communism in the Soviet westernmost satellite states as a temporary, inconvenient, and

Honor of Alfred Rieber. Budapest, 2003. Pp. 373-400. For Katherine Jolluck's Polish women exiled to the USSR during World War II, "home" meant a set of shared values that connected their own community in exile with Poles elsewhere. Exile and Identity: Polish Women in the Soviet Union During World War II. Pittsburgh, 2002; see also Marci Shore. Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw Generation's Life and Death in Marxism, 1918–1968. New Haven, 2006. Pp. 3-4, 393; Jerzy Kochanowski. Wstęp // Bocznymi drogami. P. 10; Péteri. The Nylon Curtain. P. 12, fn. 11; Michael David-Fox. The Fellow Travelers Revisited: The "Cultured West" through Soviet Eyes // The Journal of Modern History. 2003. Vol. 75. P. 334; In his study of Henryk Józewski's vision for a united Poland and Ukraine in the first half of the twentieth century, Timothy Snyder likewise anchors the governor of Volhynia's project in the latter's sense of an "essential harmony," which survived World War II; see Snyder. Sketches from a Secret War: A Polish Artist's Mission to Liberate Soviet Ukraine. New Haven, 2007. Pp. 250-262.

[51] Von Hagen. Empires, Borderlands, and Diasporas. P. 447.

regrettable setback to another inevitable process: that of the reemergence of the true concert of East Central European states in 1989.

For example, it is revealing that, except for Ryback's work on rock and roll, there exist no social or cultural histories of the Soviet bloc as a whole. Instead, scholars interested in culture and society study each country of the bloc as a separate unit. Alternatively, the authors of the few available book-length treatments of Central (or East Central) Europe under communism make an implicit statement by bracketing out the Soviet Union.[52] There are obvious merits to each approach, but there are also risks. One danger is that if historians produce no common histories of the USSR and East Central Europe under communism, they narrow down their geographical scope of inquiry based on realities that predate the Soviet experiment in the region. In doing so, they leave little margin for considering just how Soviet–East European interactions during the Cold War brought these different societies together. Another potential trap is that by doing so, they find themselves in the company of those who, due to personal political investment or an outsider's sympathy, historically have emphasized the fixed and separate nature of such entities as "Poland" or "East Central Europe," marginalizing the long-term fluidity of these entities as cultural constructs. A similar line of thinking led others to negate and ignore any symbiotic elements in Soviet–East European relationships, and hence to underplay the negotiated dimensions of the communist experiment. Mapping out movements, transfers, and exchanges between the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe can be used to put such elements on the table. At the very least, it can replace assumptions about their nonexistence with empirical evidence.

Scholars who work on Central (or East Central Europe) under communism vary in their treatments of the region's identity. Some explicitly insist on tracing historical continuities. They view the region's identity as an unchanging (and occasionally the purest) essence of the European idea. This essence, having been unjustly suppressed after World War II, explained and validated any tensions with the USSR by its victorious return in 1989.[53] Other

---

[52] For example, Ivan Berend. Central and Eastern Europe, 1944–1993: Detour from the Periphery to the Periphery. Cambridge, 2007.

[53] Jaques Rupnik wrote that the East is where "the soul of Europe, the idea of Europe as a culture that transcends political divides has been preserved." See The Other Europe. New York, 1989; Joseph Rothschild explicitly designed his survey of the region's post–World War II history as a sequel to his account of the interwar era. See: Preface to the First Edition // Idem, and Nancy Wingfield. Return to Diversity; similar themes run through Norman Davies. Heart of Europe: Past in Poland's Present. Oxford, 2001. The "Occident within" communist societies is a recurrent theme in the work of György Péteri. The Oblique Coordinate Systems of Modern Identity // Péteri (Ed.). Imagining the West.

historians are more cautious and use "Central Europe" simply as shorthand for a geographical space where the action of their stories is taking place. Their opinions about the region's identity (and those also vary widely) matter less to the story than the historical processes they examine in the foreground.[54] Yet no matter how negotiable the region's identity under communism may seem to be in a given account (and in some more than others), for as long as the Soviet Union is out of the equation, the story of the Soviet-sponsored project of social engineering will be incomplete. A comparative history of the Soviet bloc would be one way of mapping out social identities as they interacted together and transformed after World War II.[55]

By the standards of the past, the task of merging Soviet and East European narratives is somewhat heretical. The notion of cultural "synergy" across the Soviet bloc evokes the stories of friendship between peoples and of "Slavic unity" that the communist themselves propagated to give meaning to the Soviet presence in Eastern Europe, or the ritualistic invocations of "socialist internationalism" of the late communist era. Alternatively, it brings back the memories of "orientalization" to which Western scholars have subjected the region during the Cold War.[56] Yet this initial resemblance should not obscure two facts. The first is that many East European and Soviet communists *really did* share a similar vision of modernity: one rooted in the belief that state-sponsored, rational organization of the economy and society would lead to a better life and help pave their countries' way out of their peripheral status in the world.[57] The human geography they created and the natural environment they altered no doubt impacted the relation-

---

[54] Berend. Central and Eastern Europe; Kenney. Carnival of Revolutions.

[55] I exclude comparative studies, which are less concerned with transnational interactions and, by definition, seek to highlight differences between communist regimes. See, for example, Anne White. De-Stalinization and the House of Culture. Declining State Control over Leisure in the USSR, Poland and Hungary, 1953–1989. London, 1990; Gábor Rittersportn, Malte Rolf and Jan C. Behrends. Open Spaces and Public Realm: Thoughts on the Public Sphere in Soviet-Type Systems // Rittersporn and Behrends (Eds.). Sphären von Offentlichkeit in Gesellschaften sowjetischen Typs. Zwischen partei-staatlicher Selbstinszenierung und kirchlichen Gegenwelten. Frankfurt am Main, 2003. Pp. 423-452; Major and Mitter. East is East. A recent collection of essays aims to begin to redress this balance: György Péteri (Ed.). Imagining the West in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Pittsburgh, 2010.

[56] Von Hagen. Empires, Borderlands, and Diasporas. P. 449.

[57] For powerful, though methodologically distinct, analyses of the same phenomenon in the USSR and East Central Europe, see Stephen Kotkin. Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1995. P. 358; Berend. Central and Eastern Europe.

ships between Soviet citizens and inhabitants of East Central Europe. Just what the extent of these changes was and how the communist tinkering with the physical environment translated into shared experiences, transnational networks, and dependencies remains to be explored – of great promise here seem to be the methods of the approach recently labeled "the spatial turn" in historical studies.[58] The second important fact is that the shared experience of everyday life under communism *really did* shape the bodies, mentalities, and sensibilities of individuals and social groups in the Soviet bloc – and thus made them different from people elsewhere. Arguably, the combination of authoritarian rule and planned economy changed people's relationship to authority, to state property, to work, to high and popular culture, to notions of truth and freedom, to consumer tastes; it affected their everyday appearance, nutrition, landscape, the quality of natural environment and patterns of disease; it provided them with common references for anecdotes and jokes and demarcated boundaries between the sacred and the profane.[59] The deep imprint that these shared experiences had on their bodies, minds, and habits, was also what came to constitute their common identity, whether the contemporaries actively embraced it or shunned it.

---

[58] See, for example, Ralph Kingston. Mind over Matter: History and the Spatial Turn // Cultural and Social History. 2010. Vol. 7. Pp. 111-121; Malte Rolf. Importing the "Spatial Turn" to Russia: Recent Studies on the Spatialization of Russian History // Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History. 2010. Vol. 11. Pp. 359-380.

[59] The sociologist Vladimir Shlapentokh pointed out the pervasiveness and tolerance of pilfering at work in the late Soviet society in Public and Private Life of the Soviet People: Changing Values in Post-Stalin Russia. New York, 1989. Pp. 91, 214-216. Continuities in practices, structures, and moral attitudes toward "the market" in postsocialist countries (ranging from Central and Southern Europe, to Transcaucasia and Central Asia) are the binding theme of Ruth Mandel and Caroline Humphrey (Eds.). Markets and Moralities: Ethnographies of Postsocialism. Oxford, New York, 2002. Taking the Soviet–Bulgarian brother-city project as a starting point, Cristofer Scarboro explores in fascinating detail the physical and ontological ways in which Eastern Europe and Central Asia "came together" under late socialism: Scarboro. The Brother-City Project and Socialist Humanism: Haskovo, Tashkent and "Sblizhenie" // Slavonic and East European Review. 2007. Vol. 85. Pp. 522-542. The tantalizing title of Ivan Bernik's paper at Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen in Vienna (IWM, April 6, 2011) is: "Is there a Post-Socialist Sexuality?" On jokes and the development of unofficial "countermemory" across social networks in Eastern Europe in the 1960s–1980s, see Svetlana Boym. The Future of Nostalgia. New York, 2001; for more on institutional and special standardization across communist Eurasia, see Kotkin. A Mongol Commonwealth? Pp. 520-526. Padraic Kenney pointed out that even though today, Central European political elites "talk about their countries' 'return to Europe,' as oppositionists, they kept Europe at arm's length." See Kenney. Carnival of Revolution. P. 93.

Some dimensions of the common identity were more by-products than intended consequences of the implementation of communist policies. They fit neither into the official communist narrative about socialist internationalism, nor into its *doppelgängers* – the stories about anticommunist opposition or the unfolding of freedom. These aspects of the communist experience were rarely key factors in the cycle of repression and resistance, which may also help to explain why they eluded focused scholarly attention during the half-century before communism's collapse. The Croatian writer Slavenka Drakulić, on the contrary, registered them with disarming honesty as she trekked across Eastern Europe in 1990, on the eve of the Soviet collapse. Drakulić mused on "the shortages, the distinctive odors, the shabby clothing," across the region, which in a strange way made her feel at home. She described the near-magical appeal of items such as Coke and pizza, available despite the notoriously empty shelves in grocery shops. Reacting with sarcasm at the triumphant news reports on the East European "revolutions" of 1989, the writer reminded her readers that "communism persists in the way people behave, in the looks on their faces, in the way they think."[60] Drakulić's experience indicates that the recent upsurge in postcommunist nostalgia in the former East Germany and the USSR is more than a romanticized vision of the past.[61] It also demonstrates the instrumental role of studying travel in making sense of the communist project as a whole. Lastly, it suggests that while Central European identity has largely been defined by its Latin past, the communist interlude in the Soviet bloc also belongs in the longer history of Eurasia.

Ryback's youths enamored with rock and roll are another case in point. On the one hand, fans of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones who lived under communism shared their passion for these bands with their Western analogues. All of them – East and West – also knew very well the rules of the counterculture to which they belonged. But on the other hand, to be part of the concert-going crowd meant much more in the Soviet bloc. Embracing the carnivalesque culture of sonic hedonism and youthful rebellion in these tightly controlled societies was one of the very few semilegitimate channels for venting social and political frustration. Yet, at the same time, the very ambiguity of this culture potentially earned its participants the stigma of political troublemakers, and thus carried greater risks. Experiences of urban

---

[60] Slavenka Drakulić. How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed. New York, 1993. Pp. xiv, xvi, 13. The notion of "the wall in the mind" of former East- and West Germans echoes a similar sentiment: Harrison. Driving the Soviets. P. xiv.

[61] Boym. The Future of Nostalgia. Pp. 57-74.

elites in the Soviet bloc would be another example of transnational solidarity within the bloc: writers, professors, and intellectuals across the Soviet bloc often subscribed to similar professional standards and actively maintained links of friendship. This was the case even though, in political terms, some represented the subaltern David while others the imperial Goliath. One could venture that free-thinking intellectuals in communist Central Europe, in Moscow, and beyond the Urals had in some ways more in common with one another than they had, for instance, with respective groups of native party apparatchiks or farmers. The full story of their relationship is yet to be written. A translocal approach, essentially attuned to investigating and narrating movements, travels, and exchanges among multiple contexts would be suitable for connecting the dots. Further study of travel and identity would reveal answers to at least two major questions. The first has to do with the extent to which transnational networks and identities fed into or undermined the communist project. The second question would be the degree to which these networks, identities, and values carried over to the postcommunist reality and whether they proved conducive or detrimental to the processes of global integration.[62]

Stephen Kotkin observed that sliding into "identity" can easily overshadow concerns over governance and institutions. The authors cited here avoid the extremes usually associated with the "cultural turn;" but their work can serve as a starting point for imagining how, in the long run, zooming away from raw power can remain a potential issue all the same. Personal cosmologies, emotional and symbolic ties that transcend the rigid contemporary boundaries may seem as durable as the state borders that circumscribe these individuals' physical movement – a misleading impression unless further qualified. One could argue that thousands of inhabitants of the USSR, Eastern Europe, and so on had international visions of their own. One possible danger is that the larger, more synthetic narrative of the Soviet bloc dissolves into the sum total of their experiences.

Kotkin went further than most in problematizing the interconnected nature of the "post-Soviet space" as well as its actual geographical limitations. Yet his efforts also illustrate the difficulty of the task of squaring the

---

[62] This question is thus analogous to the still underresearched problem posed by Jan Gross with regard to the impact of social transformations during World War II on the conditions for introducing communism in East Central Europe. Jan T. Gross. Social Consequences of War: Preliminaries to the Study of Imposition of Communist Regimes in East Central Europe // East European Politics and Societies. 1989. Vol. 2. Pp. 198-214; Jolluck. Exile and Identity. P. xxi.

historical phenomenon of robust cross-border exchanges with the need to identify the approximate boundaries and characteristics of a territorially defined historical actor. Having warned us about the significance of institutional power in the interconnected Eurasia, in his thought-provoking article, he also ultimately risks devaluing both notions through contradictions and equivocations. On the one hand, he understands "Eurasia" to mean an arena in which various historical empires exchanged and interacted. On the other hand, he identifies multiple Eurasias, each seemingly defined by the scope or reach of the single empire dominant at a given time. Thus, China belongs in Eurasia, but including it in "Soviet Eurasia" (together with Eastern Europe and North Korea) as Kotkin does, somewhat conflates the very different kinds of power the Soviet Union exercised in each of these parts, and thus dilutes the meaning of empire and its analytic value.[63] If rule defines empire, then China's place in Soviet Eurasia is surely problematic even in 1949–1953. But then, if Eurasia is a space of exchange between multiple empires, defining it via references to the Soviet side of the exchange seems unwarranted. Conversely, if "exchange" is to be the dominant criterion, then would not the U.S.-distributed Kalashnikovs in Nicaragua also be part of Soviet Eurasia? In an effort to escape from the "mystical" notions of Eurasia championed by local nationalists past and present, Kotkin attempts to reframe the concept in purely relational terms. Yet he would also agree that Soviet power was firmly rooted in the ground as well – in the very institutions that were under Moscow's control. Further, the historian critiques the slippage into "identity" as a potential distraction from institutions. But the Mongol empire – his purported model for thinking about Eurasia – became what it was, he also argues, "by the charisma and memory of Chinggis," an ephemeral notion. Kotkin's emphasis on Soviet Eurasia's "deeply unified material culture" and "transnational ways of behaving" is likewise well-taken, but it similarly suggests that perhaps "identity" still has some use. Finally, "Eurasia" is supposed to be thoroughly unsystemic. But the institutional and material uniformity Kotkin correctly finds in its Soviet variant – which he calls "the European Union in reverse"– points to an overarching coherence.[64] In the end, no clearly defined systems seem to compete or communicate via travels and exchanges; rather, Eurasia and empire become so capacious that they mean everything and nothing at the same time. In this scheme, travels and exchanges are plainly in view, but it is less clear how and whether they constitute alternative power networks.

---

[63] Kotkin. A Mongol Commonwealth? Pp. 491, 508, 523.

[64] Ibid. Pp. 507-509, 520, 522, 525.

Like many other historians, I find "empire" to be a useful framework for thinking about a variety of cultural and social links between the Soviet and East European contexts after World War II. The term comes with heavy baggage, to be sure, further weighed down by the moral ballast specific to the bipolar optics of the Cold War. "'The Evil Empire,'" later said Ronald Reagan's speechwriter, who had coined the term, "is one of the few semantic victories the West has won."[65] This is an overstatement, as there developed a late twentieth-century consensus that ruling over a territory without the consent of the people is largely illegitimate. But it did play a role nonetheless; the legacy of this victory and the consequences of the overarching shift have become so cumbersome that using the term to zoom *away* from the hitherto dominant themes of oppression and victimization may now seem quixotic.

And yet, though the moral connotations of "empire" are unlikely to go away, they need not constitute the concept's analytic linchpin. The historian of Russia Dominic Lieven understands it broadly, as "a great power ruling over a vast territory without the consent of its people." Others, mostly political scientists, aim to fix the definition with precise terms: as a center–periphery relation or as an entity distinct from a nation-state. Others speak even more broadly of imperial "formations" and "situations." Building on important insights from postcolonial theory, they are especially concerned with the multifaceted and unstable links between power and knowledge production.[66] These broader definitions offer flexibility in focusing on the diversity of discrete empire-building processes without locking the historian into rigid social-scientific categories (otherwise useful for classifying and making predictions). But all approaches have common merits. First, they are more likely to relegate the moral judgments of the author to the back-

---

[65] Cited in Gleason. Totalitarianism. P. 197.

[66] Dominic Lieven. Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals. New Haven, London, 2000. Pp. x-xi; Mark Beissinger. The Persisting Ambiguity of Empire // Post-Soviet Affairs. 1995. Vol. 11. Pp. 149-184; Ann Laura Stoler et. al. Imperial Formations. Santa Fe, 2008. On imperial "situations" and a fresh look at "empire" in the pre-1917 Russian context, see Ilya Gerasimov et. al. New Imperial History and the Challenges of Empire // Gerasimov et. al. Empire Speaks Out: Languages of Rationalization and Self-Description in the Russian Empire. Boston, 2009. Pp. 3-32. The authors explicitly distance themselves from universal definitions of the term. Drawing on recent literature on modern colonial empires, they seek to understand the imperial experience as an "encounter with difference and all the inequalities and imbalances of power this usually entails" (17-18). For a discussion of empire as imperial formations in the context of United States history, see Paul A. Kramer. Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World // American Historical Review. 2011. Vol. 116. No. 5. Pp. 1348-1391.

ground, that is, if the empire is "evil," it is only because it seems illegitimate to those who lived through it. Second, they impose a meaningful, concrete conceptual framework on the links, contacts, relationships, dependencies, and networks that existed in a given territory. The question of how different parts of empire *functioned together* thus becomes more important than what each of those parts *should have become, but did not*.[67] The conceptual shift has implications even for the traditional focus on the USSR–Eastern Europe. On the policy level, it makes it possible to think of "Soviet obligations" to its "vassal states;" on the social plane, it enables us to address the problem of reverse flow of cultural influence from Eastern Europe to the USSR in a way that "Sovietization" makes difficult.[68]

Much of the debate on the problem of Soviet–East European links revolved around the question: "To what extent was Eastern Europe Soviet-ized?" The third reason for reconsidering "empire" is that the concept invites a number of questions that go beyond this problem. It makes it possible to remove our focus from this binary division and instead, to shift the center of gravity to a more multivectored inquiry – about the *stability* of power, networks, dependencies, identities, and so forth. A considerable amount of work has been done in recent decades on the ways in which movements, and transfers of knowledge, technology, artistic production, natural resources, and money came to constitute discrete cultural, social, and economic "ge-ographies," or "zones of circulation." Those, in turn, either competed with or fed into the political spaces that actively sought to incorporate them as instruments of power.[69] The Soviet Empire in Eastern Europe, too, relied on

---

[67] This is the overarching theme in the short but original book by Raymond Pearson. The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Empire. 2d ed. New York, 2002. Pearson, who concentrates on the political and economic performance of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe, does not define the term "empire."

[68] Andrzej Paczkowski's portrayal of the Soviet–Polish relationship as that between a mutually benefitting superpower and its vassal stands out in the literature. See Paczkowski. Polish–Soviet Relations 1944–1989: The Limits of Autonomy // Intermarium. 2003. Vol. 6. http://www.sipa.columbia.edu/ece/research/intermarium/vol6no1/paczkowski.pdf (last consulted on December 10, 2010).

[69] Yves Cohen. Circulatory Localities: The Example of Stalinism in the 1930s // Kritika. 2010. Vol. 11. Pp. 11-45; also Kotkin. A Mongol Commonwealth? The literature on empire is enormous; for a sample of different treatments relevant to this argument, see Robin A. Butlin. Geographies of Empire: European Empires and Colonies c.1880–1960. Cambridge, 2009; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. Empire. Cambridge, 2001; pro-ponents and practitioners of the "Actor-Network-Theory" (ANT) made movements and circulations the center of their research efforts: Bruno Latour. Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory. Oxford, 2005; Idem. The Pasteurization of

modalities of power accumulation other than destruction and monopolization. Its logic was defined by a constant negotiation between politics, the needs of national economies, and those of the Comecon; it was informed by official and illegal trade with the outside world as well as growing interaction between multiple social and cultural contexts across the globe; lastly, it was a system that both mediated and was destabilized by networks and institutions of communication and transport. "Empire" appears a useful way of thematizing this tension between the stable and the volatile links in the system of power, and the systemic and the particular elements in it.[70] When approached from this perspective, "empire" also makes studying ordinary people's perceptions and values much more relevant to understanding power. In addition, it opens up a domain of concepts and vocabulary that makes the Soviet and communist projects in Eurasia more amenable to a global approach that is both transnational and comparative. To put it another way, "empire" can help us accomplish two tasks: (a) to redefine the discipline that has been functioning as "Soviet–East European relations" into a much richer field of historical investigation; and (b) to integrate the histories of European communist states and societies by illuminating common themes, shared experiences, commitments, structural similarities, and translocal links maintained through travels, movements, and exchanges.

The fourth reason why empire seems useful is that, with its focus on rule and dominance, it attunes us to the crucial presence of power within networks and exchanges. This is important because, while cross-border travel was in many ways physically liberating and politically subversive in the oppressive communist regimes, discourses on the transnational, borderless world have elsewhere served to naturalize hierarchies and

---

France. Cambridge, 1993. It is revealing that both Latour and Cohen map out circulations to critique mutual interactions defined by binaries, such as "pasteurization," or "Americanization," respectively. On transnational design transfers and the Soviet bloc, see David Crowley. Paris or Moscow? Warsaw Architects and the Image of the Modern City in the 1950s // Kritika. 2008. Vol. 9. Pp. 769-798; Margareta Tillberg. Collaborative Design: The Electric Industry in Soviet Russia 1973–1979 // Focused: Swiss Design Network Symposium. Bern, 2008, Pp. 233-253; on the social dimension of trade within the strictly Soviet context, see Julie Hessler. A Social History of Soviet Trade: Trade Policy, Retail Practices, and Consumption, 1917–1953. Princeton, 2004.

[70] One of the yardsticks by which some historians have measured an empire's viability is the extent to which imperial centers were able to align their overall interests with those of the local populations. See John Lewis Gaddis. We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History. Oxford, 1997. Pp. 40-53; Sviatoslav I. Kaspe. Imperii: Genezis, struktura, funktsii // Polis. 1997. Vol. 5. Pp 31-48.

fix hegemonic power relations. Mobility, exchanges, flows, connections, interactions, and stability have functioned as core languages of the U.S. empire, while the gloss of post-sovereignty and technocracy have defined recent narratives of capitalist globalization. Closer to home, the notion of a "socialist second world" with its focus on integration via technology, economic, and scientific exchanges offers promising opportunities for reconceptualizing relations in the Soviet bloc. Yet, imbricated in the modernization theory of the 1960s, with its U.S.-centric vision of linear progress and resulting forms of power production, it too has to overcome the downward tug of a hefty legacy.[71]

In recent years, scholars studying both sides of the "Iron Curtain" have rejected the view of modernity as a uniquely Western phenomenon, or, indeed as the only variant thereof in the West or elsewhere.[72] In her critical overview of the "Americanization" paradigm in twentieth-century German history, Mary Nolan stressed the model's uneasy relationship with the narratives of German modernity. "Americanization" has been interpreted as a post-1945 alternative to the failed attempts to develop a traditional version of German modernity before World War II; or, as the eventual triumph of policies pursued since the early twentieth century. In each case, argued the historian, the "Americanization" paradigm "posits America as the only model of modernity and views other societies as incomplete versions of it." This makes it hard to take into account the ways in which other forms of modernity – fascist, socialist, or capitalist, for instance – interacted with one another. To confront this issue, Nolan proposes to "reconstruct the complex borrowings, multiple exchanges, and transnational flows" that accompanied

---

[71] See Michael Adas. Dominance by Design: Technological Imperatives and America's Civilizing Mission. Cambridge, MA, 2006; David C. Engerman and Corinna R. Unger. Introduction: Towards a Global History of Modernization // Diplomatic History. 2009. Vol. 33. Pp. 376-377; Marc Frey and Sönke Kunkel. Writing the History of Development: A Review of the Recent Literature // Contemporary European History. 2011. Vol. 20. No. 2. Pp. 215-232; Kramer. Power and Connection.

[72] Michael David-Fox has explored the ways in which the notion of "entangled modernities" could serve to reinvigorate current debates about Soviet modernity, bridge the gap between discussions of pre– and post–World War II periods and internationalize Soviet history. See Multiple Modernities vs. Neo-Traditionalism: On Recent Debates in Russian and Soviet History // Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas. 2006. Vol. 54. Pp. 536-555; Mary Nolan. Americanization as a Paradigm of German History // Frank Bless et. al. Conflict, Catastrophe and Continuity: Essays on Modern German History. New York, 2007. Pp. 200-220. In her current project on "Europe and America in the Twentieth Century," Nolan stresses the importance of multiple "Wests" and the difference between American and European interactions with the communist world.

Americanization, all of which "profoundly shaped" European economy, culture, and values.[73]

As *Ab Imperio*'s editors point out in describing this year's theme, the "second world," for instance, deserves a second chance. Decoupled from its normative connotations, it can be used as a broad framework for examining alternative modernities in action. Using it to analyze "development as history" can bring into focus the roles of Soviet bloc managers, experts, and governance more generally in the process of communist integration, thus highlighting the very kinds of power that modernization "theory" tended to conceal.[74] The potential new narrative should account for the ways in which hierarchies were created and claims were contested outside the narrow confines of "Sovietizaton." This is empire striking back with renewed force. Using the word is not necessary to examine the new dimensions of power, but it can help keep them in view. Some individuals tried to become modern via the new, rationalized, and coercive institutions of the party-states, industrialization, and cultural revolutions meant to involve the masses. This version of modernity set the tone – it justified empire but was largely mediated by it. At the same time, it coexisted and competed with others: people who traveled to, interacted with, or merely felt connected with other parts of the world realized themselves through participation in Western mass culture (via modern means of communication), consumerism, or the quintessentially modern spirit of artistic rebellion and iconoclasm.

The new, interfaced dimension of the Soviet bloc may be an important element in a larger narrative. Such a story would help make sense of the ways in which people in communist societies challenged the official vision of modernity, often by pursuing their own notions of the modern. The story must be explored with care and in dialogue with the existing and no less nuanced scholarship on Soviet–East European interactions. The new framework effectively opens up new possibilities for thinking about movement and integration, but hardly condemns the Sovietization paradigm to irrelevance. On the contrary, the narrative of Soviet and Soviet-sponsored incursions and reactions to it remains a powerful tool for investigating the real drama staged behind the Iron Curtain. It was a tragedy in which millions

---

[73] Nolan. Americanization. Pp. 206-207; compare this with Engerman and Unger's similar call to arms: Introduction. Pp. 376-377.

[74] Editors. The Diversity of Otherness in the Twentieth Century // Ab Imperio. 2011. No. 1. Pp. 15-20. For a new take on the "socialist second world," see also Elidor Mëhilli. Socialism as Exchange: The Transnational Eastern Bloc in the 1950s // Babiracki and Zimmer (Eds.). Cold War Crossings.

of reluctant and innocent actors suffered for actively opposing or simply living under communist authoritarianism. A continued, critical reflection on their experiences, and on what made them possible, is necessary to illuminate both the long-suppressed facts and certain systemic qualities of communism more generally. Recent studies of "Sovietization" have suggested that the concept can be used to explore the complex mechanisms of Soviet–East European interactions. While acknowledging the persistent utility of the concept, I also tried to underscore the ways in which the processes it came to describe may present a limitation.

The political movers and shakers behind the Iron Curtain enjoyed unquestionable successes in ensuring that people, things, objects, and ideas stayed put; in fact, by Western standards, the region might seem rather anemic. Yet in this field, there are goals more promising than matching the total mileage amassed by the freewheeling tourists, businessmen, philanthropists, missionaries, scientists, students, and bohemians of all hues in other parts of the world. One, I suggest, would be to simply reintegrate the narratives of both physical and imaginary motion under communism with stories that are structured around total stasis and isolation. Another would be to further the dialogue between the scholarship on cross-border transfers and exchanges in the Soviet bloc and the commentary on the Cold War in other parts of the world. In that sense, travels and exchanges might be the element of past human experience that can prove useful in making sense of the global history of the Cold War, and of modernity. While helping to disaggregate our contemporary analytic frameworks from the bipolar rhetoric of the recent past, it can also aid in setting out new challenges for the future.

SUMMARY

В статье рассматривается новейшая литература по истории советизации стран социалистического блока. Автор утверждает, что обращение к таким проблемам, как, например, туризм и потребление, поможет преодолеть ограничения традиционных подходов к этой истории. Патрик Бабирацкий рассматривает историографию вопроса и выделяет "парадигму советизации," согласно которой страны Восточной Европы подверглись превращению в советские сателлиты, их население разделилось на коллаборационистов и сопротивляющихся. Вместо этой парадигмы автор предлагает осмыслить историю социалистического

блока как "область контакта" (*interface*), в которой Восточная Европа видится как зона соревнующихся моделей современности. По мнению автора, такая трактовка позволяет использовать в истории социалистического блока современные подходы (например, характерные для транснациональной истории). Кроме того, автор рассматривает полезность категории "империя" для осмысления истории социалистических стран. Не отрицая эмоциональной нагрузки термина, автор отмечает богатую литературу по имперским исследованиям и потенциал этой категории для описания таких фактов, как обязательства СССР по отношению к своим сателлитам в Восточной Европе (в области политики) или культурное влияние Восточной Европы на СССР (на уровне общественной жизни). Парадигма советизации не помогает описанию этих малоисследованных вопросов. Статья содержит подробный историографический анализ литературы по истории Восточной Европы в годы холодной войны и по истории взаимоотношений СССР и стран социалистического лагеря.