



Department of History and Civilization

**Soviet Internationalism after Stalin.
The USSR and Latin America in the Cultural
Cold War**

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Abstract

This thesis, an entangled history of the Soviet Union and Latin America from the 1950s through the 1970s, explores Soviet internationalism as it re-emerged after the self-inflicted isolation of the USSR during late Stalinism. Referring to an idealised notion of pre-Stalin socialism, Soviet politicians and intellectuals, after 1953, revived internationalism as a guiding principle in relation to internal as well as external audiences. De-Stalinization at home happened against the backdrop of the Cold War, which had shifted its focus from Europe to the emerging Third World. Latin America, unlike South-East Asia or Africa with a distinct history of relations with the Soviets from early on, became again a target of Soviet advances. No longer, however, did the Soviets propagate the violent overthrow of governments; they now sought to win over anti-imperialist politicians in office, intellectuals of different political leanings and future elites as friends of the Soviet state. The first chapter analyses a range of activities that were meant to present the Soviet Union to Latin Americans as a technologically and culturally advanced modern state. The chapters three and four examine the surprising successes and some shortcomings of these endeavours with Latin American intellectuals and students respectively. Before that, however, the second chapter looks at the impact that the new internationalist activities had on the Soviet Union itself. It will be argued that the cautious re-opening of the country to the world did not, as is sometimes suggested, immediately undermine Soviet values and spread Western ideas of liberalism and consumerism instead. Contacts with countries of the Global South, which were often less developed than the Soviet Union, and that were in many cases victims of imperialist policies, initially proved to many Soviet politicians and intellectuals the ostensible superiority of their own system, while the majority of the Soviet population enjoyed internationalism through the consumption of a politicised exoticist popular culture. Stalin's successors announced a return to *socialist* internationalism, and a number of its most active promoters are presented in the last chapter. But at the same time, the end of isolation also meant a re-integration of the Soviet Union, at political, scientific, intellectual and cultural levels, into a global community under the conditions of the Cold War. I refer to this specific conglomeration of revolutionary and integrative ideals as 'Soviet internationalism after Stalin'.

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The transliteration of Russian follows the international scientific ISO 9 standard, with the exception of commonly known personal names.

Introduction

The cautious re-opening of the Soviet Union during the Thaw | The cultural Cold War and Soviet internationalism | In-between South and West. Latin America and the Third World in the 1950s to 70s | A short history of Soviet-Latin American relations and the ways it has been told so far | Scenes from a long distance relationship. Theories, narrative structure and theses

Late Stalinism, the period between the end of the Second World War and the death of the dictator in 1953, was the most isolated period of Soviet history. The political leaders saw the world as divided into two parts, and everything outside of their own camp as ruled by unalterably hostile capitalist and imperialist war-mongers, eager to annihilate the Soviet Union. Internationalism, once a fundamental Bolshevik principle, had long been subordinated to the political goals of ‘socialism in one country’ after Lenin’s death and Trotsky’s ousting; foreign contacts had abated from the end of the 1930s. While the Second World War forced a specific form of violent interaction with the world abroad upon Soviet citizens, the USSR, with the onset of the Cold War in 1947, isolated itself more than ever from foreign countries beyond the control of the Soviet Army. Scholars were cut off from most international scientific discourses, and compliant writers claimed any notable invention to be of Russian origin. ‘Cosmopolitanism’ came to be a perilous reproach and a justification for renewed terror, often with anti-Semitic undertones, against the populations of now both the Soviet Union and its new satellite states and annexed territories in Eastern Europe. A "myth of encirclement"¹ was to bond together Soviet citizens, decimated and traumatised by the war, behind their leaders. Only their wise policies, they claimed, could provide the so desperately wanted peace and stability. By the late 1940s, the cultural and intellectual isolation of the post-war Soviet Union was almost complete; even international marriages were illegal. Western observers like Isaiah Berlin noticed the complete ignorance of the Soviet intelligentsia about contemporary cultural life abroad.² For ordinary Soviet citizens, Vladimir Zubok wrote, "meeting a foreigner was less likely than seeing a total solar eclipse. Foreign travel was unimaginable. Comparison between the Soviet experience and life in other countries was almost impossible."³ With the exception of not very extensive contacts with the

¹ ELENA ZUBKOVA: *Russia after the War. Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945-1957*. Armonk, Sharpe 1998, pp. 84–87.

² VLADISLAV ZUBOK: *Zhivago's Children. The Last Russian Intelligentsia*. Cambridge, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2009, p. 14.

³ ZUBOK 2009, p. 21.

people's democracies in Eastern Europe, the Soviet population remained isolated from the rest of the world and had a very hazy idea of what was 'out there'.⁴

This thesis, an entangled history of the Soviet Union and Latin America from the mid 1950s, explores how this extreme isolationism ended after the death of Stalin. The Soviet political and intellectual elite now harked back ideologically to what they saw as unspoiled Leninist socialism of the 1920s, and thus also rekindled internationalism as an integral ideational component of the Soviet project. Yet the cautious opening to the world also brought Soviet intellectuals and citizens back into selected realms of contemporary world culture. At the same time, the Northern hemisphere was politically divided into two hostile camps; both the United States and the Soviet Union tried to win over the emerging Third World to their side, and culture was an pivotal battlefield of this struggle for the hearts and minds of the world public. It was within this tension between international cultural integration and political delimitation from the West that Soviet contacts with distant Latin America (re-)emerged on several levels. In five chapters, this thesis sheds spotlights on five different fields of interaction between Soviet and Latin American societies and individual agents roughly through the mid 1970s; they all explore how Soviet internationalism after Stalin was designed on a political level and how it was received by internal and external addressees. In the early cultural Cold War, it will be argued, the Soviet Union was often a more active and, measured against its own aims, more successful player than is usually acknowledged. In a first step, the introduction contextualises this entangled history within the different strands of scholarship concerned – Soviet history, the historiography of the Cold War, Latin American history and the history of International Relations between the two world areas.

The cautious re-opening of the Soviet Union during the Thaw

Nikita Khrushchev, who emerged as the new strongman in the Soviet Communist party (CPSU) in the mid 1950s, promised a return to normality: he condemned Stalin's "excesses" at the 20th Party Congress in 1956 and claimed to be putting the country back on the track of Leninism. While it still took the new leadership years to disband the Gulag, terror campaigns

⁴ JAN C. BEHREND: *Die erfundene Freundschaft. Propaganda für die Sowjetunion in Polen und in der DDR*. Köln, Böhlau 2006; ELLEN BRUN; JACQUES HERSH: *Soviet- Third World Relations in a Capitalist World. The Political Economy of Broken Promises*. New York, St. Martin's Press 1990, p. 36; WOLFGANG KASACK: 'Kulturelle Außenpolitik', in: OSKAR ANWEILER and KARL-HEINZ RUFFMANN (EDS.): *Kulturpolitik der Sowjetunion*. Stuttgart, Kröner 1973, pp. 345–392.

and official anti-Semitic discrimination stopped immediately. The late 1950s and early 1960s, labelled the ‘Thaw’ after Ilya Ehrenburg’s novel, were a phase of great optimism for Soviet citizens. The consumer situation improved distinctly, and over 100 million citizens could finally move into their own flats. With all its painful losses, the victory in the Second World War was a source of national pride, and the gigantic successes of the space programme made the majority of Soviet citizens believe they were on the right track. Writers and artists enjoyed an amount of freedom unknown since the 1920s, epitomised by Khrushchev’s support for the publication of Aleksandr Solženicyn’s novella *Odin den’ Ivana Denisoviča* (translated to English as “One day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich”) about everyday life in the Gulag.

There is still no monograph on the social history of the Soviet Union during the Thaw, but scholars have approached the topic from a number of angles. The bulk of contributions deal with attempts and deficiencies in coming to terms with the legacy of Stalin. They all, however, focus almost exclusively on inner developments of the Soviet Union. The German standard reference *Handbuch der Geschichte Russlands* features 1300 pages on the post-war USSR. Just like the *Cambridge History of Russia*, it dedicates only one tiny paragraph on the involvement in the decolonising Third World, and not a trace of a word on how that may have affected ordinary citizens.⁵

Stalin’s long shadow certainly lay over Soviet society until the dismantling in 1991. But one of the crucial characteristics of the changes in the mid 1950s was that they, to some extent, ended the immense international isolation and fear of everything foreign during late Stalinism. Soviet leaders and political intellectuals now shaped a number of concepts that were to determine Soviet relations with the non-Communist world. On the 20th Party Congress in 1956, Khrushchev announced that the Soviet Union sought a peaceful coexistence of the superpowers. War between the ideological antagonists was no longer considered inevitable; international contacts with states of different social systems should be established on political, cultural and scientific levels.⁶ This retreat was not an entirely new idea, and it was not Khrushchev who uttered it for the first time: already in October 1952,

⁵ MELANIE ILIC (ED.): *Soviet State and Society under Nikita Khrushchev*. London, Routledge 2009; MIRIAM DOBSON: *Khrushchev's Cold Summer. Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press 2009; POLLY JONES (ED.): *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization. Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era*. London, Routledge 2007; RONALD GRIGOR SUNY: *The Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2006; CARSTEN GOEHRKE: *Sowjetische Moderne und Umbruch*. Zürich, Chronos 2005; MELANIE ILIC; SUSAN EMILY REID; LYNNE ATTWOOD (EDS.): *Women in the Khrushchev Era*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan 2004; CHRISTOPH BLUTH; STEFAN PLAGGENBORG; MANFRED HELLMANN: *Handbuch der Geschichte Russlands. 1945-1991. Vom Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs bis zum Zusammenbruch der Sowjetunion*. Stuttgart, Hiersemann 2003.

⁶ Pravda, 15-2-1956.

CPSU secretary Georgij Malenkov, replacing the ailing Stalin at the 19th Congress, had hinted at a possibility of *mirnoe sosuščestvovanie* (“peaceful coexistence”). With one foot in the grave, Stalin himself had repeated this to a visiting Argentinean economic delegation later that month.⁷ But only Khrushchev gave contour to the concept when he declared it meant to determine relations with Western Europe and North America. The rest of the world was called a “peace zone”, but, in fact, was to be guided to socialism by the USSR. Khrushchev spoke at length at the 20th Congress about the awakening of the colonial peoples and national liberation movements and also put Latin America in their context, calling Chile and Brazil “semi-colonial states”. “Where possible, a peaceful path to socialism shall be chosen”, Khrushchev put it, but “where reactionaries cling to power with force, Communists will have to fight, too!” The Politburo confirmed this new grand foreign policy in November 1957 and it was suggested as general strategy at the first World Congress of Communist and Labour Parties in Moscow later that year.⁸

How exactly the underdeveloped world should proceed to socialism was still anything but clear at the time, and a lack of actual knowledge about conditions in many parts of the world prevented the formulation of more elaborated concepts. Seeking ideological orientation, Soviet theorists now took inspiration from two sources: their own past and the example of the contemporary world abroad. Already in the early days of Soviet Russia, the Bolsheviks had sought to stabilise their power by a number of pragmatic ideological adjustments. Internally, the *novaja ekonomičeskaja politika* (“new economic policy”) allowed small scale private trade within the country. And external alignments with not necessarily communist, but anti-imperialist states should counterbalance Western hostility against the Soviets on the international level. The concept of a *nekapitalističeskij put’ razvitija* (“non-capitalist path of development”), which justified collaboration with countries that did not have a socialist revolution, was applied to Mongolia first and to a number of other states later. National political freedom, the theory had it, was the first precondition for utter independence, which could come only at a later stage, when Western economic dominance would be overcome.

Nascent Turkey was a case in point. In 1920, the Soviets organised the Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku, where 235 Turkish delegates from the disintegrating Ottoman Empire took part. Mikhail Frunze came for a lengthy period to Ankara for talks with Mustafa

⁷ BRUN; HERSH 1990, p. 37; JAMES RICHARD CARTER: *The Net Cost of Soviet Foreign Aid*. New York, Praeger 1969, p. 5.

⁸ ALEKSANDR FURSENKO: *Prezidium CK KPSS. 1954-1964*. Moskva, Rossijskaja Političeskaja Enciklopedija 2003, pp. doc 138, bd 1; FREDERIC C. BARGHOORN: *Soviet Foreign Propaganda*. Princeton, Princeton University Press 1964, p. 30.

Kemal and prepared a Turkish-Soviet contract that was finally signed in 1925. Similar approaches were made to the Chinese nationalist Chiang Kai Shek, who finally led the Soviets to renounce their policy when he had ten thousands of Chinese Communists killed in a 1927 massacre. From 1930, the theory of *non-capitalist development* was taken out of the Comintern statutes. Stalin never bothered much with colonial countries anyway; he showed little interest in Communist parties outside Europe, China and Korea, and he disbanded Comintern altogether in 1943 to please the Western allies in the Second World War. In 1960, however, foreign policy theoreticians, seeking for orientation, dug out the concept.

Based on ideas of *non-capitalist development*, the Moscow Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) designed the concept of *nacional'no-demokratičeskie gosudarstva* (“national-democratic states”) that was to forge an anti-imperialist alliance between the states of the socialist camp and national non-communist (“bourgeois”) leaders, who had been considered chief class enemies during late Stalinism.⁹ The debates took place to the backdrop of the early days of the Cuban revolutionary government and recent experience with anti-Western governments in Ghana, Mali, Guinea and the United Arab Republic. That revolutions like those in Cuba and Egypt had taken place without any participation of the local CP and still brought about Soviet friendly administrations, even convinced the Kremlin to give up the Leninist *conditio sine qua non* that Communist parties had to be somehow included or at least tolerated by the bourgeois national leaders.¹⁰

In September 1960, Khrushchev gave his notorious speech to the 15th General Assembly of the United Nations in New York, where he demanded complete decolonisation and offered help to the newly created states. The concept of the *national-democratic states* was presented before the second World Congress of Communist and Labour Parties in the Soviet capital in November. The participants, including representatives from all 20 Latin American countries, stated in what came to be known the ‘Moscow declaration’: “peaceful coexistence does not mean abandonment of class struggle, ... it is a form of class struggle between socialism and capitalism. Peaceful coexistence offers good conditions for the national liberation movements of the peoples of the colonial and dependent countries.”¹¹

The declaration found its way into the CPSU programme draft of 1961, and at the 22nd Party Congress in 1962, Khrushchev specified four criteria for Soviet help: the *national-democratic*

⁹ BORIS PONOMAREV: ‘O gosudarstve nacional'noj demokratii’. *Kommunist* 8 (1961), pp. 33–48.

¹⁰ JACQUES LÉVESQUE: *The USSR and the Cuban Revolution. Soviet Ideological and Strategic Perspectives, 1959-77*. New York, Praeger 1978, p. 61; ROBERT FURTAK: ‘The Cuban Impact on Soviet Ideology and Strategy vis-à-vis the Third World’. *Studies on the Soviet Union* 2 (1968), pp. 100–115, p. 101.

¹¹ *New York Times*, 7-12-1960.

states were to refrain from joining military blocs and should not permit the establishment of military bases on their soil. They had to concede democratic rights for progressive organisations, labour unions and Communist parties. Thirdly, they should confront or restrict Western economic interests, and, finally, they should introduce reforms that aimed at improving social conditions in their countries. In fact, the Kremlin never cared about any of these criteria but the first.¹²

In the tumultuous early 1960s, reality quickly surpassed Soviet theory construction. Based on developments in Cuba and Algeria, the new category *revoljucionnaja demokratija* (“revolutionary democracy”) encompassed, from 1963, all those states that actively pushed forward a revolutionary programme and maintained good relations with the Soviet Union, without having either a politicised working class or an influential Communist party.¹³ Before long, Soviet commentators used the concepts of *revolutionary democracy* and *national-democratic state* interchangeably. Nikolaj Leonov, the KGB-expert for Latin America, recalled that, in the implementation of these theories, they were not too meticulous about details either: “on the Party Congresses, we assured the national liberation movements of all countries of our support. Then the usual improvising with the Third World representatives started, according to the principle *Davaj, davaj – žiruj, žiruj!*¹⁴ (literally: “there you go, get fat!”, more or less in the sense: “whatever you stand for, just take what you need!”)

The import of these new concepts was that the notion of a categorically hostile capitalist world abroad was challenged – and that there was reason for optimism to see socialism realised in a peaceful way in the Third World. Foreign policy makers had the Soviet Army withdraw from Austria and Finland, gave up claims on Turkish territory and, conceding that there were different paths to socialism, reconciled with Yugoslavia. In the wake of the 1955 Bandung Conference, which signalled a potential anti-imperialist alliance with the emerging Third World, Khrushchev travelled to India, Burma and Afghanistan. On this occasion, as during other trips to Egypt, Indonesia and altogether 35 countries, the Soviet party boss and his accompanying leading statesmen (often including Ekaterina Furceva, the only woman in the Politburo and Soviet Minister of Culture), journalists and intellectuals offered Soviet assistance and friendship.¹⁵ Beyond these state-to-state contacts, the USSR became a member

¹² BRUN; HERSH 1990, pp. 39f.; ROLLIE POPPINO: *International Communism in Latin America. A History of the Movement 1917-1963*. Glencoe, Free Press of Glencoe 1964, p. 169; PONOMAREV 1961.

¹³ LÉVESQUE 1978, p. 61; Pravda, 22-12-1963.

¹⁴ NIKOLAI LEONOV: *Licholet'e. Sekretnye missii*. Moskva, Meždunarodnye Otnošenija 1995, p. 111.

¹⁵ ALEKSEJ ADSHUBEJ: *Gestürzte Hoffnung. Meine Erinnerungen an Chrutschow*. Berlin, Henschel 1990, p. 250.

of over 200 international organisations from the Red Cross over the International Olympic Committee to many UN-suborganisations it had boycotted so far, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNESCO (both in 1954) or the World Health Organization (WHO, in 1957).¹⁶

While these integrative approaches on a political level are rather well studied, this thesis seeks to explore how the opening up of the Soviet Union concerned also intellectuals and ordinary people. Soviets citizens were still restricted in their freedom of movement, and peasants were not even free to travel within the Soviet Union until the early 1970s. But interacting with the ‘foreign’, in personal contacts as much as through representations, was much more an everyday experience especially for educated city dwellers, than during late Stalinism. The country that, in 1953, had still claimed officially to have invented the steam engine, the light bulb and television, held, five years later, 20 international scientific congresses. Soviet scientists could travel abroad again to attend congresses in their field – or even symbolic gatherings for the sake of international cooperation like the 1957 Pugwash Conference in Canada. In the early 1960s, some 1500 Soviet doctors were sent abroad every year. Soviet radio broadcast 2000 hours weekly from 147 stations to all over the world already in 1956 and expanded this programme for years to come. Soviet publishing houses had an average 100 million books per year printed for the outside world.¹⁷ Already from 1956 to 1958, two million Soviet citizens travelled abroad, and one and a half million foreigners visited the USSR. By 1964, the yearly number of foreign tourists who flocked into the Soviet Union had surpassed one million. In the years of 1955 to 1958 alone, 20,000 Soviet artists were sent to 60 countries around the world, more than half of them to non-socialist parts of the world. The number rose to an impressive 80,000 Soviet artists abroad and about the same number of foreign artists in the Soviet Union between 1961 and 1965.¹⁸

The history of the Soviet Union was not only determined by politicians and apparatchiks: after the death of Stalin and the revelation of his crimes, a new generation of mostly young and urban Soviet citizens, the later so-called *šestidesjatkiki* (“the ‘60ers”), strove for socialism with a human face. Referring to Lenin and a glorified notion of leftist culture of the 1920s,

¹⁶ CHRIS OSAKWE: *The Participation of the Soviet Union in Universal International Organizations. A Political and Legal Analysis of Soviet Strategies and Aspirations inside ILO, UNESCO and WHO*. Leiden, Brill 1972.

¹⁷ RICHARD STITES: ‘Heaven and Hell. Soviet Propaganda Constructs the World’, in: GARY RAWNSLEY (ED.): *Cold-War Propaganda in the 1950s*. Basingstoke, Hampshire, MacMillan 1999, pp. 84–103, p. 88; SERGEJ ROMANOVSKIJ (ED.): *Meždunarodnye naučnye i kul’turnye svjazi SSSR*. Moskva, Gosizdat 1966, pp. 135f.; 101-107; 234-237; Spravka o kul’turnich svjazjach Sovetskogo Sojusa s zarubežnymi stranami, undated, GARF f.9518 op.1 d. 343 l.169-173.

¹⁸ ROMANOVSKIJ, ED. 1966, pp. 47f.; 128.

they longed for revolutionary activity and displayed an “idealistic sense of social and moral justice”.¹⁹ With this reference, they, too, revived the socialist internationalism of the early Soviet Union. In its specific form after 1953, internationalism was not only a political concept, but an officially promoted attitude that was adopted by large parts of the intelligentsia and the population. By the end of the 1960s, an impressive number of 40 million Soviet citizens were members of international friendship societies.²⁰ While contacts with foreigners and the world abroad were always subjected to restrictive Soviet laws and official fears – particularly of Western influence –, they would increase steadily in number and importance in the years to come.

The cultural Cold War and Soviet internationalism

Soviet contacts with the rest of the world, at the political as much as at other levels, invariably happened to the backdrop of the Cold War. Scholarship of the latter was long a field for political scientists and military historians, and a lack of information on Soviet internal affairs and little academic interest in the Global South resulted in a rather Western-Eurocentric view of the system conflict. Some years after the end of the Cold War, historians broadened the understanding of the conflict substantially. Finally accessible Russian archival material did not change the picture fundamentally. But it added valuable insights into processes of political decision making, into the ideological dispositions of Soviet leaders and ended what Gaddis Smith had called a “clapping with one hand” in Cold War historiography.²¹

While the Soviet perspective of the conflict gained more weight in Western scholarship of the 1990s, the latter also often reflected a contemporary triumphalist *zeitgeist*, and the so-called *Reagan-Victory-School* irritated with its moralist narratives of a victory of good against evil.²² More equilibrated accounts followed soon and increasingly included the vast parts of the

¹⁹ ZUBOK 2009; VLADISLAV ZUBOK: *A Failed Empire. The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev*. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press 2007, p. 191; JULIANE FÜRST: ‘The Arrival of Spring? Changes and Continuities in Soviet Youth Culture and Policy between Stalin and Khrushchev’, in: POLLY JONES (ED.): *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization. Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era*. London, Routledge 2007, pp. 135–153, p. 141; PETR VAJL; ALEKSANDR GENIS: *60-e. Mir sovetskogo čeloveka*. Moskva, Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie 2001.

²⁰ ‘Im Namen von 40 Millionen’. *Kultur und Leben* 11 (1971), pp. 18–20; NINA POPOVA: ‘Über die Tätigkeit und die Aufgaben des Verbandes der Freundschaftsgesellschaften’. *Kultur und Leben* 4 (1962), pp. 6–9.

²¹ <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=22439> (last access 14-11-2008).

²² JOHN LEWIS GADDIS: *We Now Know. Rethinking Cold War History*. Oxford, Oxford University Press 1998.

planet, where the Cold War was actually quite hot.²³ Scholarship had long reproduced the political dualism of East and West. Assessments of many Third World countries now complemented the picture of a *Global Cold War*.²⁴ Historians underlined both the active role of Third World elites, their impact back on the superpowers and the terrible consequences the conflict had for the populations of many states outside the Eastern and Western blocs.²⁵

As for Soviet foreign policy, it is a longstanding question, whether it was driven rather by interests of power and political realism – or by Communist ideology. Recent historiography tended to take ideas and convictions again more seriously than the “post-revisionist” generation before them, which thought in categories of *empire* and *realpolitik*.²⁶

Arne Westad saw Soviet Third World policy as a Marxist continuation of old Russian missionary-imperialist thought and as a continuation of late European imperialism: “its objectives were not exploitation or subjection, but control and improvement.”²⁷ Shaped by these *longue durée* ideas, Soviet political leaders had also concrete geopolitical and security interests and sought recognition as a world superpower. With his “revolutionary-imperialist paradigm”, Vladimir Zubok has offered a workable concept to reconcile ideas and power.²⁸ In his history of the Soviet Union in the Cold War, he argues convincingly that there is actually no contradiction between geopolitical interests and their interpretation in categories of Marxist-Leninist ideology. This thesis adds other ideational roots of Soviet conceptions of the world: vertical-historically, the experience of the forced modernisation of its inner periphery in Central Asia and the Caucasus in the 1920s and 30s, and, horizontal-contemporarily, the direct impact of events in the Third World as the Soviet leadership perceived it from the mid 1950s.

²³ WILLIAM WOHLFORTH: ‘Superpowers, Interventions and the Third World’. *Cold War History* 6/3 (2006), pp. 365–371, p. 367; FURSENKO 2003; ALEKSANDR FURSENKO; TIMOTHY J. NAFTALI: ‘One Hell of a Gamble’. *Khrushchev, Castro, Kennedy, and the Cuban Missile Crisis 1958-1964*. London, John Murray 1997; see also: H-Diplo 7/13 (2007), <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/KhrushchevsColdWar-Roundtable.pdf> (last access 3-11-2008).

²⁴ ODD ARNE WESTAD: *The Global Cold War. Third World Interventions and the Making of our Times*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2007.

²⁵ FEDERICO ROMERO: *Storia della guerra fredda. L'ultimo conflitto per l'Europa*. Torino, Giulio Einaudi 2009; ODD ARNE WESTAD: *Reviewing the Cold War. Approaches, Interpretations, Theory*. London, Cass 2006; BERND GREINER (ED.): *Heiße Kriege im Kalten Krieg*. Hamburg, Hamburger Edition 2006; ROGER E. KANET: ‘The Superpower Quest for Empire. Cold War and Soviet Support for ‘Wars of National Liberation’’. *Cold War History* 3 (2006), pp. 331–352; CHRISTOPHER ANDREW; VASILIJ MITROCHIN: *The World was Going our Way. The KGB and the Battle for the Third World*. New York, Basic Books 2005; TONY SMITH: ‘New Bottles for New Wine. A Pericentric Framework for the Study of the Cold War’. *Diplomatic History* 24 (2000), pp. 567–591.

²⁶ STEVE SMITH: ‘Two Cheers for the ‘Return of Ideology’’. *Revolutionary Russia* 17/2 (2004), pp. 119–135.

²⁷ WESTAD 2007, p. 5.

²⁸ ZUBOK 2007.

Zubok's book is also interesting for dedicating a chapter to the Soviet *home front*. Most other accounts of the Cold War, including Westad's, remain at the level of a history of events, high politics and great men; only few include the impact of the conflict on societies beyond their political and intellectual elites; if they do so, they usually only introduce the perspective of the United States.²⁹ The implications of the system conflict on Soviet culture, everyday life and mentalities are as understudied as insightful: the sincere belief – of political leaders, the intelligentsia and the population – that they possessed a superior model of society that needed to be promoted across the globe, was actually widespread in the Soviet society of the 1950s and 60s. The Cold War has turned out to have been not only a power struggle of two military blocs, but a competition of different visions on how to organise modern society.

The concept of the 'Cold War' altogether has recently come under attack from several sides. A consideration of phenomena of societal developments during the system conflict raises the question to what extent they actually belonged to the geopolitical realm of the Cold War. The rise of international social, non-governmental and inter-governmental organisations has led some scholars to believe that, in the long run, the Cold War was only a sideshow of historical development in the second half of the 20th century, overshadowed by the forces of globalisation.³⁰ Others state that, for large parts of the world's population, the Cold War was neither cold nor was it a single war; some thus suggest replacing the name with "East-West-conflict".³¹

The latter concept, however, is misleading as it blurs the differences between an ideational rivalry between the United States and Russia that dates back to the mid 19th century and the concrete geopolitical constellation as it emerged after the Second World War. I thus suggest a double meaning of Cold War (with capital letters): on the one hand, it was a confrontation of two empires after 1945, with their respective political systems, authoritarian state socialism and liberal capitalism, and their empires of satellite states and allies. On the other hand, the Cold War refers – semantically incorrectly, but so far without a viable substitute – to a world historical epoch roughly between the end of the Second World War and the end of state socialism in Eastern Europe. Many political processes worldwide that were originally

²⁹ Notable exceptions are: BERND STÖVER: *Der Kalte Krieg 1947-1991. Geschichte eines radikalen Zeitalters*. München, Beck 2007; MARSHALL T. POE: *The Russian Moment in World History*. Princeton, Princeton University Press 2003, p. 90; PATRICK MAJOR; RANA MITTER: 'East is East and West is West? Towards a Comparative Socio-Cultural History of the Cold War'. *Cold War History* 4/1 (2003), pp. 1–22, p. 3.

³⁰ AKIRA IRIYE: *Global Community. The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World*. Berkeley, University of California Press 2004; AKIRA IRIYE: *Cultural Internationalism and World Order*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press 1997.

³¹ JOST DÜLFER: *Europa im Ost-West-Konflikt. 1945-1990*. München, Oldenbourg 2004.

independent of the system conflict were polarised through the conflict between East and West. Other phenomena, especially socio-cultural ones outside the East-West axis, proceeded, also during the epoch of the Cold War, without noteworthy impact of the system conflict.

This definition is in line with recent usage by most European and North American scholars. Also in Latin America, the common concept of the Cold War today refers to a period from 1947, when both the *Tratado interamericano de Asistencia Recíproca* (“Inter-American treaty of mutual assistance”, TIAR), and the *Organización de los Estados Americanos* (“Organisation of American States”, OEA) were founded, until 1989/91, when not only the socialist regimes of Eastern Europe, but also the last military juntas in Chile and Paraguay came to a close. The concept of *cholodnaja vojna* (“cold war”) in the Soviet Union usually referred only to the short period from late Stalinism to the Cuban missile crisis; recently, younger Russian scholars, too, have used it to describe the entire period until the end of the USSR.

The cultural Cold War

The renewed interest in the ideational roots of the Cold War, and the influence of Gramsci-inspired Cultural Studies on historiography in general, have led some scholars to assess the Cold War from entirely new perspectives. Instead of looking, from above, at policies and diplomatic documents, they based their analyses, bottom up, on cultural artefacts. The superpowers, they claimed, sought *egemonia* not only at the geopolitical, but also the cultural level, and cultural representations were used to woo internal and external audiences. The United States as much as the Soviet Union put enormous efforts into proving to the world – and to themselves – the superiority of their respective systems through complex programmes of what could be called “cultural warfare”. The cultural Cold War in this sense was not a sideshow of the “real” conflict, but at its very centre: political decision makers, on the one hand, realised that a good image had concrete advantages for their state, as it strengthened its position in the international system vesting it with “soft power”³²; and its political organisations, at the same time, gained legitimacy if they managed to convince their own populations of their successful policies on the international stage. On the other hand, culture played a crucial role in the way the Cold War was perceived by ordinary people who lived through it. For today’s scholarly assessments of the Cold War, in the end, phenomena of the

³² JOSEPH NYE: ‘Soft Power’. *Foreign Policy* 80/3 (1990), pp. 153–171.

cultural Cold War were an expression of the ideational grounds of the conflict and thus allow for the reconstruction of the latter much better than state treaties or military strategies.

The literature in the field is already abundant, yet most authors share a somewhat one-sided analytical framework.³³ Sometimes the cultural Cold War even appears as something that happened exclusively inside the United States.³⁴ The bulk of literature concentrates on US activities and their results on a passively receiving Soviet Union. The iron curtain was finally raised or parted, so the master narrative goes, thanks to the success of US consumer culture in the Soviet Union.³⁵ Yet what in retrospect may look as a story of a one-directional influence, started out from a much more contingent situation in the mid 1950s. This requires a methodological concept that sees the Soviet Union as a much more active player in the game.³⁶ Some research has been done lately, but still focuses on late Stalinism and geographically on Europe.³⁷ Most of what is known about Soviet activities in the cultural Cold War on a global scale is still written with a certain bias towards Western contemporaries, who wrote their books not with an exclusively academic interest, but as warnings against Communist infiltration. Yet what they saw as a “gigantic totalitarian PR-campaign”³⁸ was in fact often quite similar to activities of their own governments.

This thesis seeks to contribute to the scholarship of the cultural Cold War. The social and cultural dimensions and the everyday experience of the conflict are understudied on the Soviet side. Telling the story of the Soviet home front as an entangled history with selected groups from Latin America offers certain advantages: it looks at interactions below state

³³ HUGH WILFORD: *The Mighty Wurlitzer. How the CIA Played America*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press 2008; DAVID CAUTE: *The Dancer Defects. The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War*. Oxford, Oxford University Press 2003; FRANCES STONOR SAUNDERS: *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War*. London, Granta Books 2000.

³⁴ LAURA BELMONTE: *Selling the American Way. U.S. Propaganda and the Cold War*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press 2008; GARY RAWNSLEY (ED.): *Cold-War Propaganda in the 1950s*. Basingstoke, Hampshire, MacMillan 1999.

³⁵ YALE RICHMOND: *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War. Raising the Iron Curtain*. University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press 2003; WALTER L. HIXSON: *Parting the Curtain. Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961*. New York, St. Martin's Griffin 1998; similar: ALAN M. BALL: *Imagining America. Influence and Images in Twentieth-Century Russia*. Lanham, Md., Rowman & Littlefield 2003; MARILYN KUSHNER: 'Exhibiting Art at the American National Exhibition in Moscow, 1959. Domestic Politics and Cultural Diplomacy'. *Journal of Cold War Studies* 1 (2002), pp. 6–26; PAMELA KACHURIN: 'The ROCI Road to Peace. Robert Rauschenberg, Perestroika and the End of the Cold War'. *Journal of Cold War Studies* 1 (2002), pp. 27–44; DMITRI SARAB'YANOV; JOHN BOWLT: 'Keepers of the Flame. An Exchange of Art and Western Cultural Influences in the USSR after World War II'. *Journal of Cold War Studies* 1 (2002), pp. 81–87.

³⁶ NIGEL GOULD-DAVIES: 'The Logic of Soviet Cultural Diplomacy'. *Diplomatic History* 27/2 (2003), pp. 193–214.

³⁷ BEHREND 2006; THOMAS LINDENBERGER (ED.): *Massenmedien im Kalten Krieg. Akteure, Bilder Resonanzen*. Köln, Böhlau 2006; STITES 1999, p. 88.

³⁸ BARGHOORN 1964; similar: CLIVE ROSE: *The Soviet Propaganda Network. A Directory of Organisations Serving Soviet Foreign Policy*. London, Pinter 1988; OSKAR ANWEILER; KARL-HEINZ RUFFMANN (EDS.): *Kulturpolitik der Sowjetunion*. Stuttgart, Kröner 1973.

level, it goes beyond the purely political dimension of International Relations, and it underlines the role played by cultural exchange and cultural currents in the development of the Cold War. This transnational dimension makes clear how, also in the Soviet case, the domestic and the foreign were intertwined: internationalism was directed to audiences at home as much as abroad. Finally, giving room to the foreign perspective on the Soviet Union allows for reflections on the successes and shortcomings of Soviet advances to the Third World.

Internationalism

The cultural Cold War was part of a geopolitical confrontation of two opposing political systems, but the “weapons” both used were almost identical. The means, if not always the contents, of Soviet and US activities were part of what Akira Iriye has called ‘cultural internationalism’: attempts to build cultural understanding, international cooperation, and a sense of shared values across national borders through cultural, scientific or student exchanges. Iriye has hinted at the impact that early Communist internationalism had on his concept of a ‘global community’ from early on, but never went to details and concentrated on Asian and Western activities instead.³⁹ This thesis tries to fill the gap by putting the entangled history of the Soviet Union and Latin America in the context of the international history of the Cold War. Integrative developments in the history of the second half of the 20th century, this thesis argues, were not only engendered by the West and under Western terms.

The concepts of ‘transnationalism’ and ‘internationalism’ have not yet been defined to universal satisfaction; their usage thus requires some explanation. ‘Transnational’ connotes a certain distance from the state and rather emphasises the agency of individuals or societal groups across national boundaries. While states, in particular the Soviet one, played an important role in organising, approving (or inhibiting) contacts across borders, and the Iron Curtain of the Cold War, agents on both sides nonetheless moved, acted and influenced others ‘transnationally’. The term is used here occasionally when appropriate. ‘Globalisation’, by contrast, suggests liberalised economics and finances and refers to integrating and levelling – while usually not linear – processes that rather undermine the influence of national policy. The entanglements in focus here destabilised neither the Soviet nor any Latin American state nor were they linked to liberal economic policy; thus ‘globalisation’ is a much less adequate

³⁹ IRIYE 1997.

term here than another one, which reflects the self-conception of those persons involved: the “essentially nineteenth century concept” of ‘internationalism’.⁴⁰

The *Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History* defines the latter as “the idea that nations need to cooperate with each other for peace in the community of the world” and presents US-led market liberalism, Soviet-led socialism and Third World solidarity as three rivalling internationalisms of the Cold War era. But the Western model of a global free market, plus the existence of a world opinion and international organisations, is in the foreground of most definitions.⁴¹ Others separate distinct multiple versions of internationalism: a conservative model, usually in the form of anti-revolutionary or religious international solidarity; a liberal one based on open markets and human rights; and socialist internationalism in two variants: social democratic reformism and communist proletarian solidarity, from 1945 also based on interstate relations between socialist states. One definition of internationalism as “bonds that link states, nations and groups of individuals and make up the modern world” locates the concept in the framework of European nationalism from the early 19th century.⁴² Unlike the idea of cosmopolitanism, all these definitions of internationalism still somehow refer to the nation state as the basis of global cooperation. While some historians point to the early roots of internationalism in Europe’s 16th century, most definitions agree that elaborate concepts of ‘internationalism’ date back, parallel with those of its twin brother ‘nationalism’, to the early 19th century, and that only with the ideological conversion around 1990 did the variant of a rampant liberal internationalism take over the lead.⁴³

On top of these separate and competing ideas of global cooperation, an all-encompassing multilateral internationalism came into being after the Second World War. Based on intergovernmental agreement within global organisations, most notably the UN and its substructures, and non-governmental organisations, this “institution-building and cooperation for the sake of peace and security” claimed to represent all the planet’s peoples. During Cold War bloc confrontation, this coexistence-oriented internationalism, which coincides with Iriye’s ‘cultural internationalism’, ignored the geopolitical and ideological orientation of its

⁴⁰ MARTIN H. GEYER; JOHANNES PAULMANN: *The Mechanics of Internationalism. Culture, Society, and Politics from the 1840s to the First World War*. Oxford, Oxford University Press 2008, p. 23; two hitherto unpublished theses use the concept of ‘globalisation’ for the Eastern bloc anyway: OSCAR SANCHEZ-SIBONY: *Red Globalization. The Political Economy of Soviet Foreign Relations in the 1950s and 60s*. University of Chicago 2010; and ELIDOR MEHLI: *Building the Second World. Postwar Socialism in Albania and the Eastern Bloc*. Princeton University 2011.

⁴¹ KJELL GOLDMANN: *The Logic of Internationalism. Coercion and Accommodation*. New York, Routledge 2001.

⁴² CARSTEN HOLBRAAD: *Internationalism and Nationalism in European political thought*. New York, Palgrave Macmillan 2003, p. 1.

⁴³ GEYER; PAULMANN 2008, p. 7; HOLBRAAD 2003, p. 169; IRIYE 1997, p. 34.

subjects. Iriye even claims that the Cold War itself enhanced the process of global integration and propelled a development proceeding independently of it: "forces of globalization continued to strengthen themselves, while empires came and went."⁴⁴

As of late, many historians have been inspired by Iriye's call for a *Global History* in their stories of migrant networks, the global spread of ideas or the impact of "global moments" on different societies, as they reconstructed constitutions through interactions and the "cultural manifestations and effects of the interaction between societies".⁴⁵ Combined with an impact from postcolonial studies, they have questioned not only the central role of the nation state, but also the ostensible all-encompassing and mono-directional influence of the West on the history of the rest of the world and its interpretation. However, besides provincialising Europe, they have predominantly implemented their theoretical approach through a historiography of 18th- and 19th- century South-East Asia, China, India and sometimes Africa. Latin America, once prominent in the Marxist World System- and Dependency Theories, is conspicuously underrepresented in recent debates.⁴⁶ It shares its marginal position with the Russian orbit: not only did most historians of Eastern Europe long neglect Russia's role in world history in general and the renewed international entanglements of Soviet society after 1953 in particular. Proponents of *Global History*, too, usually excluded the Soviet Union from their accounts of increasing world interconnectivity from the 1950s. Where the "Russians" had a say, they – correctly but selectively – told only negative stories that underlined the shortcomings of the Soviet model compared to Western global integration.⁴⁷

With a dash of cynicism, one might yet say that Communist Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union are actually predestined for the analysis of a *global* historian. On the one hand, the 'global' was always an immensely important point of reference for party leaders and

⁴⁴ IRIYE 2004, pp. 63; 202.

⁴⁵ MATTHIAS MIDDELL; KATJA NAUMANN: 'Global History 2008-2010. Empirische Erträge, konzeptionelle Debatten, neue Synthesen'. *Comparativ* 6 (2010), pp. 93–133, p. 99.

⁴⁶ For a sense of the field: PAMELA KYLE CROSSLEY: *What is Global History?* Cambridge, Polity Press 2008; ULRIKE FREITAG (ED.): *Globalgeschichte. Theorien, Ansätze, Themen*. Frankfurt am Main, Campus Verlag 2007; BRUCE MAZLISH: *The New Global History*. New York, Routledge 2006; ANTHONY HOPKINS: *Global History. Interactions between the Universal and the Local*. Basingstoke, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan 2006; the classics: IMMANUEL WALLERSTEIN: *The Capitalist World-Economy. Essays*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1979; JAMES THEBERGE: *Latin America in the World System. The Limits of Internationalism*. Beverly Hills, Sage Publications 1975; ANDRE GUNDER FRANK: *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America. Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil*. New York, Monthly review press 1969; RAÚL PREBISCH: *Hacia una dinámica del desarrollo latinoamericano*. Montevideo, Ediciones de la Banda Oriental 1967.

⁴⁷ Examples are accounts of lacking money in the Eastern bloc, STEPHEN KOTKIN: 'The Kiss of Debt. The East Bloc Goes Borrowing', in: NIALL FERGUSON (ED.): *The Shock of the Global. The 1970s in Perspective*. Cambridge, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2010, pp. 80–93, and of lacking right of assembly in the Eastern bloc, FREDERICK STARR: 'The Third Sector in the Second World', in: BRUCE MAZLISH and AKIRA IRIYE (EDS.): *The Global History Reader*. New York, Routledge 2005, pp. 191–200.

theoreticians. They drew their legitimacy from processes in world history as they perceived them and they constantly claimed a role model character for their type of state and of their concept of modern society for the rest of the world.⁴⁸ Citizens, on the other hand, were, by and large, confined to where they lived, locked up in states that restricted foreign travel severely. Proponents of *Global History* keep emphasising that they are interested not so much in the grand scale developments of world history, and not so much in migration studies either, but in the manifestation of global phenomena in a local context.⁴⁹ Communist Eastern Europe offers, in the pure form, such cases of the local meeting the global. There is another epistemological and theoretical reason to include the East and its relations with the Third World into the debates on *Global History*: most historians who give a voice to non-Western actors usually still do so with reference to Europe or the United States. Comparisons and shared histories of different non-Western countries add a perspective that puts the pivotal role of the West in world history in perspective.

The deficit stories of the 1970s tended to downplay the contingent situation of the late 1950s and early 1960s, when contemporary observers were not so sure after all, who was going to gain the upper hand in the Cold War – the *Sputnik* and ostensible Communist expansion produced a new wave of *Red Scare*. At the same time, many historical accounts present internationalism as something that came to the East as a result of the end of the Cold War. However, it did not take the Russians until 1991 to join the global community. At state level, the Soviet Union was already participating increasingly in the international system from the end of the Second World War. All restrictions and isolation notwithstanding, Soviet society, too, was, from 1953, integrated into many transnational cultural and scientific developments as they proceeded in other parts of the planet.

And there was socialist internationalism. From the late 19th century, it had opposed the European dominated world system of capitalist economy and imperialist foreign policy. The global proletariat, early socialists believed, would finally leave their national identities behind and together rise against and take power from their bourgeois exploiters. The ‘Second International’ was formed in 1889, after excluding anarchists from a previous attempt at founding a global workers’ organisation. The fierce nationalism displayed by most social democrats around the beginning of the First World War bitterly disappointed a group of left

⁴⁸ JAN C. BEHREND: ‘Vom Panslavismus zum Friedenskampf. Außenpolitik, Herrschaftslegitimation und Massenmobilisierung im sowjetischen Nachkriegsimperium’. *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 56/1 (2008), pp. 27–53, p. 27.

⁴⁹ KENNETH POMERANZ: ‘Social History and World History. From Daily Life to Patterns of Change’. *Journal of World History* 1 (2007), pp. 69–98.

internationalists, who, after the Russian Revolution, founded the Communist International in Moscow. Completely subordinated to orders from the Kremlin during Stalinism, it disbanded in 1943 as a concession to the Second World War allies. Its short time successor Cominform was limited to occupied Eastern Europe (and the Communist parties of France and Italy) and lasted only from 1945 to 1956. But with the end of Stalinism and the emergence of the Third World in the wake of the 1955 Bandung Conference, the new Soviet party boss Nikita Khrushchev launched a revival of socialist internationalism in the USSR.

Internationalism in the Soviet Union has so far only been studied in institutional histories of the Comintern and Cominform, and thus only for the first half of Soviet history.⁵⁰ Stalin's successors announced a return to *socialist* internationalism – and the West believed them –, but in fact, they did not return simply to the old model of spreading world revolution and Soviet Communism. The Soviet Union after 1953, and this is both a principal argument of this thesis and a recurrent tension within Soviet foreign policy at the time, combined the Russian dominated socialist internationalism of the 1920s with the 'cultural internationalism' of the 1950s. The new Soviet leadership opened the country to the world in order to spread, if much more cautiously than the early Bolsheviks, their model of society across the globe. At the same time, the end of isolation meant a re-integration of the Soviet Union, on political, scientific, intellectual and cultural levels, into a global community under the conditions of the Cold War. I refer to this specific conglomeration of revolutionary and integrative ideals as 'Soviet internationalism after Stalin'.

In-between South and West. Latin America and the Third World in the 1950s to 70s

Just as the term 'Cold War', both the concepts of '(Latin) America' and the 'Third World' require some explanation – and justification. Latin America, in this thesis, encompasses all countries of the American double continent and the Caribbean, except the United States and Canada. The more geographically rooted concepts of 'North-' and 'South America', separated at the isthmus by the Panama Canal, increasingly represent today's political and mental maps. In the context of the Cold War, they are of little avail and are hence used rarely here. To diminish tedious repetitions, I occasionally – not perfectly correctly – refer to Latin America as a 'subcontinent' and to Latin Americans as 'Latinos'. The English language continues a

⁵⁰ E.g.: MICHAEL BUCKMILLER; KLAUS MESCHKAT (EDS.): *Biographisches Handbuch zur Geschichte der Kommunistischen Internationale. Ein deutsch-russisches Forschungsprojekt*. Berlin, Akademie-Verlag 2007.

pretension often criticised by Spanish and Portuguese speakers, as it claims the adjective “American” for the United States only. In order to avoid offence or confusion, I use the abbreviation “US” instead and refer to “the Americas” instead of America whenever the entire continent is concerned.

Culturalistic macrohistories, by conservative scholars such as Samuel Huntington and liberals such as Shmuel Eisenstadt alike, have been criticised for their large scale construction of ostensibly homogenous world cultures. Latin America, especially in my lavish definition, is of course not homogenous. Socio-economic and ethnic and cultural/language differences are tremendous between, say, white settler colonies like Argentina or Southern Brazil and countries with an indigenous majority like Bolivia or Guatemala. Dutch, English and French speaking islands and countries in and around the Caribbean have little in common with Mexico or Uruguay. Exactly the same criticism, however, could be applied to the analysis of one specific nation state. Ethnic and class differences often vary to just the same extent within one single Latin American country. Especially for a global history which is more interested in interactions of agency groups and individuals between different world regions, and not only in political relations of national governments, the nation is just as questionable a category as the cultural unit Latin America. A short history of the concept of the latter explains why it is much more useful and fruitful for the historical analysis in this context.

The idea of a “Latin” America dates back to the end of Spanish rule in the Americas and to French imperialism around 1800, when Napoleon tried to forge an anti-Anglo-American coalition in the Americas that was to justify his rule over Mexico. ‘Latin’ replaced ‘Ibero’ or ‘Hispanic’ to construct common Roman roots of the Spanish, Portuguese and French speaking inhabitants. This idea, which included Louisiana and Québec into Latin America, soon disappeared again. The name, however, and with it the anti-US connotation remained.

Ever since that time, a Latin American identity has existed, and both Spanish and Portuguese speakers refer to it as *América Latina*. The overwhelming majority of its inhabitants share indeed the same history and the same religion; they speak the same or a similar language, live in similarly structured societies and they have the same or a similar conception of themselves against the Northern neighbour.

All iconic historical figures and intellectuals of the 19th century carried on their idea of *Nuestra América* (“our America”). *Para nosotros, la patria es América!* (“for us, the homeland is America”), the liberation hero Simón Bolívar made clear. The Cuban poet José Martí, and the Nicaraguan liberation fighter Augusto Sandino a generation later, even

envisioned a Latin American nation. In the 1920s, Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos countered European racism with his idea of a *raza cósmica* (“cosmic race”) that had come into being in the melting pot Latin America. In Mexico at the same time, the Peruvian socialist Víctor Haya de la Torre founded the *Alianza Popular Revolucionario de América* (“American popular revolutionary alliance”, APRA) as an originally pan-Latin American and anti-US political movement.⁵¹

Latin America was never only a simplifying category of European imperialists, but a weighty idea throughout the intellectual history of the subcontinent. At times, Latin American thinkers themselves levelled the disparities between different parts of the hemisphere “by analysing the identity of their own countries and extending their affirmations to the rest of Latin America.”⁵² The relevance and popularity of pan-Latin Americanism fluctuated over time. From the 1950s to the 1970s, the period in focus of this thesis, it experienced its possibly greatest heyday among leftist writers and activists. Pablo Neruda’s *Canto General* (“general song”, 1950) drafted the history of all Latin America, his *patria grande*, in rhyme.⁵³ After the Cuban Revolution, which initially catalysed pan-Latin American intellectual sentiment, the Havana based journal of the *Casa de las Américas* became a platform (and an important financier) for leftwing writers from Mexico to Argentina.⁵⁴

Brazilian writers of the left, for long more interested in French intellectual life than in the surrounding Hispanic world, joined the *latinoamericanismo* wholeheartedly after many of them were expelled from their country in the wake of the 1964 military putsch. They found sanctuaries and joined intellectual discourses in the Spanish speaking countries around.

The *boom* of Latin American literature in the 1960s and 70s was the quintessence of this pan-Latin Americanism. Authors such as José Revueltas, Alejo Carpentier, Carlos Fuentes or Julio Cortázar made Latin American (and not: ‘Mexican’, ‘Cuban’ or ‘Argentinean’) literature hugely popular in Europe and the United States for the first time. All of them were politically left-leaning, and they were proponents of Latin American solidarity. Macondo, the setting of *A Hundred Years of Solitude*, is a mythical Latin American town, not a Colombian one, just

⁵¹ GERD KOENEN: *Traumpfade der Weltrevolution. Das Guevara-Projekt*. Köln, Kiepenheuer & Witsch 2008, pp. 45–56; ARTURO ARDAO: *Génesis de la idea y el nombre de América Latina*. Caracas, Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos Rómulo Gallegos 1980; EDUARDO GALEANO: *Las Venas abiertas de América Latina*. Montevideo, Editorial Universidad de la República 1971, p. 432.

⁵² JORGE LARRAÍN IBÁÑEZ: *Identity and Modernity in Latin America*. Cambridge, Polity Press 2000, p. 1.

⁵³ NICOLA MILLER: *In the Shadow of the State. Intellectuals and the Quest for National Identity in Twentieth-Century Spanish America*. London, New York, Verso 1999, p. 128.

⁵⁴ OSCAR TERÁN; GERARDO CAETANO; SOFÍA CORREA SUTIL; ADOLFO GARCÉ GARCÍA Y SANTOS: *Ideas en el siglo. Intelectuales y cultura en el siglo XX latinoamericano*. Buenos Aires, Siglo Veintiuno 2004, p. 75; MILLER 1999, p. 125.

as most readers identified its author Gabriel García Márquez not so much as Colombian, but as the archetype of the left activist Latin American novelist.

The politically more libertarian Mexican poets Octavio Paz, Gabriel Zaid and Enrique Krauze published the literary journal *Plural* from 1971 (renamed to *Vuelta* from 1976), in which again authors from all over Latin America found a common platform. The Peruvian Mario Vargas Llosa, the Mexican Carlos Fuentes and the Argentineans Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares wrote for it as did the Cubans Guillermo Cabrera Infante and Reinaldo Arenas.⁵⁵

Political activists of the left shared the intellectuals' pan-Latin Americanism. Che Guevara, in his unloved position as Cuban Minister of Industry, announced: “we see the events on Cuba as a reflection of those qualitative changes that take place on the entire American continent... in our epoch of transition to socialism.”⁵⁶ The iconography of left guerrilla movements, even if they called for *national* liberation, always carried the shape of the entire Latin America in their flags and emblems, not of their respective nation states. And in the early 1970s, proponents of dependency theory pleaded for the economic integration of Latin America to overcome foreign exploitation and the resulting backwardness.⁵⁷

The Soviets, too, saw Latin America as one spatial category *Latinskaja Amerika*. When they sent intellectuals and delegations across the ocean, they always went to several states; the groups they received in Moscow were usually cobbled together with travellers from many different Latin American states, and they always debated the political situation of the entire subcontinent. Just like Che, the Soviets initially saw the Cuban Revolution as a somewhat random first Latin American country that had taken the steps to the historically necessary next level – the others would follow soon.

In sum, for all contemporary agents, Latin Americans, Soviets and Westerners alike, the concept of ‘Latin America’ made sense. Huntington’s and Eisenstadt’s reductions notwithstanding, this should be reason enough to use the category also in a retrospective analysis.

⁵⁵ LARRAÍN IBÁÑEZ 2000, pp. 129ff.

⁵⁶ ERNESTO GUEVARA: ‘Kuba und der Kennedy-Plan’. *Probleme des Friedens und des Sozialismus* 2 (1962), pp. 119f.

⁵⁷ GALEANO 1971, pp. 431f.

Raised expectations in Latin America

After a first explosion of Cold War violence, especially in Colombia, and the foundation of several anti-communist organisations in the late 1940s, a remarkable wave of democratisations hit the whole of Latin America in the 1950s. Even in a lavish definition, only Costa Rica, Chile and Uruguay could be considered democracies, before, from the middle of the decade, numerous dictatorships came to a close. Year after year, the authoritarian rulers Getúlio Vargas in Brazil (1954), Juan Perón in Argentina (1955), Manuel Odría in Peru (1956), Colombia's Gustavo Pinilla (1957), Venezuela's Marcos Jiménez (1958) and Fulgencio Batista on Cuba (1959), year after year, left their country's political stages. Not only communists believed they were witnessing a "qualitatively similar stage of development of the historic process".⁵⁸

Years of economic growth engendered a cultural and intellectual renaissance. Serious attempts were made to drive back hitherto predominant illiteracy. Many Latin American states still restricted suffrage to those who could read and write – urbanisation, expanded education and a heritage of populist rule led to greater political participation of the masses. At the same time, improvements in medicine and hygiene had helped the population to increase to an extent the continent had never seen before. This demographic development, however, hampered and dampened the positive effects of a booming economy for most people's living standards. While, in many societies, the poorer strata of the population also profited from years of economic growth, the richer did so disproportionately much more, which further widened the world's already greatest gap in distribution of income and living standards. Political exclusion and social inequality lingered on.

Since the onset of the Cold War, the geopolitical situation had been reflected in domestic politics and intellectual debate as an all encompassing "struggle over political and social arrangements".⁵⁹ While, for many intellectuals, Marxism seemed an increasingly attractive solution to the continent's problems, most Latin American elites continued to perceive world Communism as a massive threat not only to the political, but also to the ethic and cultural

⁵⁸ LESLIE BETHELL; IAN ROXBOROUGH: 'The Impact of the Cold War on Latin America', in: MELVYN LEFFLER (ED.): *Origins of the Cold War. An International History*. New York, Routledge 2007, pp. 293–316; LESLIE BETHELL (ED.): *Latin America. Politics and Society since 1930*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1998; LESLIE BETHELL; IAN ROXBOROUGH (EDS.): *Latin America between the Second World War and the Cold War. Crisis and Containment, 1944-1948*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1997; ROQUE DALTON; VICTOR MIRANDA: 'Über die gegenwärtige Phase der revolutionären Bewegung in Lateinamerika'. *Probleme des Friedens und des Sozialismus* 2 (1967), pp. 382–390.

⁵⁹ HAL BRANDS: *Latin America's Cold War*. Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press 2010, p. 9.

foundations of their societies. The Organization of American States (OAS) had come into its post-war being explicitly as a confederation of democracies against Communism. In 1954, representatives from 17 countries met in Mexico City to form the *Comisión Permanente del Congreso Contra la Intervención Soviética en América Latina*.

The 1950s and 60s also saw a communication revolution that changed the way Latin Americans perceived themselves in the world. While television remained a privilege for few, millions of cheap Japanese radios flooded the continent.⁶⁰ More urbanised and literate populations learned what was happening on the rest of the planet. Most importantly, they heard about living conditions in the booming countries of North America and Western Europe. Even in 1966, however, the average Latin American went to school for as little as two years; 40 per cent of the adult population were illiterate. Infant mortality was four times as high as in the United States. Malnutrition, inadequate housing and hygiene limited life expectancy to 46 years.⁶¹ This combination of raised and often disappointed expectations led to widespread discontent and an increasing sense of backwardness.⁶²

Social mobilisation was the result. Student and union protest activities were the order of the day from the mid 1960s. Many Catholic clerics sought earthly solutions for pressing problems in what came to be known as Liberation Theology. Disappointed with the failed modernisation models, intellectuals found an explanation for Latin America's backwardness in dependency theory. A good chunk of its attraction laid in the fact that it put the blame on the outer world and especially the United States. These tensions with the Northern neighbour dated long back, but culminated in the 1960s with the recent experience of US intervention in Guatemala and the Cuban Pay of Pigs, their quasi-colonial presence in the Guantanamo Bay, in Panama and Puerto Rico, and in particular with the unscrupulous support for the anti-communist military dictators who had grabbed the power again all over Latin America. By the end of the decade, Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia, Ecuador, Panama, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic were under the tight grip of brutal *caudillos*. In all other states, the military had significant influence on politics.

⁶⁰ STEPHEN G. RABE: *The Most Dangerous Area in the World. John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America*. Chapel Hill, NC, London, University of North Carolina Press 1999, p. 23.

⁶¹ BRANDS 2010, p. 71; HERNANDO AGUDELO VILLA: *La Revolución del Desarrollo. Origen y Evolución de la Alianza para el Progreso*. Mexico, Roble 1966, pp. 42f.

⁶² BORIS GOLDENBERG: *Kommunismus in Lateinamerika*. Stuttgart, Kohlhammer 1971.

Rekindled, old resentments against the ‘Yankees’ in the North caused widespread anti-imperialist sentiments; together with the increasing feeling of backwardness, they led many Latin Americans to develop an identification with the colonial and postcolonial states and peoples of Asia and Africa. The 1960s came to be the decade of *tercermundismo* (“Third-Worldism”). The struggle of nationalists in Algeria and Indochina fascinated the radical left. But also reformist Latin American statesmen looked increasingly not only to the North, but also to their fellows of the Global South, who had formed a loose Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in the wake of the 1955 Afro-Asian conference in Bandung. The Indonesian president and Third World icon Sukarno came for a much debated visit to Bolivia in 1961.⁶³ The Brazilian president Quadros was said to have photographs of Nasser, Nehru and Tito on his desk and supported – rhetorically – the liberation movements in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, at the time still under Portuguese colonial rule. Quadros decorated Che Guevara with a Brazilian state medal and touted membership in the Non-Aligned Movement among Latin American statesmen. Emphasizing a ‘common ethnic and cultural heritage ... as well as current underdevelopment’, he also founded an Afro-Asian Institute, which gathered prominent left-wing intellectuals and became an influential voice in a new, independent Brazilian foreign policy.⁶⁴ His successor Goulart invited Tito to Brazil, and during his visit as the first Western statesman to Communist China, drank a toast with Mao to Afro-Asian-Latin American friendship. Imperialism, they agreed, was the culprit for their countries’ backwardness: earlier in history, it had been Portugal, the Dutch or the British, now it was US monopolies which aimed at keeping Brazil as a supplier of raw materials.

Latin America still differed from the rest of the Third World in that most of its states had long gained independence and that its elites were broadly European or Europeanized. But by the mid 1960s, Latin America came to be “an integral part of the Third World”.⁶⁵ Apart from Argentina, all Latin American states finally joined the Non-Allied Movement. To be sure,

⁶³ ‘El presidente A. Sukarno afirmó que existe similitud de espíritu entre los pueblos de Bolivia e Indonesia. Cordial bienvenida tributo la población paceña al mandatorio visitante’. *Presencia*, 8-5-1961.

⁶⁴ JAMES HERSHBERG: “‘High spirited confusion’. Brazil, the 1961 Belgrade Non-Allied Conference, and the Limits of an “Independent Foreign Policy” during the High Cold War’. *Cold War History* 3 (2007), pp. 373–388; JORGE AMADO: *Navegação de cabotagem. Apontamentos para um livro de memórias que jamais escreverei*. Lisboa, Editora Record 1992, pp. 93; 285; ILYA PRIZEL: *Latin America through Soviet Eyes. The Evolution of Soviet Perceptions during the Brezhnev Era 1964-1982*. Cambridge, New York, Cambridge University Press 1990, pp. 47–52.

⁶⁵ JORGE VOLPI: *El insomnio de Bolívar. Cuatro consideraciones intempestivas sobre América Latina en el Siglo XXI*. Buenos Aires, Debate 2009, p. 18.

membership also served as leverage for economic support from the United States. And changing regimes and different states showed varying degrees of enthusiasm about *tercermundismo*. Not all went as far as Peru under Juan Velasco and Mexico under Luis Echeverría who actually sought leading roles in the NAM, a tendency that always aroused suspicion among conservatives all over the Americas. With the exception of Cuba and Allende's Chile, all states remained aligned politically to the United States, and at least their European rooted elites considered themselves fully as part of the West.⁶⁶ Yet at the same time, many Latin Americans identified with the underdeveloped part of the planet. Latin America hung somewhere between the South and the West.

As for the generalising concept of Latin America, there has been some criticism of the term 'Third World', as it seemingly constructs a normative gradient to the leading First and Second Worlds. The concept of the 'Third World' was coined in the early 1950s by the French historian Alfred Sauvy, based on the *Tiers état*, for all those parts of the planet that were not part of the Western and Eastern blocs of the Cold War. In the West, it replaced the term 'underdeveloped countries' from the 1960. Soviet official discourse was actually quite similar: the old expression *narody vostoka* ("peoples of the East") was geographically outdated when Africa and Latin America joined forces with Asia. The Soviets now referred to the *narody Azii, Afriki i Latinskoj Ameriki* ("peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America"), and after decolonisation also interchangeably to the *razvivajuščiesja strany* ("developing countries") and *slaborazvitye strany* ("poorly developed countries"), or sometimes simply to *novye gosudarstva* ("new states") or *molodye nacii* ("young nations"). From the late 1960s, Soviet scholars also used the term *tretij mir* ("Third World"), albeit initially always in quotation marks to distance themselves from its Western originators.⁶⁷

For the same pragmatic reasons as with 'Latin America', I use the term 'Third World', too. As the term 'Global South', it refers to all countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America with the exception of Soviet territory and China. For one thing, it was a meaningful category for contemporaries of the Cold War and thus needs some term to refer to it in the historical analysis. For another thing, the alternatives that include the word "developing" are much more explicitly normative.

⁶⁶ MARCELLO CARMAGNANI: *L' altro Occidente. L'America Latina dall'invasione europea al nuovo millennio*. Torino, Einaudi 2003.

⁶⁷ RAGNA BODEN: *Die Grenzen der Weltmacht. Sowjetische Indonesienpolitik von Stalin bis Brežnev*. Stuttgart, Steiner 2006, p. 31; A. ŠUL'GOVSKIJ: 'Opyt rešenija nacional'nogo voprosa v SSSR i ideologičeskaja bor'ba v Latinskoj Amerike'. *Latinskaja Amerika* 8 (1972), pp. 13–34, p. 15; MICHAEL LAVRIČENKO: *Economičeskoe sotrudničestvo SSSR so stranami Azii, Afriki i Latinskoj Ameriki*. Moskva, Gosizdat političeskoj literatury 1961, p. 2.

A short history of Soviet-Latin American relations and the ways it has been told so far

Throughout the history of Soviet geopolitics, Latin America was usually of low priority. Geographical factors, the vicinity to the almighty United States on the one side, the huge distance to the USSR on the other, determined expectations of Moscow's foreign policy makers. At the same time, it was Latin America where for the first time since the October Revolution a socialist revolution took place without interference of the USSR. And it was a Latin American country, which firstly voted democratically for a Marxist president. Added to that, the Soviet Union was the only great power that has supported political parties in *all* Latin American states. Some explanation for this ostensible contradiction is rooted in the fact that Soviet interactions with the world were always based on two channels, diplomatic relations on the one hand, and the international Communist network on the other. Latin America was interesting for many Soviets not so much for geopolitics, but for its home-made socialism.⁶⁸

International Communism and state diplomacy until 1953

German, Italian and Spanish immigrants had brought Marxist ideas to Latin America from the late 19th century. Two lines of Marxist thought quickly evolved: the Peruvian writer José Carlos Mariátegui conceptualised a Maoism *avant la lettre*, a countryside and indigenous based socialism similar to the Russian social revolutionaries. Workers and intellectuals in the industrial, and rather European, urban centres, however, stuck to traditional Marxism. After the October Revolution in 1917, they founded Communist parties all over the continent and integrated into the evolving Comintern, which opened a regional office in Montevideo in 1929. Two attempts at spreading world revolution to the Americas failed shortly thereafter: in a 1932 insurrection in El Salvador, the local CP under Farabundo Martí joined an already on-going peasant revolt that was soon to be crushed in a bloody massacre. The only ever Comintern conducted attempt at revolution in the Americas took place in Brazil in 1935, when Communists reacted to the oppression of the union movement, declared Luis Carlos Prestes president and were finally defeated, declared illegal and persecuted.

By the mid 1930s, the Comintern had learned the lesson that the revolutionary potential of the Americas was much more limited than what they had hoped for. Not only was the proletariat small and the structures predominantly agrarian (which had been the case, too, in Russia in

⁶⁸ PRIZEL 1990, p. ix; COLE BLASIER: *The Giant's Rival. The USSR and Latin America*. Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press 1983, p. 68.

1917); more importantly, the area was under the unchallengeable influence of the imperialist United States. Their new policy was to go the parliamentary path and seek popular fronts with other parties, in order to avoid sinking into insignificance. In their internal structures, the Latin American Communist parties, like many CPs worldwide during Stalinism, went through a process of bureaucratisation, hierarchization, servile obedience to Moscow's orders and the exclusion of real or ostensible 'Trotskyites'. Most notably, the muralist painter Diego Rivera had to leave the Communist Party of Mexico as early as 1929. He later hosted Leon Trotsky in his Mexico City house, where the latter was murdered in 1942.

Already from the mid 1920, however, the Soviet Union not only supported the structures of international Communism in Latin America, but at the same time sought to establish "normal" relations at state level. Mexico, with its own recent revolutionary past, was the first state in the Americas to officially recognise the Soviets in 1924; the feminist and Marxist thinker Aleksandra Kollontaj was sent as first Soviet representative (and the world's first female ambassador) to Mexico City, where she enjoyed an excellent reputation. In Uruguay, the USSR organised its trade with all South America from its Montevideo *Južamtorg* (the Russian acronym for "South America trade") office and established diplomatic relations in 1926. Colombia, without ever exchanging diplomats, recognised the Soviet government in 1935. Mexico and Uruguay temporarily interrupted their relations, but the Second World War brought Latin America and the Soviet Union closer than ever: 13 states, all major ones except Peru and Nicaragua, recognised diplomatically what was now their ally in the war against the Axis powers. During this time, and for the first time in many Latin American states, Communism found a broad interest also beyond small circles of intellectuals and artists, and the reputation of the Soviets was at an all time high. It did not last long.

With the onset of the Cold War from 1947, the US State Department demanded Latin American governments break relations with Moscow; all but Mexico, Uruguay and Argentina did. Allegations of high ranking Communists that they would, in the event of war, rather support the Soviet Union than their own countries, did not help entrench the CPs in a broader public. Around 1950, they were banned in most states. Some years later, the Soviet crushing of the Hungarian uprising would destroy much of what was left of the good reputation of the USSR during the war among many Latin Americans.⁶⁹

During late Stalinism, Moscow leaders, if they had any idea at all, saw Latin America again as dominated by a strong oligarchy, backed by a conservative church and reactionary armies

⁶⁹ BETHELL; ROXBOROUGH 2007, p. 315; POPPINO 1964, p. 32.

and all heavily dependent on the United States.⁷⁰ The Cominform, the puny successor of the disbanded Comintern, opened an office in Buenos Aires that spread commands to the Latin American Communist parties. Beyond that, Latin America all but disappeared from Moscow's radar.

Stalin's death and Third World awakening, 1953-59

One of the first palpable effects of the Cold War in which Soviet interference in Latin America was claimed was the CIA-support for a coup d'état against the Guatemalan president Jacobo Arbenz in 1954. He had legalised the Communist *Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo* ("Guatemalan Party of Labour") and had admitted a small number of Communists into his cabinet. In the tense geopolitical situation, Guatemalan conservatives found it easy to draw a picture of international Communist conspiracy: the sale of some dysfunctional German weaponry by Czechoslovakia served as ostensible evidence for Arbenz' Soviet ties, which in fact hardly existed. As a matter of fact, the influence of all Latin American Communist parties had been dwindling since the late 1940s; they were still banned in most countries, membership in 1957 had sunk to less than half of the numbers a decade before, and where they were allowed to run for elections, they hardly ever gained more than 5 per cent of the vote. By the mid 1950s, with the exceptions of Cuba and Chile, party Communism had ceased to play a serious role in Latin American politics.⁷¹

Soviet foreign policy doctrine actually contributed to the weakness of the Latin American CPs as it again turned to states more than parties. With the Soviet discovery of the emerging Third World, the entire Latin America was again of increasing interest, too. It would take yet another decade until the Soviet Union developed a more refined and country based foreign policy for the continent. Around 1960, it was, somewhat inconsistently, described as "semi-colonial" (Khrushchev at the 20th Party Congress) or simply lumped into the categories the Soviets had developed for Asia and Africa. Before 1953, Soviet ideologists had considered Latin American presidents and dictators alike as class enemies and stooges of imperialism. Now they were potential friends of the Soviet Union in the *peace camp*. The Soviet premier Nikolaj Bulganin, in 1955, gave an interview to the (as has been found out much later: CIA-sponsored) Latin American journal *Visión* and announced Soviet interest in interacting economically, politically and culturally with all states in the Americas without interference

⁷⁰ PRIZEL 1990, p. 1.

⁷¹ GOLDENBERG 1971, pp. 121–126.

into their inner affairs.⁷² And indeed, contracts were signed and very pragmatic economical and political relations established with a series of South American states beginning with Argentina and Brazil.

The Cuban Revolution

The Cuban Revolution on New Year's Eve of 1958 disturbed this process towards pragmatic relations. Fidel Castro and his 26th of July movement had basically no contacts with the Soviet Union and, while some members like Che Guevara and Raúl Castro considered themselves Marxists, only loose ties to the old established Cuban Communist Party PSP. The violent struggle, after all, contradicted Moscow's orders to take the peaceful path. Their success, however, and their subsequent rapprochement with the USSR, albeit beginning only some 18 months after the revolution with a Soviet promise to buy sugar, caused many policy makers to reconsider their stance. Maybe, Soviet chances in Latin America were not so bad after all, and maybe, the violent path would be the right method, too. In 1960, Khrushchev declared bluntly: "the Monroe Doctrine is dead!"⁷³, and he expanded contacts with other Latin American states, first and foremost with developmentalist Brazil under presidents Quadros and Goulart. For a short while, the Kremlin revelled in its possibilities on the 'blazing continent', as Latin America was often referred to in Soviet publications, but the enthusiasm came to a grinding halt with the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962.

Castro's continuous attempts to export his revolution firstly to other Caribbean islands, later to Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Guatemala and Bolivia, did not have – with the exceptions of Colombia and, for a short period from 1962 to 65, Venezuela – the backing of the local Communist parties. While the Soviets shipped Eastern European weapons to Havana and offered the occasional help of their secret services, it was only the Cubans themselves who trained and armed guerrilla groups in continental Latin America. In his zealous aspirations to become the leader of a Third World camp, Castro used the Soviets as a means, but only whenever it served his purposes.

Soviet policy for the rest of Latin America was, from 1960, always connected to Cuba. To find a solution to the simmering conflict over armed guerrilla struggle in the Americas, members of all Latin American CPs met in Havana in December 1964. In order to appease the

⁷² WELLES HANGEN: 'Soviet Makes Bid To Latin America For Economic Tie. Bulganin Offers Trade Deals and Aid on Pattern Set in Asia and Mideast. Foothold Believed Aim'. New York Times, 17-1-1956.

⁷³ PRIZEL 1990, p. 1.

Soviets, Maoists and representatives of the Chinese Communist party were excluded. The delegates finally found a compromise the Soviets could accept: the Latin American Communist parties would continue the parliamentary path, with the exception of Colombia, Venezuela, Guatemala, Paraguay and Haiti.⁷⁴ Other revolutionary movements, like the urban guerrilla of the *Tupamaros* in Uruguay, the Brazilian and Argentinean armed leftist fighters, or, most notoriously, Che Guevara's lethal Bolivian mission, had no support whatsoever from the Communist parties or the Soviet Union.

The reconciliation with the Soviets was short lived: already two years later, Castro invited representatives from all over the Third World to the 1966 *Tricont* conference in Havana, styling himself the leading character of the Third World movement. He did exclude the Chinese again, but this time also the Soviets and indeed all pro-Moscow Communist Parties – an affront for his Soviet financiers. By the mid 1960s, the Soviets had lost much of their initial Third World enthusiasm, and Castro's adventures in Latin America and even Africa annoyed many of the more conservative foreign policy makers in Moscow. They reminded him of his dependency on Soviet economic and military support, and, in 1968, Castro submitted himself. While the entire world, including many Communists outside and within the Soviet Union, sharply criticised the crushing of Prague spring with Soviet tanks, Castro commended the decisive line of action. After the genuflection, Castro indeed scaled down his open support for revolutionary struggle and only occasionally and on a small scale helped groups in Venezuela, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and other Caribbean islands.

In the course of the 1970s, Cuba increasingly adapted Soviet structures of the state, the government, the economy and of many branches of the society. There was no direct Soviet pressure to do so, as had happened in the Eastern European 'replica states' after the war. The Cuban leaders voluntarily reconstructed their country out of ideological conviction.

Hundreds of Soviet advisors helped build up the Cuban secret service *Dirección General de Inteligencia*, DGI, from 1961, and, to varying degrees, the Soviet Union financed and controlled its operations in the Americas.

The Cubans long lobbied for membership in the Eastern bloc's institutional structures and were finally admitted to the Comecon in 1972, but never to the desired Warsaw Pact, which would have promised military assistance in case of an invasion of the island. What the Cuban revolutionaries did secure was ongoing substantial financial help from Moscow, which was

⁷⁴ BLASIER 1983, p. 80.

indispensable to keep the Cuban state and economy running: by the end of the 1970s, the ever badly-off Soviet Union had pumped an estimated 16.7 billion US\$ in economic help and 3.8 billion in military equipment into their *Island of Freedom*.⁷⁵ Cuba was also the only Latin American state ever to receive official visits by Soviet party bosses: Leonid Brezhnev came in 1974, and Mikhail Gorbachev shortly before the end of the USSR in 1989.

Pragmatic state relations and more Communist schisms from the mid-1960s

With Brezhnev in power from 1964, the Soviets more than ever enforced the establishment of traditional diplomatic relations. By 1971, ambassadors had been exchanged with all countries of the hemisphere except Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Paraguay and Honduras. While the Soviets used their now eleven embassies in Latin America as bases for activities of their secret services, they did not incite revolutions.⁷⁶ As for diplomatic and economic ties, the Soviets hardly cared about the political orientation of states and even developed a preference for stable, conservative regimes. Relations with Brazil remained intact even after the military ended the left-populist presidency of the Soviet-friendly João Goulart. Collaboration with the dictatorship proved fruitful for both sides.⁷⁷ When the military took hold of power also in Panama (1968), Bolivia and Peru (both 1969), Soviet media initially denounced them as fascist takeovers.⁷⁸ But soon, the Soviets found out that they actually had quite a lot in common with the military rulers, who brought great advantages: they, too, did not like the imperialist United States and started land reforms and nationalisations. And, more importantly, they did not ask the USSR for money, but bought Soviet weaponry for hard currency instead. Before long, coverage of the Andean military regimes and about Panamanian strongman Omar Torrijos was very benevolent.⁷⁹ With the Peruvian military dictator Velasco, the Soviets developed close relations, distributing a high number of scholarships for Peruvian students, sending doctors and medical care after an earthquake in 1970 and attributing the usual programme for states considered *friends of the Soviet Union*. The USSR's peaceful coexistence with the "imperialist" West and rapprochement to "fascist" dictators put pro-Moscow Communist parties, in Latin America as elsewhere, to an acid test.

⁷⁵ BLASIER 1983, p. 99.

⁷⁶ BENJAMIN WELLES: 'Soviet Intelligence Role in Latin America Rises'. New York Times, 7-12-1970.

⁷⁷ TOBIAS RUPPRECHT: 'Socialist High Modernity and Global Stagnation. A Shared History of Brazil and the Soviet Union during the Cold War'. Journal of Global History 3 (2011), pp. 505–528.

⁷⁸ JUAN COBO: 'Der Militärputsch in Peru'. Neue Zeit 41 (1968), p. 18.

⁷⁹ JUAN COBO: 'Die sowjetische Hilfe für Peru'. Neue Zeit 43 (1970), pp. 16–17; MICHAEL KRUGLOW: 'Die peruanische Überraschung'. Neue Zeit 8 (1969), p. 15; Izvestija, 22-11-1969.

At a time when Marxist thought was on the rise at universities all over Latin America, Soviet-style Communism lost ground. Indigenous Marxism had existed in parallel all along, and Trotskyism was a challenge still, when from the early 1960s ever more socialists abandoned the Soviet Union and turned to Castroism and Maoism. Most notably, the pro-China *Partido Comunista do Brasil* (PCdoB) seceded from the old Brazilian Communist party PCB in 1962. Similar breakaways occurred in Bolivia and Colombia, and even several ones happened in Peru, where, after a trip to China during the Cultural Revolution, the professor of philosophy Abimael Guzmán split the Maoist *Sendero Luminoso* (“Shining Path”, precisely: *Partido Comunista del Perú – por el Sendero Luminoso de José Carlos Mariátegui*) from the traditional Peruvian CP. Castroites and Maoists both propagated the necessity of violent struggle; the former realised it as *guerrilleros* against dictators and their armies, as in Argentina, Bolivia or Brazil (including later president Dilma Rousseff); the Maoists in Peru by contrast, unleashed a spiral of violence against the entire population, above all against just the indigenous population of rural Peru they claimed to be fighting for. While Cuba did support some groups (albeit not the *Sendero Luminoso*) with weapons and especially training, Beijing’s activities remained at a symbolical level. With the economic reforms in late 1970s China, the Latin American Maoists turned away from this role model, too, and found their last friend standing in Enver Hoxha’s Albania.⁸⁰

Chile and the limits of Soviet global power, 1970-73

The Soviets were distinctly opposed to open guerrilla warfare. They found it more difficult to show a coherent stance towards developments in Chile, where, from 1970, Salvador Allende served as the first democratically elected Marxist president on earth. On the one hand, the victory of the Chilean popular front seemed to finally prove what the Soviets had been preaching to the world wide left for more than a decade: a peaceful path to socialism was feasible. Allende was celebrated in the Soviet press accordingly, headlined in the newspapers and hailed on Soviet TV.⁸¹ There was now a coming and going of representatives of the Chilean left and of government members to Moscow. In 1972, a contract was signed that arranged exchanges in the fields of public health, education, media, sports and arts, and

⁸⁰ MICHAEL LÖWY; MICHAEL PEARLMAN (EDS.): *Marxism in Latin America from 1909 to the Present. An Anthology*. Atlantic Highlands, Humanities Press 1992, pp. xiii–lviii.

⁸¹ Izvestija, 27-10-1970 until 5-11-1970.

Aeroflot scheduled a weekly flight to Santiago, the first one to South America.⁸² But there was hardly any financial support. Allende came himself later that year with the head of the CP, Luis Corvalán; again, they were celebrated as great socialist heroes, but they had to return with almost empty hands. Although they bargained with their contacts with China, their requests for bitterly needed credits were met only with restraint – the Soviets gave a onetime 20 million US\$ loan, but could never have afforded yet another tremendously expensive friend as Castro's Cuba.⁸³ Economically, Chile was irrelevant for the Soviets: the main export material, copper, was abundant in the USSR. For Soviet foreign grand policy, Chile offered no advantages either – hence the disappointment was limited in the Soviet foreign ministry when Allende was overthrown and killed himself in a 1973 putsch led by the army general Augusto Pinochet. Those in and outside the Soviet Union who still believed in the prospects of world socialism, however, learned a momentous lesson: a peaceful path to socialism was possible, but to stay in power, socialists needed to be able to defend themselves.

Central America and the Caribbean 1979-86

Throughout the 1970s, the USSR focussed on their bilateral relations with Latin American states. But when the Sandinistas under Daniel Ortega, without any interference from Moscow whatsoever, toppled the Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza in 1979, the Soviets remembered the Chilean case – and this time they not only started the usual cultural exchange programme and Sunday speeches, but also sent weapons, technicians and military advisors. To save resources, the USSR delegated some tasks to their Eastern European allies: GDR experts trained and supplied Nicaraguan secret service personnel, Czechoslovakia sent money and equipment, Bulgaria gave aircraft training, Poland donated helicopters.⁸⁴ Alarms went off in Washington, but the extent of assistance from the Eastern bloc actually never came close to a substantial level that would have approached US support for the *Contra*-rebels.⁸⁵ Also the amount of support for the Grenadian New Jewel Movement and for the Salvadoran *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (FMLN) was small, as its leader Schafik

⁸² Pravda, 4-3-1972.

⁸³ Pravda/Izvestija, 10-12-1972; THEODORE SHABAT: 'Allende Arrives in Soviet, Seeks New Aid for Chile'. New York Times, 7-12-1972.

⁸⁴ MICHAEL RADU: 'Eastern Europe and Latin America', in: EUSEBIO MUJAL-LEÓN (ED.): *The USSR and Latin America. A Developing Relationship*. Boston, Unwin Hyman 1989, pp. 254–269, pp. 261f.

⁸⁵ NICOLA MILLER: *Soviet Relations with Latin America, 1959-1987*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1989, p. 202; RICHARD FEINBERG: 'Central America. The View from Moscow'. Washington Quarterly (1982), pp. 171–175, p. 173.

Handal himself complained during his trip through Eastern Europe.⁸⁶ But in both cases, contacts with the Soviet Union served as a pretext, for a full blown US invasion and regime change in Grenada in 1983, and for large scale US military support for the military junta in El Salvador. The cruel civil war in Guatemala at the same time hardly got any attention from either the United States or the Soviet Union (instead, pariah states such as the military junta ruled Argentina and apartheid South Africa supported the anti-communist fight).

These were the last two cases of what can be considered the biggest impact the Soviet Union had on Latin America: over decades, they delivered the justification for US intervention. In Guatemala in 1954, in Brazil in 1964 and in the Dominican Republic the year after, in Chile in 1973 and finally in Grenada in 1983, the United States actively participated in the violent overthrow of regimes – to mention only those that took place during the Cold War. They also tried but failed in Cuba in 1961, in Guyana in 1963, in Chile in 1970 and in Nicaragua in the early 1980s.⁸⁷

Perestroika and the end of the Soviet Union in 1991

Soviet support for Latin American Communist parties as well as leftist or anti-US governments ended with Gorbachev's reforms in the late 1980s. Diplomatic relations and interactions were expanded at the same time. Mexico's president Echeverría had been the first non-socialist Latin American head of state to visit the USSR officially in 1973; throughout the 1980s, many other high ranking statesmen followed. Gorbachev himself scheduled a visit to Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay in 1987, but in the end – as a goodwill gesture to the United States – sent his foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze and went only to Cuba himself in 1989.

That fact that no Soviet head of state, government or party ever visited mainland Central or South America shows the low priority of the area for Soviet grand foreign policy. At most, Latin American high politics were of interest for the USSR as anti-US votes in United Nations assemblies. Also economically, the entire continent was hardly ever relevant for the USSR throughout its existence (The only notable exception was the import of grain from Argentina, which did not join a Western embargo in the wake of the invasion of Afghanistan – as return service, the Soviets declared Argentina's aggression against the Falkland Islands

⁸⁶ PRIZEL 1990, p. 147.

⁸⁷ MICHAEL GROW: *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions. Pursuing Regime Change in the Cold War*. Lawrence, University Press of Kansas 2008.

an act of anti-imperialism). The Soviet market proved incompatible with the raw material exporting Latin American states; and Soviet commodities were usually not competitive on the open market. Soviet trade with the area did not even match the humble exchange with Africa. Military exports, mainly to Peru, were an exception, but encompassed only 2.5% of Soviet arms sales in the Third World.⁸⁸ Development aid, beyond credits for rather unpopular Soviet goods, was given only as *ad hoc* help in case of natural disasters and in the form of scholarships for students. The long term trade subventions for Cuba and the one time foreign exchange credit for Chile remained rare exceptions.⁸⁹ Communist parties, however, constantly had received large sums of money directly from the Moscow party apparatus. With the end of the Soviet Union, all these parties – besides the Cuban one – sank into obscurity almost immediately.

Historians' assessments of Soviet-Latin American relations

Academic interest in Soviet-Latin American relations has, as a matter of course, always depended on the authors' historical and political context. First approaches from the 1950s focussed more on the activities of international Communism than on the Soviet state. Considering the tense political atmosphere especially in US academia at the time, these early accounts were still astonishingly nuanced. While obviously anti-communist, they made clear that the Americas were never Soviet geopolitical top priority and underlined how little influence party Communism had, in most countries, outside of small circles of artists and intellectuals.⁹⁰ From the 1960s, Western observers discerned that the post-Stalinist Soviet Union also had interests as a state in Latin America, interests that were not necessarily in line with Communist aspirations. Scholars now analysed these stances and their inner contradictions, adjusting the topic of their increasingly sophisticated and often rather positivistic studies: the activities of *Communism* in Latin America were not in the focus now, but rather those of *the USSR*.⁹¹

⁸⁸ ROBERT CASSEN (ED.): *Soviet Interests in the Third World*. London, Sage Publications 1985, p. 114.

⁸⁹ KLAUS FRITSCH: *Entwicklungshilfe der Sowjetunion. Der westliche Forschungsstand*. Köln, Berichte des Bundesinstituts für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien 1986.

⁹⁰ GOLDENBERG 1971; POPPINO 1964; ROBERT J. ALEXANDER: 'Soviet and Communist Activities in Latin America'. *Problems of Communism* X/1 (1961), pp. 8–13; ROBERT J. ALEXANDER: *Communism in Latin America*. Chapel Hill, Rutgers University Press 1957.

⁹¹ WOLFGANG BERNER: 'Die Sowjetunion und Lateinamerika', in: DIETRICH GEYER (ED.): *Osteuropa-Handbuch. Sowjetische Außenpolitik Band II*. Köln, Böhlau 1976, pp. 844–878; HERBERT GOLDHAMER: *The Foreign Powers in Latin America*. Princeton, Princeton University Press 1972; JOSEPH G. OSWALD; ANTHONY

What has been written on Soviet political relations with Castro's Cuba is notably more polarised, with political leanings depending on the author's background. Works hover between harshly critical studies by renegades and victims of the revolution and much more relaxed, usually rather European or Canadian than US, studies that sometimes cannot hide a degree of sympathy for the tropical David fighting the imperialist Goliath.⁹²

Soviet scholars did conduct some good research on Latin American history, their books on contemporary relations between the USSR and Latin America, however, tended to be positivistic chronicles or rather schematic ideological treatises.⁹³ Just as biased, and with a clearly more political than academic drive, was a series of US studies that were written in the wake of the left revolutions in Central America from the late 1970s. Drastically overestimating Soviet activities in their "backyard", political and intelligence analysts spread paranoia of overall Communist subversion, and linked it, in their academic work, with denunciations of political liberalism in the United States and demands for an end of *détente* and outright calls to arms.⁹⁴

Many academics without political aspirations, and especially so in the increasingly more relaxed atmosphere of early perestroika, defied this US paranoia. The most thorough and comprehensive analyses of Soviet-Latin American relations were all written around the mid 1980s. They painted Soviet activities in the Americas not as those of an aggressive and perfectly orchestrated evil empire, but rather pointed at the multilayered economic and political contacts, at limited Soviet influence and, especially, the lack of coordination, which different Soviet organs displayed in their activities abroad.⁹⁵

All this literature from the 1950s to the 1980s has analysed Soviet-Latin American relations within a traditional political history analytical framework, focussing on the spread of Communist parties on the one side, and political, military, economic and sometimes cultural relations on a bipolar interstate level on the other. During the high times of *détente* realism in

STROVER (EDS.): *The Soviet Union and Latin America*. New York, Praeger 1970; HERBERT DINERSTEIN: 'Soviet Policy in Latin America'. *The American Political Science Review* 1 (1967), pp. 80–90, p. 83.

⁹² The literature is abundant, examples are: YURI PAVLOV: *Soviet-Cuban Alliance, 1959-1991*. Boulder, North-South Center Press, University of Miami 1996; NÉSTOR CARBONELL: *And the Russians Stayed. The Sovietization of Cuba. A Personal Portrait*. New York, William Morrow & Co 1989; LÉVESQUE 1978.

⁹³ ALEKSANDR SIZONENKO: *Sovetskij Sojuz i Latinskaja Amerika. Sovremennyj etap otnošenij*. Kiev, Politizdat Ukrainy 1976; VIKTOR VOL'SKIJ: *SSSR i Latinskaja Amerika. 1917-1967*. Moskva 1967.

⁹⁴ TIMOTHY ASHBY: *The Bear in the Back Yard. Moscow's Caribbean Strategy*. Lexington, Mass., Lexington Books 1987; DENNIS L. BARK: *The Red Orchestra*. Stanford, Calif, Hoover Institution Press Stanford University 1986; LEON GOURE; MORRIS ROTHENBERG: *Soviet Penetration of Latin America*. Miami, Coral Gables 1975.

⁹⁵ PRIZEL 1990; MILLER 1989; EUSEBIO MUJAL-LEÓN (ED.): *The USSR and Latin America. A Developing Relationship*. Boston, Unwin Hyman 1989; CARLOS RIVAS: *América Latina, Unión Soviética. Relaciones económicas y comerciales*. Bogotá, Ediciones Librería del Profesional 1989; AUGUSTO VARAS (ED.): *Soviet-Latin American Relations in the 1980s*. Boulder, Westview 1987; BLASIER 1983.

the mid 1970s, initial attempts had been made to enlarge the analytical horizon: some scholars abandoned ideology completely and made comparisons between the US and Soviet empires based on system theory. They paralleled Soviet methods of control and influence in Eastern Europe with those of the United States in Latin America, compared Poland and Mexico in their position as dependent direct neighbours to the superpowers, or pointed at commonalities of adaption and resistance that Rumania or Yugoslavia on the one side and Cuba or Peru on the other built up against the dominance of their respective hegemons.⁹⁶

Irrespective of their analytical and political perspective, all assessments of Soviet-Latin American relations before 1990 had in common two characteristics: firstly, the authors had no access to Soviet archival material. Secondly, as a common and necessary first step in international history, they focused on the positivist sphere of political relations, also in a series of studies on separate Latin American states that were undertaken from the 1980s.⁹⁷

After 1991, many Russian archives were accessible, but as regards the Soviets and Latin America, no one has bothered so far. As of late, many historians of the Soviet Union have become interested in relations with the emerging Third World. Their studies underline the active role of smaller states, which often used the superpowers to their own benefit and they somewhat broadened the picture of international relations to interactions of domestic and foreign policy, to economic interests, the impact of religion, scientific and cultural exchange. Several of these case studies have analysed Soviet relations with South East Asia, the Middle East and Black Africa, but not the Americas.⁹⁸ The temporary political lack of interest in Latin America seized also many academics. Those historians professionally engaged with Latin America, like back in the 1950s, have focused recently again on Communism, and not so much the Soviet state. The Comintern's activities on the subcontinent have been

⁹⁶ JAN TRISKA (ED.): *Dominant Powers and Subordinate States. The United States in Latin America and the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe*. Durham, Duke University Press 1986; EDY KAUFMAN: *The Superpowers and Their Spheres of Influence. The United States and the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe and Latin America*. London, Croom Helm 1976.

⁹⁷ RUBEN BERRÍOS; COLE BLASIER: 'Peru and the Soviet Union 1969-89. Distant Partners'. *Journal of Latin American Studies* 23 (1991), pp. 365–384; MARIO RAPOPORT: 'Argentina and the Soviet Union. History of Political and Economic Relations, 1917-55'. *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 2 (1986), pp. 239–285; ISABEL TURRENT: *La Unión Soviética en América Latina. El Caso De La Unidad Popular Chilena, 1970-1973*. México, Centro de Estudios Internacionales 1984; JOSEPH NOGEE: 'Allende's Chile and the Soviet Union. A Policy Lesson for Latin American Nations Seeking Autonomy'. *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 21 (1979), pp. 339–368.

⁹⁸ A selection: ANDREAS HILGER (ED.): *Die Sowjetunion und die Dritte Welt. UdSSR, Staatssozialismus und Antikolonialismus im Kalten Krieg 1945-1991*. München, Oldenbourg 2009; VLADIMIR SHUBIN: *The Hot Cold War. The USSR in Southern Africa*. London, Pluto Press 2008; BODEN 2006; MAXIM MATUSEVICH: *No Easy Row for a Russian Hoe. Ideology and Pragmatism in Nigerian-Soviet Relations, 1960-1991*. Trenton, Africa World Press 2003; for a broader overview see: DAVID ENGERMAN: 'The Second World's Third World'. *Kritika* 1 (2011), pp. 183–211; TOBIAS RUPPRECHT: 'Die sowjetische Gesellschaft in der Welt des Kalten Kriegs. Neue Forschungsperspektiven'. *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 58 (2010), pp. 381–399.

revisited.⁹⁹ Communism's Latin American crimes found a prosecutor in renegade secret agent Vasilij Mitrochin and a judge in Pascal Fontain in a chapter of the *livre noir*.¹⁰⁰ The Soviet state, however, is absent also in overviews of Latin American history.¹⁰¹ And more conspicuously, it is even all but absent in many new histories of Latin America in the Cold War.¹⁰² A notable exception is Hal Brand's great book on "Latin America's Cold War"; yet, while convincing in interpretation and style, his encompassing account remains at the level of traditional political Cold War History and does not include either cultural, intellectual and microhistorical aspects or new archival material from Russia.¹⁰³

The comparative view, as in the first approaches of the 1970s, has hardly been pursued further. A comparison between the Zapatista movement in Mexico and the Ukrainian *Machnovščina* and a short reference to parallels between Soviet nationality policies and Latin American *mestizaje*, the political promotion of racial mingling, are rare exceptions. While interethnic marriage was promoted actively within the Soviet Union to bring gender equality and general progress to "backward" ethnicities, Soviet theorists still repudiated the similar Latin American concept of *mestizaje*.¹⁰⁴

Ethnicity and agrarian policies are not be part of this thesis, but the examples show that there are points of vantage for going beyond an IR analytical framework and more into the field of *Gesellschaftsvergleich*: the Soviet Union and Latin America were not only "on the cultural fringe of Europe" and "unable to define themselves other than through their relationship with the West".¹⁰⁵ They also had a specific shared history and interacted directly: this thesis focuses on this transnational dimension, which considers the mutual influences between both

⁹⁹ KLAUS MESCHKAT: 'Die Komintern in Lateinamerika. Biographien als Schlüssel zum Verständnis einer Weltorganisation', in: MICHAEL BUCKMILLER and KLAUS MESCHKAT (EDS.): *Biographisches Handbuch zur Geschichte der Kommunistischen Internationale. Ein deutsch-russisches Forschungsprojekt*. Berlin, Akademie-Verlag 2007, pp. 111–126; LÖWY, PEARLMAN, EDS. 1992.

¹⁰⁰ ANDREW; MITROCHIN 2005; STÉPHANE COURTOIS; NICOLAS WERT; JEAN-LOUIS PANNÉ (EDS.): *Le Livre noir du communisme. Crimes, terreurs, répression*. Paris, Éditions Robert Laffont 1997.

¹⁰¹ BETHELL, ED. 1998; BETHELL, ROXBOROUGH, EDS. 1997.

¹⁰² GROW 2008; BETHELL; ROXBOROUGH 2007; SEWALL MENZEL: *Dictators, Drugs & Revolution. Cold War Campaigning in Latin America 1965-1989*. Bloomington, AuthorHouse 2006; GREG GRANDIN: *The Last Colonial Massacre. Latin America in the Cold War*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press 2004; JEAN FRANCO: *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City. Latin America in the Cold War*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press 2002; JORGE G. CASTAÑEDA: *Utopia unarmed. The Latin American Left after the Cold War*. New York, Vintage 1994.

¹⁰³ BRANDS 2010.

¹⁰⁴ ADRIENNE LYNN EDGAR: 'Marriage, Modernity and the 'Friendship of Nations'. Interethnic Intimacy in Post-War Central Asia in Comparative Perspective'. *Central Asian Survey* 26/4 (2007), pp. 581–599; DITTMAR DAHLMANN: *Land und Freiheit*. Stuttgart, Düsseldorf, Steiner-Verlag-Wiesbaden-GmbH 1983; ŠUL'GOVSKIJ 1972, pp. 24–34.

¹⁰⁵ STEPHEN MARKS: *How Russia Shaped the Modern World. From Art to Anti-Semitism, Ballet to Bolshevism*. Princeton, Princeton University Press 2003, p. 35.

these non-Western areas at levels beyond geopolitics and has never been applied to the history of the Soviet Union and Latin America.

Scenes from a long distance relationship. Theories, narrative structure and theses

The introduction has set the entangled history of the Soviet Union and Latin America in the context of the different strands of scholarship concerned and outlined the contributions it seeks to make to the social history of the post-Stalinist Soviet Union, the history of the cultural Cold War and to Latin American history. This thesis can build on an existing literature on Soviet-Latin American relations that was written still during the Cold War. Unlike any other book on the subject, however, it is based on Soviet archive material; there is extensive and accessible documentation on officially organised cultural, intellectual and scientific exchanges of the period in Russian state and Communist party archives. Interviews as well as published memoirs, travelogues, scientific and popular journals, newspapers, fictional literature, theatre plays, poetry, songs and films from Russian, Latin American and Western archives, libraries and the internet have provided a much larger source base than any scholar of Soviet-Latin American relations has had at his or her disposal. Instead of adding yet another study of Cold War politics, this thesis seeks to fathom possibilities to combine a global history of the Cold War with its *home fronts* in the Soviet Union and, to a lesser extent, in Latin America. The new impacts of the world abroad on the USSR after years of isolation did not initially weaken the belief in the superiority of their own system, as contacts with the West did in the long run. As long as they were directed towards the Third World and especially Latin America, the first contacts actually proved and enforced the ideas the Soviets had about themselves in the world. Soviet internationalism after Stalin was a combination of old socialist internationalism and the new impacts from worldwide cultural internationalism. With this combination of ideas, the Soviets revived and expanded their interactions with Latin America from the mid 1950s.

The first chapter looks at Soviet self-representation towards Latin Americans. A discursive analysis of a range of cultural diplomacy and exchange activities asks not so much, whether Soviet propaganda was true or misleading (a question rather easy to answer), but reconstructs the image the Soviet Union after Stalin meant to create of itself abroad. In a second chapter, the perspective changes to the impact of Latin America on Soviet popular culture, music,

cinema, and literature. The appeal of these arts predated but was again boosted by the Cuban Revolution, and it inseminated internationalism among Soviet artists, intellectuals and many ordinary citizens. Chapters three and four are dedicated to Latin American students and intellectuals as target groups of Soviet advances and carriers of certain ideas about the Soviet Union that went beyond communist ideology. Travelogues and memoirs by writers who visited the USSR are revealing about two aspects: firstly about how the intellectuals perceived, after the revelations about Stalin's dictatorship, what many once considered a socialist paradise; secondly about how the new Soviet self-representation managed to keep them interested in the USSR anyway. Interviews with alumni from Soviet universities add the recollections of Latin Americans who spent fully funded five to seven years of their youth in Soviet cities. The perception of the Soviet Union, and this is a recurrent topic of this thesis, too, was quite different from the Global South than from the West. Putting the Western perception of the USSR in context and reflecting on its attraction for many people in the Third World helps understand a series of integrating moments of Soviet society after Stalin. A fifth chapter finally switches back to Soviet agents and looks at Moscow's regional experts who dealt with Latin America. While roped in for political ends, they broadened scholarly knowledge on the world abroad and brought their internationalist idealism into organisations of the Soviet state.

In this non-linear composition that might be referred to as "scenes from a long distance relationship", these five chapters constitute rather independent and self contained stories, with their own chronology and occasional intersections with aspects and persons from other chapters. This build-up takes some inspiration from the construction kit of historical writing offered by the *histoire croisée*: it overlaps two geographical areas, analyses how people from both sides interact in this context and deploys its theses not *ex-ante*, in order to avoid self-fulfilling prophecies.¹⁰⁶ Perspectives change constantly in order to give an even-keeled picture; the focus is always on ideas, persons and groups crossing from one side to the other, and on the ways these contacts shaped perceptions of the other and the self.

This conception, which focuses less on political tensions and military crises, excludes topics that some may expect to be more in the foreground of a history set in the Cold War, such as violent conflicts, political crises or repressive puppet-regimes in Latin America. Early impacts of the system conflict, *La Violencia* in Colombia or the overthrow of the democratically elected left president Jacobo Arbenz with the help of the CIA, are not in the focus of this

¹⁰⁶ MICHAEL WERNER; BÉNÉDICTE ZIMMERMANN: 'Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity'. *History and Theory* 45/1 (2006), pp. 30–50.

thesis, firstly because much excellent research has been done in these fields already, secondly because the Soviet Union was hardly involved directly in most of these events. For the same reasons, the Cuban Revolution, and, for that matter, the Chilean popular front government under Salvador Allende, only form part of this thesis insofar as their repercussions in the Soviet Union are concerned. The Cuban Crisis is considered to be the best researched single episode in history; as for the Sovietisation of the island from the late 1960s, there is little news to tell until archives in Havana become accessible. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Soviets saw events in Cuba as only one part of a process taking place all over Latin America. In order to grasp the strange occurrence of the Soviet-Cuban alliance, one needs to take into account the perception of the whole of Latin America in the years before. Only in this context, the very special case of Cuba features in this account of Soviet-Latin American interactions. This thesis explores the re-opening of the Soviet Union to the world after the isolation of late Stalinism. The re-kindled internationalism within the framework of the cultural Cold War proved, for a while, a rather successful contribution to the re-launching of the Soviet project, both towards internal and external audiences. Similar to the victory in the Second World War and the technological feats of the 1950s and 60s, these successes were a source of legitimisation for the new Soviet political elite and an integrative ideational moment for Soviet society during the turmoil of de-Stalinization. The analysis of Soviet internationalism after Stalin should thus contribute to a deeper understanding of both the second half of the history of the Soviet Union and the history of the cultural Cold War.

1.
A modern image for the USSR.
Soviet self-representation towards Latin Americans

Cultural diplomacy, propaganda and internationalism. Theories and institutions

- A modern idyll. The image of the USSR in Soviet media in Latin America
 - Don't mention communism! Technology and highbrow culture in Soviet self representation
 - Courting the world's youth. The image conveyed to young Latin Americans
 - *Space*: the inner periphery as stencil. *Time*: Stalinist legacies
- Peace and friendship. Soviet self-representation and internationalism from the 1950s
-

A society is, above all, the idea it forms of itself

Emile Durkheim,
The Elementary Forms of Religious Life

*As self-representation we shall
consider the production of a text or
functional equivalents of a text,
with which and through which the
organisation identifies itself.*

Luhmann/Habermas,
*Theorie der Gesellschaft oder
Sozialtechnologie*

Cultural diplomacy and propaganda. Theories and institutions

In March 1957, Oleg Ignat'ev, head of the Soviet news agency *Sovinformburo* in Argentina, wrote a long letter to Moscow. The United States, he reported, had numerous staff in their embassies dealing only with cultural affairs, they issued a colourful brochure about life in the United States and they broadcast their *Voice of America* daily in Spanish. Thanks to private holdings as of the *United Press*, the “Yankees” also exerted considerable influence on the bulk of Latin American media and news agencies. Ignat'ev complained that the Soviet Union, the new best friend of the developing nations, lagged behind completely and listed more than 40 “suggestions to strengthen Soviet propaganda in Latin America”: he demanded more

professional, more efficient Soviet measures that comply with specific interests of each country. More modern technologies that matched up to the United States were to be used, and the focus should not be on political issues, but on Soviet literature, culture and geography. Customs of the Western press should be considered, one's own shortcomings and hardships mentioned. The bureaucratic lump TASS, having failed so obviously in conveying to the world the "necessity of the invasion of Hungary" the year before, should be replaced with a news agency that appealed also to non-communist "progressive circles". To ensure that the Soviet content was still recognised in the new form, Ignat'ev suggested all staff of Soviet institutions be Soviets, including, most importantly, lower ranks such as translators and chauffeurs. They should show Soviet films on Soviet projectors and everyone should be obliged to wear Soviet watches, write with Soviet pens, drive Soviet cars and even smoke Soviet cigarettes.¹⁰⁷

Two years before, Khrushchev and Bulganin had publically announced their interest in expanding political, economic and cultural connections to the Third World. But the United States seemed still light-years ahead in their relations with Latin America. Ignat'ev got support for his appeal to crib from the successful opponent, when a Soviet cultural delegation to Uruguay later that year reported about the predominance and role model effectiveness of US cultural diplomacy. After their return to Moscow, they listed the US activities in detail, explained how their libraries and language classes functioned, which periodicals they distributed – and reported that they encouraged youngsters to study in the United States.¹⁰⁸

As a reaction to these new insights gained abroad, the Soviet Union invested ever more effort and money into a cultural diplomacy that was no longer exclusively directed to potential communists and revolutionaries in the Americas. A 1958 report to the Moscow headquarters of the VOKS, the official organisation of cultural exchange programmes, suggested finding out more details about US cultural diplomacy and to use the new information for Soviet interests.¹⁰⁹ The target group for these activities had broadened tremendously: the new doctrine of the "national democratic states" saw entire Third World countries and their populations as possible anti-Western friends to win over. The Kremlin's goal with its cultural diplomacy was no longer to convert Latin Americans to communism, but to convince them of the peaceful nature and altruistic stance of the Soviet state, and possibly of its role model character for quick state-led modernisation. More than in other Third World arenas of the

¹⁰⁷ O. Ignat'ev G. Žukovu v GKKS. Predloženiya po usilenju našej propagandy v stranach Latinskoj Ameriki, 8-3-1957, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.39 l.168-184.

¹⁰⁸ Spravka ob Amerikano-Urugvajskom Kul'turnom Al'janse, 5-5-1958, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.398 l.35-38.

¹⁰⁹ 11-2-1958, GARF f.9576 op.8 d.4 l.149.

global Cold War, the Soviets could draw on two assets among many Latin American intellectual and political elites, the prime target of their campaigns: a very critical stance towards the United States and an affinity for European high culture.

This first chapter will subject Soviet self-representation towards Latin Americans to critical scrutiny. From the mid 1950s, ever higher numbers of copies of Soviet print media were sent, and expanding hours of Soviet radio broadcasts reached all of the Americas; Soviet artists, intellectuals and political representatives travelled there; large exhibitions were held in Argentina, Mexico, Cuba and Brazil between 1955 and 62. Ever more Latin Americans were invited, for officially staged short visits as well as for lengthy stays, to the Soviet Union, which now wooed especially the youth of the Global South. The focus of this analysis is the image the Soviet Union tried to convey of itself through all these activities. In order to reach its broadened target groups, it will become obvious, the Soviet Union downplayed the topos of communism remarkably and flaunted its cultural and technological achievements instead. This self-representation drew on elements of socialist internationalism of the 1920s and 30s, with its foreign propaganda on the one hand, and the experience of the modernisation of the inner periphery with the peoples of Central Asia and Caucasus on the other. But Ignat'ev's reference to the United States made it clear: Soviet cultural advances to the Third World from the 1950s stood also in the context of quite similar activities of the ideological foes in the West (and, to a lesser extent, of China). In the field of cultural diplomacy, the Soviet Union and the United States not only competed, but also mutually influenced each other's self-representation and in doing so shaped a great deal of what came to be known as cultural internationalism under the conditions of the global Cold War.¹¹⁰

In contemporary scholarship, a renewed interest in ideas and ideology has entailed paying increasing attention to their dissemination and propagation through cultural diplomacy. Beyond the policies of occupation and political influence, both camps of the Cold War sought to win over politicians, intellectuals and entire populations across the globe. In contrast to the punctual analysis of crises and military confrontations, cultural diplomacy gives insight into the all encompassing and linear dimensions of the conflict and it reveals the ideational basis of the Cold War and its actors' mindsets. Based on missionary thoughts of superiority, the Cold War rivals not only fought over geopolitical or economic interests, but just as much over convictions and ideas of how to organise modern society.¹¹¹ Political decision makers shared the belief in the importance of spreading their world view. Already in 1955, the ever badly off

¹¹⁰ IRIYE 1997.

¹¹¹ WESTAD 2007, pp. 4f.

Soviet Union saw it as appropriate to spend two billion US Dollars a year on foreign propaganda.¹¹²

Theories

Cultural activities of the Soviet state are usually referred to as ‘propaganda’, but the word carries heavy semantic ballast. Harking back to papal missions in the 16th century, the term has been given a distinctly pejorative connotation in today’s common parlance because of Nazi and Stalinist propaganda. Yet both sides of the Cold War used the word extensively. The Soviets did so decidedly affirmatively: “‘propaganda’,” a *Sovinformburo* member recalled later, “is simply what ‘public diplomacy’ means in Western terminology.”¹¹³ But Westerners used ‘propaganda’ as well, usually derogatorily for Soviet activities, but indeed also as an analytical term.¹¹⁴ And, as a former high ranking member of the *United States Information Agency*, USIA, explained, they even used it in an affirmative sense for their own activities: “propaganda, that is to distribute information, selectively but credibly, with the aim of making other peoples think and act according to [US] American interest.”¹¹⁵ To make things more complicated, some scholars differ ‘black propaganda’ as deliberate misinformation from ‘white propaganda’ that only cultivates a certain state image.¹¹⁶

The latter would probably coincide with a representative definition of ‘cultural diplomacy’ or ‘public diplomacy’. As opposed to information policy, which works with multipliers such as journalists or politicians, cultural/public diplomacy refers directly at a broad audience and portrays a country “to another country's people in order to help achieve certain foreign policy goals. This self-portrayal includes the transfer and exchange of cultural media and representatives as well as the exchange of students, teachers, professors, government representatives, and others, as long as it is at least directed and sponsored in part by government offices.”¹¹⁷

¹¹² BELMONTE 2008, p. 67.

¹¹³ KAREN CHAČATUROV: *Tri znaka vremena. Polveka v međunarodnoj žurnalistike*. Moskva, Meždunarodnye Otnošenija 2002, p. 10.

¹¹⁴ E.g.: BELMONTE 2008; NICOLAS CULL: *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency. American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2008.

¹¹⁵ THOMAS SORENSEN: *The Word War. The Story of American Propaganda*. New York, Harper&Row 1968, p. 17.

¹¹⁶ JOHANNES PAULMANN (ED.): *Auswärtige Repräsentationen. Deutsche Kulturdiplomatie nach 1945*. Köln, Böhlau 2005, p. 4.

¹¹⁷ MANUELA AGUILAR: *Cultural Diplomacy and Foreign Policy. German-American Relations 1955-1968*. New York, Peter Lang Publishing 1996, p. 8.

The category cultural/public diplomacy in this definition seems more useful than ‘propaganda’ as an analytical tool, but is still not perfectly adequate in the context of this chapter for two reasons: firstly, the problem remains that there is absolutely no coherent concept of the terms propaganda and cultural/public diplomacy in the literature this chapter is based on. Some differentiate the ideal types “non-reliable, non-transparent, short term” vs. “reliable, transparent, long ranging”¹¹⁸, or “offensive, ideological” vs. “decent, humble goals”¹¹⁹ respectively. Yet I would claim, it is impossible to separate reliably where cultural/public diplomacy ends and propaganda begins, if there is no commonly accepted definition of either term, either from contemporaries or from today’s analytical point of view. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, *grande dame* of public opinion research in West Germany, had a point when she stated that ‘cultural diplomacy’ is only a “euphemism for ‘propaganda’”.¹²⁰ Secondly, ‘cultural diplomacy’ is confined to a more or less immediate political purpose – “in order to help achieve certain policy goals.” While this political dimension is important, I see this functionalistic dimension of cultural/public diplomacy only as part of a larger set of activities that I call Soviet ‘self-representation’.

In any renewed contact with the world abroad, the Soviets presented a certain image of themselves. This image can be defined as an idealised version of the world that Soviet internationalists believed themselves to live in – or as they believed it should be. It reflected their political imagination, their world view, their intellectual horizon, their conception of the empire (which they would not refer to as ‘empire’, of course) they lived in and the role they were to play in it. By conveying this image also to foreigners, these internationalists tried to mould actively what the rest of the world thought of the Soviet Union.

Image, and this is applicable also to similar activities of Western states at the time, did not necessarily reflect directly a reality behind it: ‘self-representation’ goes beyond questions of deceit and truth, and captures the ideational, or ‘discursive’, basis of agency and power instead. That Soviet realities did not comply with their beautified depictions abroad is hardly surprising. In this chapter, in the first place, Soviet self-representation will be taken at face value, not for the “real content” behind the signs, but for the signs themselves. Shortcomings, discrepancies – and downright lies – behind the official picture will be pointed out occasionally in this chapter, but the main interest is the official discourse itself.

¹¹⁸ PAULMANN, ED. 2005, p. 4.

¹¹⁹ AGUILAR 1996, p. 8.

¹²⁰ PAULMANN, ED. 2005, p. 4.

Soviet cultural diplomacy in the Third World, begun after the death of Stalin, took place in a complex web of Soviet conditions, local circumstances and US activities. Not only did it influence the target audience and finally also the US adversary, but it had its impacts on the Soviet Union itself, its politicians, its intellectuals and indeed the entire population. What is called here ‘Soviet self-representation’ defines not only a coordinated arm of foreign policy, but the sum of all endeavours, from different institutions and people, which were to convey a certain image of the Soviet state. This chapter will analyse a range of phenomena, about all of which much more could be said. But what is of interest in this context is above all how they were supposed to represent the Soviet Union towards the outer world. This self-representation to foreigners, I argue, was one integral part of Soviet internationalism after Stalin.

Institutions

The Soviets certainly had some experience with self-representation. As early as the 1920s, Karl Radek headed a propaganda department in the foreign ministry. After political interest in the Third World had waned during Stalinism, however, the extent of global propaganda beyond Communist parties was hardly worth mentioning. After the Second World War, between installing puppet regimes, suppressing the liberated populations and re-enacting the Stalinist show trials, the USSR tried hard and considerably failed in convincing people in Eastern Europe of the prospects of Soviet-style socialism.¹²¹ "Primitive ideologism, formalism, sluggishness caused by the endless need to check it with the authorities and extreme stereotyping"¹²² characterised this early Cold War propaganda. Already in the late 1940s, Soviet officials were debating how they could improve on their attempts, which so palpably failed to appeal. Their chief problem was that they only had vague and schematic ideas about the countries they were aiming at – a dilemma that affected the later policies towards the Third World even more.

After the end of Stalinism, the Soviet leadership envisaged the creation of an alliance between the socialist camp and the former colonies and, to this end, supported non-communist and neutral countries that fitted the new concept of ‘national democratic states’.¹²³ Soviet “propaganda” from now on had a new target group. No longer was it directed to already converted Communists, nor did it attempt to win people over to communism as it did towards

¹²¹ BEHRENDT 2008.

¹²² VLADIMIR PECHATNOV: ‘Exercise in Frustration. Soviet Foreign Propaganda in the Early Cold War’. *Cold War History* 1/2 (2000/01), p. 16.

¹²³ BRUN; HERSH 1990, pp. 38f.

Eastern Europe. The Soviet state now presented itself to the Third World as a role model of non-Western development and as an altruistic helper with its own model of fast modernisation. But in order to address more successfully non-communist political leaders and entire populations on a now truly global scale, the Soviet Union urgently needed to refurbish its methods and therefore its institutions.

After its breakup, the Comintern-apparatus had been re-organised within the Central Committee of the Communist party. The organ changed its name and leadership several times, until, from 1955, Boris Ponomarev headed what was now called the ‘International Department of the Central Committee’. A Communist Information Bureau, the Cominform in Bucharest, had organised Communist party relations with Eastern Europe, Italy and France during late Stalinism and was replaced with only a publishing board of the multi-language journal *Problemy Mira i Socializma* (“problems of peace and socialism”, *World Marxist Review* in the English edition) in Prague. The International Department of the Central Committee in Moscow, among other tasks, oversaw the work of several front organisations and institutions that were to promote the Soviet way of life abroad. The conduct of cultural relations was now under direct party control.¹²⁴ Having secured its tight grip on these institutions, the party concealed this very influence in their presentation to the outer world.

From the 1920s, the *Vsesojuznoe obščestvo kul’turnoj svjazi s zagranicej* (“all-union organisation for cultural contacts”, VOKS) had organised much of the Soviet Union’s foreign propaganda, most notably the notorious visits of hundreds of foreign intellectuals. Its somewhat discredited name was changed into *Sojuz sovetskich obščestv družby* (“union of societies for friendship”, SSOD) in early 1958. While the VOKS only had one department for the United States and Latin America together, the SSOD quickly developed a refined regional differentiation. In 1959, SSOD-deputy Victor Goršakov invited the ambassadors of Argentina, Mexico and Uruguay and many Soviet artists to the foundation ceremony of the ‘Soviet-Latin American Friendship Association’. He paralleled the fight against the Spanish monarchy in the Americas with the Soviets’ struggle against the Tsar and, instead of communist innuendos, there was talk about Russian scientists in the Americas in the 19th century. The Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian was elected president of the association and gave a long rambling speech on Soviet enthusiasm about Latin America: “never will the tropical exoticism, palms and orchids, parrots and alligators keep us from acknowledging the

¹²⁴ JURIJ POLJAKOV: ‘Posle rospuska Kominterna’. *Novaja i Novejšaja Istorija* 1 (2003), pp. 106–116; GOULD-DAVIES 2003, p. 203.

pride of the Latin American peoples, their diligence, their fight, their history, culture, their pursuits and dreams.”¹²⁵

Friendship societies came into being with most states on earth. Already by 1964, these circles showed the allegedly peaceful nature and the cultural, scientific and technological advances of the Soviet Union in 14 Latin American countries, and their number grew until the 1980s. They distributed books, journals, newspapers and scientific literature, they organised the exchange of delegations and students, and held photo exhibitions or Russian tea afternoons.¹²⁶

Several groups and organisations that were founded independently by Latin Americans came under the umbrella of SSOD, too. A first one had been founded by the Mexican writer José Mancisidor as early as the 1920s; in 1944, the liberal Colombian president Alfonso López Pumarejo not only established diplomatic relations with the war ally USSR, but also supported the foundation of the *Instituto Cultural Colombo Soviético*. Run by local intellectuals in La Candelaria, the old centre of Bogotá, it soon opened local branches in the Colombian cities of Medellín and Cali. A similar institution, the *Instituto Cubano-Soviético*, came into being the year after in Havana. Like the *Instituto Argentina-URSS* in Buenos Aires and several other Argentinean towns, they all boasted their own libraries, offered Russian language classes, staged theatre plays, supported the translation of literature, edited their own journals and attracted huge crowds with their regularly screened Soviet documentary and feature films – almost half a million people saw films at the Buenos Aires branch in 1958 alone. Deeply impressed after a visit to Argentina, Pablo Neruda went back to copy the local structure of the association in his native Chile. In Mexico, Diego Riviera headed a similar organisation from 1944.¹²⁷

All these groups, a milieu around the Communist parties, leftists and liberals, appointed their chairmen autonomously, organised events and even maintained direct contact with other branches in Soviet republics and all over the world without direct command from Moscow. But they of course depended heavily on its financial and material supply. For the Soviet Union, they proved a relatively cheap and uncomplicated means to promote its goals abroad without directly involving the politically problematic Communist parties.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ PECHATNOV 2000, p. 16; Stenogramma sobranija učreditelej Sovetskoj asociacii družby i kul’turnogo sotrudničestva so stranami Latinskoj Ameriki, 22-11-1959, GARF f.9676 op.2 d.109 l.21-32.

¹²⁶ ‘Auf Freundschaftsbahnen’. Kultur und Leben 12 (1971), p. 38; POPPINO 1964, p. 136.

¹²⁷ VERA KUTEJŠČIKOVA: *Moskva-Meksiko-Moskva. Doroga dlinoju v žizn’*. Moskva, AkademProekt 2000, p. 144.

¹²⁸ ROMANOVSKII, ED. 1966, p. 115; POPOVA 1962.

The local friendship societies had their counter-organisations within the Soviet Union, which were under the direct control of the SSOD. By the end of the 1960s, the *Dom Družby* (“house of friendship”), the SSOD-headquarters in the Arbat, coordinated 56 of these institutes with 745 branches all over the Soviet Union. 17,000 cooperative members (“the workers’ collective of the Čeljabinsk Institute of Mechanisation”, “the Sovchoz *Družba* in Ivanov” *et cetera*) and an impressive number of more than 40 million Soviet citizens were at least nominally members of these international clubs. This does not tell too much about the amount of activity and motivation all these people displayed, but it does give an idea of how important the Soviet state considered a proper internationalist stance among its population.¹²⁹ As for the image these clubs were to send abroad it is interesting to note that their chairmen were always internationally renowned Soviet celebrities, not Communist politicians. The filmmaker Lev Kulidžanov was long time president of the Soviet-Mexican society, Aram Khachaturian headed the umbrella organisation and often appeared publically with his fellow members, the violinist David Ojstrach and the cosmonaut Valentina Tereškova. When the Soviet-Cuban friendship society was inaugurated in 1964, no less a figure than superhero Yuri Gagarin was nominated president and the Azeri composer Raúf Gadžiev his deputy in the Baku branch.¹³⁰ While popular figures represented Soviet internationalism externally, orders were still given in the international department of the Central Committee.

In addition to the structures of the SSOD, the *Gosudarstvennyj Komitet Kul’turnych Svjazej* (“state committee for cultural relations”, GKKS) came into being in 1957. The GKKS was responsible for the final implementation of most cultural foreign representational activities in the ten years of its existence. Its officials did collaborate with local Communist parties, but whenever they negotiated with foreign authorities in Soviet missions and embassies, they were supposed to show a certain distance from the CPSU and to represent the Soviet state. Officially, the administration of international radio broadcasts, the edition of literature in foreign languages and news agencies were subject to the GKKS. But again, the ones really pulling the strings sat in the Central Committee, as acknowledged by its first chairman, Georgij Žukov. The preface of its charter states clearly that the GKKS had no discretionary rights and was purely an executive organ for information and propaganda. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *id est* the Soviet state, had indeed no say in the matter – a source of ongoing friction, until the GKKS was finally disbanded in 1967, and the foreign ministry got its own

¹²⁹ N.N. 1971; N.N. 1971; ‘Reiz des Exotischen, Fernen’. *Kultur und Leben* 4 (1965), pp. 36f.; MARGARITA FADEICHEVA: ‘Friends from All Countries Meet Here’. *Moscow News* 26 (1962), pp. 8–9.

¹³⁰ Stenogramma sobranija učreditelej obščestva sovetško-kubinskoj družby, 2-11-1964, GARF f.9576 op.2 d.1871.1-16.

cultural department. The GKKS, too, came to be subdivided into regional departments. From 1959, the future ambassador to Cuba and Argentina Aleksandr Alekseev was in charge of Latin American affairs.¹³¹

The GKKS-employees had to report to the Central Committee of the CPSU, the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Culture. When the latter two suggested activities, however, they needed the approval of the international respectively cultural departments of the Central Committee of the party.¹³² This caused impressive amounts of bureaucratic paperwork and rivalry between the downgraded ministries. Barring the state-party dispute, hierarchies were usually clear. Yet for such highly centralised a political system it is still striking how cultural diplomacy was fragmented among various concurrent organs.¹³³ GKKS and SSOD took on the bulk of the tasks and will be in the foreground of this chapter's analyses. In addition, several more front organisations contributed to foreign propaganda. Numerous anti-fascist committees, women's associations, the central committee of the trade union, publishing houses and radio committees all had their international departments for all parts of the world. All of them were explicitly required to propagate Soviet achievements abroad.

Besides the long-time news agency TASS, the *Sovinformbjuro* was in charge particularly for the foreign non-communist audience. In 1961, it was given the more neutral and modern name *Novosti* (or *Agenstvo Pečati 'Novosti'*, "Press Agency 'News'", APN) and given the official status of a non-party-affiliated public organisation. Already back in 1954, the *Sovinformbjuro* had installed an office in Mexico. Officials there complained that a lack of coordination between the responsible organs limited the vast possibilities the Soviet Union could have in Latin America. Anti-imperialist thought prevailed also in the bourgeoisie, they reported. Many national-liberation and democratisation movements would be susceptible to Moscow's approaches.¹³⁴ So Moscow approached.

¹³¹ GOULD-DAVIES 2003, p. 206; KASACK 1973, p. 386; Correspondence between the GKKS and the Communist Party of Brazil, 9-3-1961, RGANI f.5 op.36 d.136 l.27-29; O sozdanii GKKS pri Soveta Ministrov, 4-3-1957, GARF f.5446 op.1 d.662 l.236.

¹³² One representative example: Ministerstvo Kul'tury Central'nomu Komitetu KPSS, 21-12-1959, RGANI f.5 op.36 d.102.

¹³³ PECHATNOV 2000, p. 7.

¹³⁴ Očet o rabote predstavitelja SIB v Meksike tov. V. Masjukeviča, undated, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.343 l.20-27.

A modern idyll. The image of the USSR in Soviet media in Latin America

Soviet self-representation in Latin America began with the distribution of journals, the longest lasting Soviet global propaganda activity. The few English or French samples of the VOKS-magazine that may have reached Latin America from the 1930s entertained their not so broad, and predominantly Communist, international readers with articles such as “Capital setup in Soviet agriculture” and a lot of statistics. Other internationally distributed journals were *Soviet culture in the making*, *USSR* or *Literature in the Soviet Union*. They had in common an almost exclusive focus on Soviet issues, with some side views of the evildoings of Western capitalism.

During the great reforms of Soviet media from the mid 1950s, these international publications also changed their face.¹³⁵ For one thing, they were translated into ever more foreign languages, including Spanish and later Portuguese. With the advent of decolonisation, they increasingly covered Third World stories, and the layout got more and more appealing. The grey and highly ideologised political journal *War and working class* became the colourful *New Times*, one of the most popular Soviet international monthly illustrated reviews, which, from the mid 1950s, was also translated to Spanish (*Nuevos Tiempos*) and sent to Latin America. By 1954, it had been joined by three more translated magazines: *USSR* became *Unión Soviética*, Soviet literature now presented itself in *Literatura Soviética* and Latin American women could join the internationalist feminist call reading *Mujer Soviética*, the translation of *Soviet Woman*.¹³⁶ In regular evaluations, the Cultural Department of the Central Committee usually commended the editors, but demanded the journals to address a broader, not only communist readership by “adapting to local customs”. According to responsible Soviet officials, this meant the “frequent use of terms such as *elections*, *decision* and *resolution*” as well as “more humour and a modern language”.¹³⁷ An entire series of reports called for the further improvement and more accessibility of Soviet journals for an international readership. The Soviet embassy in Mexico suggested to the foreign ministry in Moscow that the layout of the magazines should be further refined. More illustrations and photos were necessary; articles should be less on politics and more on technology and

¹³⁵ THOMAS WOLFE: *Governing Soviet Journalism. The Press and the Socialist Person after Stalin*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press 2005; MARK W. HOPKINS: *Mass Media in the Soviet Union*. New York, Pegasus 1970, pp. 265–296.

¹³⁶ Spisok sovetских žurnalov v Latinskoj Amerike v 1954g., undated, GARF f.5283 op.14 d.631 l.30.

¹³⁷ El. Romanova: O žurnale Sovetskoi Literatury, 2-2-1957, RGANI f.5 op.36 d.36 l.2.

science, on culture, sports, women and children.¹³⁸ In a long conforming letter to the GKKS, they repeated their suggestions and added samples of similar brochures distributed by the Japanese, English and US embassies.¹³⁹

Besides the GKKS-magazines, also local dependencies of the friendship societies and the embassies themselves began to publish bulletins in large print runs – Argentines, for example, had a choice between *Novedades de la Unión Soviética* (“news from the Soviet Union”) twice a week and a *Bulletin Argentina-URSS* with 20,000 copies weekly.¹⁴⁰ The monthly *Kul'tura i Žizn'* (“culture and life”) had been in the forefront of the anti-cosmopolitan campaign in the late 1940s.¹⁴¹ From 1957, it was available as *Cultura y Vida* firstly in Argentina, Mexico and Brazil and later all over the continent – now with a focus on internationalist topics. With many photos and rather similar to *Nuevos Tiempos*, it conceptualised a positive, colourful image of the Soviet Union. From July 1962, the editing house *Meždunarodnaja Kniga* (“the international book”) sent its own newspaper to Chile, Uruguay, Brazil and Cuba. *Moscow News*, the oldest Soviet newspaper for an international audience, had been shut down in 1949, and its Jewish editor Michail Borodin had been sent to die in the Gulag. In 1956, the paper was relaunched, and, with an additional Spanish edition, *Novedades de Moscú*, reached also readers all across the Americas, featuring many photos and articles on cultural exchange, visits and travels to the Soviet Union, friendship of the peoples, student exchange, sport, cars, technology, the cosmos, stories of ordinary Soviet people and the development of the Soviet periphery.

Eventually, some 20 Soviet regular publications found their way to all Latin American countries, first in Spanish, later also in Portuguese. Some were specialist literature or still discussed Marxist theory (*Ciencias Sociales, Comercio Exterior, América Latina, Problemas del Extremo Oriente, Revista Militar Soviética, Socialismo: Teoría y Práctica, and Problemas del Paz y del Socialismo*). Yet to a much broader audience, *Nuevos Tiempos, Cultura y Vida, El Teatro Soviético, El Siglo XX y la Paz, El libro y el Arte en la URSS, Film Soviético, Deporte en el URSS* or *Sputnik* presented an idealised version of all walks of Soviet life. They were all shipped first through diplomatic and Communist party channels, mainly via Mexico-City and Buenos Aires, later through Havana. Fiction books and technical literature joined the periodicals in increasing number. US contemporary observers estimated the number of Soviet

¹³⁸ 13-5-1957, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.343 1.2-4.

¹³⁹ 12-6-1957, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.343 1.4-45. Very similar is an entire series of suggestions from the Sovinformburo in Mexico, RGANI f.5 op.36 d.194 1.285-297.

¹⁴⁰ Spravka SSOD, 11-2-1958, GARF f.9576 op.8 d.4 1.149.

¹⁴¹ ILJA EHRENBURG: *Menschen, Jahre, Leben. Memoiren*. Berlin 1977, pp. III, 258.

publications available in Latin America at over 400 already in 1957. The annual cost of more than 100 Million Dollars was usually covered by trade agreements, so little hard foreign exchange had to be spent.¹⁴²

The immediate impact of these journals should not be overestimated. Besides some cultural institutions, libraries and universities, only a few people actually subscribed to them.¹⁴³ Added to that, in numerous right-wing military dictatorships, the postal service tried to prevent the distribution of Soviet print media. Officials in Moscow regularly received letters of complaint about non-arriving journals.¹⁴⁴ In some cases, people even faced persecution only for reading Soviet material, as a Bolivian told Khachaturian in a letter – from prison.¹⁴⁵ What is more interesting about the journals is the way the Soviet Union represented itself in them: modelled on US journals such as *Life* or *Look*, these new Soviet high gloss journals combined reports on high culture, technology, sports, scientific achievements, fashion, folklore or the private life of stars and heroes. They mainly presented an ostensibly harmonic view of Soviet everyday life and gave some information on the worldwide struggle for development and against imperialism. The Soviet inner periphery, Central Asia and the Caucasus, occupy much space in these new journals. Having undergone a socialist development programme directed by Moscow, they are presented as role models for the modernisation of the Third World. Industry, water supply, housing compounds as well as science, health care and even theatres and the arts allegedly blossomed everywhere in Central Asia. Between all photos of young and active people, happy children and smiling girls with flowers, the absence of politics and even of the word communism is striking. The Soviet Union gave itself the image of an industrialised, independent, modern, idyllic state with a healthy and happy population.

Moscow speaking Quechua

Like the journals, Soviet international radio had its predecessors in the 1930s. As early as 1932, Radio Moscow broadcast its very first show in Spanish to Spain and Latin America, a first Portuguese one followed in 1935. On a regular basis, however, broadcasting to the

¹⁴² POPPINO 1964, p. 170; ALEXANDER 1957, p. 42.

¹⁴³ At the later example of Ecuador: 200 private subscriptions in 1972. Spisok periodičeskich izdanij dlja ekvadora (avia), undated (1972), GARF f.9576 op.10 d.164 l.112-114.

¹⁴⁴ One random example: Luis Herida, president of the Bolivian association of authors complaining to SSOD, 25-11-1965, GARF f.9576 op.10 d.56 l.23.

¹⁴⁵ Aurelio Angulo to Aram Chačaturian, 7-5-1967, GARF f.9576 op.10 d.73.

Americas started only in the year of Stalin's death. The 31 hours per week in 1953 were raised to 219 hours plus 130 hours from Cuba in 1961.¹⁴⁶ The Soviets now even made the considerable effort to conceptualise shows in the indigenous languages of the Andes, in Quechua, Guaraní and Aymara. Also Soviet radio now tried to appeal to a larger audience. Political news was not given up, but 'Moscow radio informs and comments' was only a 15 minute opener to the daily show *Sobesednik*. The rest of the programme was devoted to scientific, economic and cultural achievements of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe's peoples' democracies. Siberian landscapes, travels to the cosmos and the modernisation of Central Asia were typical segments. To give a random but representative example of a Portuguese language show in January 1959: the head of a boarding school in Tashkent gave account of the changes in the educational system of his native Uzbekistan, whose prerevolutionary history then is unfavourably compared to its progress under Soviet rule. A feature on the evildoings of US imperialism in Panama was then followed by reports about Soviet agriculture, medicine and energy production.¹⁴⁷ Finally, letters to Moscow were read – hence the title “dialogue partner”.

The success of the radio shows is difficult to estimate. Numbers of listeners are hardly measurable, and the Soviets seem not even to have made the attempt to find out who was actually tuning in. Yet, as for the printed media, an interesting change took place in the mid 1950s. For one thing, the great effort to broadcast a full programme in several rare languages in order to inform the other part of the world about its achievements indicates something about the considerable Soviet self-confidence of that time. In 1964, a new Moscow radio station even started to broadcast exclusively to the Americas: *Radio Progreso* was founded on the initiative of the SSOD and put under the direction of Anatolij Sofronov.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, like the journals, Soviet radio brightened up its appearance. Some shows still featured debates on Marxist theory, the falsifications of the Western media or Lenin's legacy on Soviet-Latin American relations. But 'peace', 'progress' and 'development' ousted 'revolution' and 'communism' as catchphrases. Reports on tourism to the Soviet Union, on technological feats, cultural events, sports news or the Sunday afternoon show on philately added

¹⁴⁶ BAYRAM RIZA; CATHERINE QUIRK: 'Cultural Relations between the Soviet Union and Latin America'. *Studies on the Soviet Union* 2 (1968), pp. 30–39, p. 32.

¹⁴⁷ *Govorit Moskva*. Komitet po radioveščanju, otdel Latinskaja Amerika, 14-1-1959, GARF f.6903 op.24 d.242 1.37-59.

¹⁴⁸ *Izvestija*, 24-7-1964.

completely apolitical elements, as did a weekly show by Latin American students at Soviet universities, who shared their experiences with their compatriots back home.¹⁴⁹

Finally, also films conveyed this new image of the USSR to Latin America. *Sovexportfilm*, the state run film distributor, opened a permanent office in Buenos Aires in the 1950s.¹⁵⁰ The Soviet ambassador to Argentina, Aleksandr Alekseev, reported in the mid 1960s that Soviet films were seen by an average two Million Argentinians alone. Soviet filmmakers again produced internationally competitive films that gained attention and respect. Mikhail Kalatosov's *Letjat Žuravli* ("The Cranes are Flying"), to pick but the most famous example, had won the Golden Palm in Cannes in 1958 and also touched an audience of millions in Latin America with its tragic love story in times of the Second World War. Modernisation, *human interest* stories and the depiction of the USSR as a successful, cultured and idyllic modern state had replaced communism and class struggle in Soviet media abroad.

Don't mention communism! Technology and highbrow culture in Soviet self representation

Not only paper, celluloid and airwaves were to transport the new Soviet image. In a move towards rather more conventional European cultural diplomacy, the Kremlin began sending artists and sportsmen of all kinds abroad. In April 1956, the famous violinists David Ojstrach and Leonid Kogan travelled with pianist Tatjana Nikolaeva to Argentina, Chile and Uruguay. In Buenos Aires alone, an audience of 3000 was enthralled by their performances. Igor' Bezrodnyj followed later that year. In the company of pianist Evgenij Malinin and singer Sara Doluchanova, he gave 60 concerts in Uruguay, Argentina, Ecuador, Peru, Costa Rica, Mexico and Cuba. Pianist Sergej Dorenskij played Chopin and Rachmaninov in Rio de Janeiro. Coming back to tour Latin America many times, they all played standards of classical music, such as Bach, Tchaikovsky or Vivaldi, but also pieces by Soviet composers Dmitri Shostakovich and Sergei Prokofiev, which were heard for the first time across the Atlantic on these occasions. Shostakovich came to play himself in Mexico in early 1959 and again in

¹⁴⁹ 'Escuche diariamente Radio Moscú'. Boletín del Instituto Cultural Colombo Soviético 5/6 (1974), p. 7; L. NOVIKOV: 'Golos Mira. K 40-letiju radioveščanija na Latinskiju Ameriku'. Latinskaja Amerika 9 (1972), pp. 140–146, p. 144.

¹⁵⁰ Posol'stvo SSSR v Argentine, GKKS (1965), undated, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.321 l.1; Ministr Kul'tury CK, 28-11-1959, RGANI f.5 op.36 d.114 l.99.

1962.¹⁵¹ Aram Khachaturian, third of the big three of Soviet composers, was coevally head of the Latin American section of the SSOD. He toured Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia and Cuba in early 1960 and again in 1962.¹⁵² It is telling of this new Soviet cultural diplomacy that, in preparation of his trips, all organisations tried hard to make sure he was perceived only as an artist, not as a Soviet official.¹⁵³

Besides music, which included even a tour of the Red Army Choir in 1961, ballet was the long-running figurehead of Soviet cultural diplomacy. In 1958, the Bolshoi Theatre performed in Montevideo, Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro and repeated their trip many times throughout the late 1950s and the 1960s. The company's trips were always a guaranteed success. Prima Ballerina Violeta Bovt and her partner Evgenij Kuz'min once danced six consecutive evenings in a sold out venue in Rio.¹⁵⁴ Another Ballerina, Irina Tichomirovna, gave a proud account after her tour across the Americas that had led her to Cuba, Venezuela, Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Argentina and Jamaica in *Culture and Life*: they had given 42 shows with an audience of 140,000 and were received everywhere with great enthusiasm. In São Paulo, the congestion was so great that they had to move into the football stadium and, after the show, give autographs for hours. As is typical for many similar reports of the time, she firstly confirmed that everyone loved the Soviet Union and that Soviet artists were well known and popular. Secondly, there always had to be a reference to the great people of their host country – and their lack of development due to imperialists.¹⁵⁵

After the Bolshoi, Igor' Moiseev's ballet company played Latin America in 1961 and 1963. The latter tour alone drew a remarkable 400,000 spectators to their shows.¹⁵⁶ And besides the *haute volée* of Soviet ballet dancers and classic musicians, chess players were used to favourably represent their Soviet homeland abroad, too. David Bronstein, Boris Spaski, Victor Korchnoj, Tigran Petrosjan, Paul Keres and many more came to several Latin American countries and played – usually very successfully – friendly matches and tournaments.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹ DORENSKI: 'In Brasilien'. Kultur und Leben 1 (1960), pp. 53–55; IGOR BESRODNY: 'Von Argentinien bis Kuba'. Neue Zeit 51 (1956), pp. 28–31; IGOR BEZRODNY: 'Seventy-Five Days in Latin America'. Moscow News 94 (1956).

¹⁵² Spravka o sostojanii i perspektivach razvitija kul'turnich i naučnich svjazej meždu SSSR i Meksikoj, 28-11-1963, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.344 l.139-141.

¹⁵³ Posol'stvo SSSR v Meksike, CK, 3-9-1959, RGANI f.5 op.36 d.102 l.106; same thrust: 18-11-1959, RGANI f.5 op.36 d.102 l.106-107.

¹⁵⁴ DORENSKI 1960; A. GUKASOV: 'Sovetskij ballet v stranach Južnoj Ameriki'. Teatr 19/5 (1958), pp. 164–165.

¹⁵⁵ IRINA TICHOMIRNOVA: 'Sem'desjat dnej v Latinskoj Amerike'. Muzykal'naja Žizn' 14 (1960), pp. 13–15., similar: L. TRUNINA: 'Sovetskij balet v Latinskoj Amerike'. Teatr 23/1 (1962), p. 182.

¹⁵⁶ RIZA; QUIRK 1968, p. 35.

¹⁵⁷ LEONOV 1995, p. 100.

Soviet athletes, who were now included in the international charm offensive, proved not quite so triumphant. When, in July 1956, a Soviet basketball team was sent to South America, they lost their matches against the hosting Uruguayan and Brazilian teams. A victory against a team from Buenos Aires, which had already been in Moscow the year before, smoothed ruffled feelings.¹⁵⁸ These sport events are remarkable for two aspects: for one thing, they took place in a framework of hospitality and friendship, the coverage in Soviet media is respectful to both the players and their home countries. Secondly, with all sporty fairness, this was still the Cold War: when the Soviet team beat the United States at the 1959 world championship in Chile, newspapers all over the world reported about that defeat prominently. "When it comes to shooting at the moon or at a basket, the US cannot keep up with Russia", headlined the Chilean newspaper *Ultima Hora*. The *New York Times* stated that the United States (as such, not the sports team!) had suffered needless damage to prestige. But the Cold War also ruined the Soviet team's success: when they refused to play nationalist China/Taiwan in the next game, they were suspended from the competition, losing the secure title of world champion.¹⁵⁹

International sports were used in the Cold War home front as well: when an Uzbek football team toured Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru and Uruguay, a little booklet was made out of their trip, which combined some geographical and cultural information on South American countries – with their football strategies! Addressed to a young readership, it also conveyed a political message through the attractive story. On their trip, the sportsmen meet an exiled Armenian in Chile, who bitterly regrets having fled his homeland, "following the rumours about sweet life in the West".¹⁶⁰ The message to the young Soviets was clear: compared to the rest of the world, their home country was thriving.

To a certain extent, these elements of traditional cultural diplomacy, high culture and sports, had already been used in the 1920s and 30s to win over Western intellectuals for the Soviet cause. These predecessors, however, were not a patch on the efforts and the global reach of the new cultural foreign policy from the 1950s, which operated in a context of the quite similar endeavours by the United States and some Western European states. For the USSR, these activities offered a double advantage: they reached an audience far beyond left or communist circles and presented the Soviet Union as haven of arts and sports. Soviet officials knew of

¹⁵⁸ SERGEI BESSONOV: 'Soviet Basketballers in South America'. *Moscow News* 58 (1956), p. 8.

¹⁵⁹ JUAN DE ONIS: 'Soviet Five Balks At Taiwan Game. Russians Rout U.S. Team but Face Loss if they Don't Play Chinese'. *New York Times*, 30-1-1959.

¹⁶⁰ GENNADIJ KRASNICKIJ: *Ot Rio-de-Žaneiro do Montevideo*. Taškent, Gosizdat UzSSR 1964.

the old Latin American upper-classes' predilection for European high brow culture.¹⁶¹ To what extent the bourgeois audience actually identified the performances of Russian and European classical high culture with the achievements of the Soviet Union was, however, a moot point. Hence, another perk of sending the Bolshoi was a less ideological one: it brought hard currency. When, years later, representatives of Soviet popular music, Josif Kobzon or Vladimir Vysockij to name two very different examples, also found their way to the Americas, the financial gain remained a motivating factor. This seems to have been an issue of some debate for the internationalist organisations. On several occasions, responsible officials called this practice counterproductive. As so often, reference to the United States was crucial: while they delivered complimentary films, records and literature and had famous musicians play in the name of the United States and for very little money, the Soviets charged too much for their shows, the Soviet embassy in Uruguay complained.¹⁶² Likewise, the Brazilian institute for friendship with the Soviet Union found fault with the commercial character of some artists' performances. They should be used much more to increase the institute's influence on Brazilian politics and society. A counter model here predated an upcoming conflict: when the Chinese had sent their opera in 1956, the Brazilian friends of the Soviet Union reported, they had given one third of the seats to members of the Brazilian-Chinese Friendship Society, who in turn were able to act politically upon the ordinary visitors.¹⁶³

Even though all Soviet cultural representatives were presented as non-political, their travels abroad were political issues indeed. They always used their trips to establish and maintain contacts with local intellectuals and "progressive circles". And they were always accompanied by KGB-affiliated Soviet embassy staff. But at least on the surface, the new traditional Soviet cultural diplomacy presented the USSR to the Latin American public as a modern and especially cultured European state.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ E.g.: CARLOS SAPATA; L. KULIDŽANOV: 'Luče znat' drug druga'. *Latinskaja Amerika* 9 (1977), pp. 159–164, p. 160.

¹⁶² *Sovetskij Posol'stvo Urugvaj GKKS*, 19-3-1965, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.399 l.23.

¹⁶³ *Zapis' besedy členov delegacii verchnogo soveta SSSR s rukovodstvom instituta kul'turnych svjazej "Brazilija-SSSR"*, 4-8-1958, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.322 l.84.

¹⁶⁴ LEONOV 1995, pp. 96–100.

A completely new and probably the single most successful element of Soviet self-representation abroad was the space programme. Technology had always played a key role in Soviet self-conception. “Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the country”, Lenin had declared back in the 1920s. Tractors and combine harvesters for the backward peasants, submarines and airplanes, canals and hydroelectric power plants and the profession of the engineer were important elements of a cult of progressive technology during Stalinism and beyond. When, from the mid 1950s, the Soviets tuned down the communist element in their rhetoric towards the world abroad, the technological feats and scientific advances gave excellent topoi. The flight of the *Sputnik* in 1957 impressed many ordinary Latin Americans, some even recalled it as the first time they ever heard of the Soviet Union.¹⁶⁵ The new Mexican ambassador to Moscow, presenting his credentials, commended *Sputnik*'s success at great length: “...the Russians have paved the way to the stars!”¹⁶⁶ Augustín Nieto Caballero, a Columbian Christian publicist, told his acquaintances during a trip to Moscow about the “cosmic resonances” the Russian space programme had on the popular concept of the Soviet Union. Old ideas about the USSR had “burst like soap bubbles”.¹⁶⁷ The Muscovite journalist Aleksej Adžubej reported from Argentina that people were overwhelmed and stunned by the flights of the Soviet satellites.¹⁶⁸ Newspapers from the Rio Grande to Tierra del Fuego and from Chile to the Caribbean headlined with reports on the space programme. And in Jamaica, a group of young Jazz musicians named themselves *The Satellites*, then later changed it to *The Skatellites* becoming the founding fathers of Ska music – the Soviet Union hence contributed to the name of one of the most influential styles of modern pop music.

Ska music would not make it into the Soviet Union until much later, but news about the repercussions of the satellites and later the manned spacecraft did. Yuri Gagarin's flight became *the* “success story of Soviet modernity”.¹⁶⁹ An Argentinean observer felt “highly emotional” to see the first man in space, his wife allegedly even got gooseflesh and they both decided to share that experience in one of many other similarly sounding letters to the SSOD in Moscow.¹⁷⁰ From all over Latin America, telegrams arrived that expressed their admiration

¹⁶⁵ LUIS SOTO: *Un verano en Siberia* 2008, p. 30.

¹⁶⁶ 15-10-1957, RGANI f.5 op.36 d.43 l.81.

¹⁶⁷ AGUSTÍN NIETO: *El secreto de Rusia*. Bogotá, Antares 1960, p. 11.

¹⁶⁸ ADŠHUBEJ 1990, p. 217.

¹⁶⁹ KLAUS GESTWA: ‘Kolumbus des Kosmos. Der Kult um Jurij Gagarin’. *Osteuropa* 10 (2009), pp. 121–151.

¹⁷⁰ Preserved in GARF f.9576 op.8 d.85 l.104.

for the Soviet triumph.¹⁷¹ Gagarin became, in a somewhat double-edged comparison, the “Columbus of the Cosmos”¹⁷² – and went to conquer the Americas: in July 1961, shortly after his successful space flight, he arrived in Cuba, where a cheering crowd received him in his motorcade and for a reception on Havana’s Revolution square.¹⁷³ Gagarin’s meetings with the heroes of the Cuban Revolution, hugging Fidel and grinning with Che, gave priceless photo opportunities – and inspired Yevgeny Yevtushenko, at the time lingering on the island, to a series of turgid poems (see chapter two). Gagarin went on to Brazil to enjoy the same spectacle with president Jânio Quadros, who decorated him with the state’s highest order of merit, the *Ordem Nacional do Cruzeiro do Sul*.¹⁷⁴ These gigs caught on with a broad public and were repeated with the next generation of cosmonauts. Andrijan Nikolaev und Pavel Popovič came to Brazil in March 1963, and, in October, Gagarin and the first woman in space, Valentina Tereškova, visited Cuba and Mexico. Tereškova, on a second trip to Argentina in 1966, was hosted by the Sovietophile US singer Dean Reed in his local TV-show. These public appearances were enacted most carefully: allegedly, an entire press conference in Mexico had to be repeated when a waiter crossed the cameras carrying a Coca Cola bottle.¹⁷⁵

Exhibitions

Soviet feats in technology and high culture were central features, too, in a series of exhibitions the Soviets held in the Americas. In May 1955, on the occasion of the renewal of a first trade agreement from 1953, a Soviet trade fair was held in Buenos Aires. On 11,000m², Soviet harvesting machines, trucks, coal seam cutters and portable oil well drilling equipment could be examined – and bought. The show, opened by the Soviet ambassador and the Argentinean minister of trade, was primarily addressed to potential business partners, but the echo it found went well beyond that. The exhibition drew an unexpected number of 2.3

¹⁷¹ E.g.: 13-4-1961, Pozdravitel'noe pis'mo edinogo centra trudjaščichsja Čili predsedatelju VCSPS po povodu pervogo poleta v kosmos sovetskogo čeloveka – Jurija Gagarina; 24-8-1961, Pozdravitel'noe pis'mo profsojuza švejnikov štata Guanabara (Brazilija) v VCSPS po povodu poleta v kosmos Germana Titova, both in: N. ISAEV (ED.): *Dokumenty proletarskoj solidarnosti. Sbornik dokumentov o sodružestve trudjaščichsja Sovetskogo Sojuza s trudjaščimisja stran Azii, Afriki i Latinskoj Ameriki v 1918-1961 godach*. Moskva, Profizdat 1962, pp. 174–178.

¹⁷² KRASNICKIJ 1964, p. 58.

¹⁷³ Gagarin na Kube, undated fotography, RGAKFD #0-309204.

¹⁷⁴ N. DENISOV: 'Na orbite mira i družby'. *Sovetskaja Pečat* 10 (1961), pp. 38–42.

¹⁷⁵ LEOPOLD GRÜN: *The Red Elvis. The Dean Reed Story* 2007; ANDREW; MITROCHIN 2005, p. 20.

million curious visitors in 40 days and the media all over America covered it in detail.¹⁷⁶ Soviet film maker Igor' Bessarabov was sent to Buenos Aires to capture the success, and the host country, on celluloid.¹⁷⁷ The fair had proven so popular that the Soviets decided to use it also as a means to convey an idealised image of their society – a concept that traced back to 19th century world fairs with their “culture of material abundance”, which promised universal prosperity to the masses. In the context of the Cold War, the United States had also begun to use exhibitions from 1950 with a Chicago fair called ‘Frontiers of Freedom’, which in the course of the decade was held in 97 venues worldwide.¹⁷⁸ Already in 1955, however, the State Department registered that the Soviets had followed suit with a large number of exhibitions themselves – including the particularly successful one in Buenos Aires.¹⁷⁹ As for Latin America, it was now Washington’s turn to react. Their exhibition, which explicitly referred now to the Soviets even in the title ‘People’s capitalism’, opened in Mexico, Colombia, Guatemala, Chile and Bolivia in 1956 – but did not find nearly as many visitors as the Soviet one.¹⁸⁰ In the head-to-head record, the Soviet Union was defeated famously, when, during a temporary rapprochement in 1959, both sides held exhibitions in the opponent’s country.¹⁸¹ However, the Soviet one was held not only in New York, but also in Mexico City afterwards. No longer called a *trade* fair, the ‘Exhibition of Soviet Achievements in Science, Technology and Culture’ was now organized with the help of the GKKS.¹⁸² Within 25 days, it again drew almost one million visitors, which made it the biggest in the history of the country. Anastas Mikojan flew in from Moscow to open the exhibition with Mexican president Adolfo López Mateos and both his foreign and trade ministers. Besides Soviet machinery, this time 16,000 exhibits presented all walks of Soviet life, from info stalls on Soviet geography, health care and the educational system, to urban construction, the ostensibly shortest working hours on earth, industrial and agricultural output and scientific discoveries. Technology remained an important issue with models of ships, the *Sputniks* and of a nuclear power plant at display. Special interest focused on a photograph of the back of the moon – an absolute novelty at the time.

¹⁷⁶ IVAN BOL’ŠAKOV: ‘Uspech sovetskich vystavok v stranach Latinskoi Ameriki’, in: IVAN BOL’ŠAKOV (ED.): *Na vsech kontinentov mira*. Moskva, Pravda 1962, pp. 87–100, pp. 87f.; ‘Argentina, Russia Sign. Trade Agreement Is Renewed As Soviet Opens Big Exhibit’. *New York Times*, 20-5-1955; N.N. 1955.

¹⁷⁷ Sovetskaja Vystavka v Argentine (1955), RGAKFD #10283.

¹⁷⁸ ROBERT H HADDOW: *Pavilions of Plenty. Exhibiting American Culture Abroad in the 1950s*. Washington, Smithsonian Institute Press 1997, p. 3.

¹⁷⁹ HADDOW 1997, p. 39.

¹⁸⁰ BELMONTE 2008, p. 133.

¹⁸¹ KUSHNER 2002.

¹⁸² GARF f.9518 op.1; GARF f.9518 op.3.

Obviously, the exhibition was no longer addressed only to potential trade partners, but to an audience as broad as possible. To that end, the organisers also combined it with elements from the cultural diplomacy programme. Stalls with classic Russian literature and contemporary Soviet authors, oil paintings and sculptures added cultural aspects. Soviet films were shown, Shostakovich played a concert, and the Bolshoi performed and rounded off what was considered a major success from the Soviet side.¹⁸³

Undoubtedly impressed was a group of Cuban officials at the fair. They asked the Soviets to put it on in Cuba as well. In February 1960, again Mikojan, accompanied by Khachaturian, opened the *Exposición Soviética* in Havana in the presence of the entire crew of bearded revolutionaries.¹⁸⁴ Fidel Castro, president Dórticos, not-yet-taken-out Camillo Cienfuegos and Che Guevara leant in their combat dress over models of Soviet factories, power plants, *sputniks* and food products, smoked their cigars and dreamt of the industrialisation of Cuba. “Almost everything we see here is new to us” they allegedly said impressed. Tables of statistics at the exhibition explained why planned economy guaranteed steady, fast and secure development. Mikojan made the famous offer to buy one million tons of sugar annually above world market price and gave a 100 million US\$ credit to buy Soviet goods. Not only did the revolutionary leaders revel in Soviet generosity and achievements, 800,000 Cubans, every 8th inhabitant of the island, visited the exposition, making it more popular than the carnival, as the *New York Times* observed warily.¹⁸⁵ Their scepticism proved justified: these early cultural contacts became the basis for decades of Soviet presence in the United States’ Caribbean backyard. Aleksandr Alekseev came as a GKKS-official with the exhibition, made friends with the revolutionaries, who nicknamed him Don Alejandro – and became Soviet ambassador to the island.¹⁸⁶

The next Soviet exhibition took place in Rio de Janeiro in May 1962. On the opening day, Nikolai Patoličev, Soviet minister of Foreign Trade, and Carlos Lacerda, the militantly anti-communist governor of the state of Guanabara signed a trade contract. Trade volume was raised from 100 to 140 million US\$, but effectively remained at the level of barter transactions for oil and coffee – nothing that would have justified an exhibition of that scope.

¹⁸³ BOL’ŠAKOV 1962, pp. 90f.; M. MEŠČERJAKOV: ‘Sovietskaja vystavka v Meksike’. *Vnešnjaja Torgovlja* 30/1 (1960), pp. 5–7; Plan propagandy i informacii Sovinformbiuro v svjazi s vystavkoj dostiženij nauki, tehniki i kul’tury SSSR v gor. Meksiko/Meksika, 3-9-1959, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.343 l.155; Pravda, 30-11-1959; ‘Mikoyan Leaves Mexico for Home. His Trip Is Generally Held a Success Though Press Comment Was Hostile’. *New York Times*, 29-11-1959; N.N. 1959; Pravda, 24-11-1959.

¹⁸⁴ SERGO ANASTASOVIC MIKOJAN: *Anatomija Karibskogo krizisa*. Moskva, Izdatel'stvo Academia 2006, p. 624.

¹⁸⁵ BOL’ŠAKOV 1962, pp. 93f.; *New York Times*, 24-2-1960; Pravda, 7-2-1960.

¹⁸⁶ ALICIA ALTED; ENCARNA NICOLÀS; ROGER GONZÁEZ: *Los niños de la guerra de España en la Unión Soviética. De la evacuación al retorno (1937-1999)*. Madrid, Fundación Largo Caballero 1999, pp. 211–232.

The expo, however, did things in a big way. According to Soviet sources the largest ever held in Latin America, it reflected many aspects of a highly optimistic Soviet Union some months before the Cuban Crisis. In a greeting article, Khrushchev explained magnanimously that the Soviet Union also once started from the level of Brazil, which, after national independence, was still to reach economic autonomy. The Soviets were glad to offer a role model for further development. They themselves would reach, by 1980, the state of communism with free apartments, free transport and free health care, and the economy will have increased six fold. The Soviet Union, as Khrushchev presented it to the Brazilians, was the future, the power of peace and development, and the exhibition should give a little first insight into that.¹⁸⁷ To see this state of affairs, visitors could fly in from downtown Rio in a Soviet helicopter squadron to admire elaborate models of the Bratsk hydroelectric power plant, of Soviet aircraft and the nuclear-powered icebreaker *Lenin*. An entire section was dedicated to the space programme, now that Gagarin had made his flight to the outer space (and one to Brazil the year before). Models of the spaceships *Vostok 1*, *Vostok 2* and the *Sputnik* were displayed, and the handsome cosmonauts smiled at the visitors from huge posters. Detailed models and interactive panels explained the electrification and energy supply in the USSR. President Goulart, shown around and filmed by a group of Soviet personnel, marvelled at a pair of robot arms that stroke and quenched matches in front of his eyes. Like their president, the 500,000 visiting Brazilians could lionise blinking ball bearings, cutting edge machinery, pretentious watches, upmarket private cars and tractors at the expo. For ordinary Soviet citizens, these goods were, it goes without saying, as readily available as the beautiful Russian models who presented short skirts of Soviet production at a fashion show – a gimmick stolen from the United States who had introduced them at their fairs from the mid 1950s. Brazilian men were visibly impressed in one scene of the Soviet film shot in the fair area and around Rio-de-Janeiro, “the most beautiful city in Latin America”. The Soviet audience back home, in most cases without fancy watches and cars, could at least delight in the beauty of exotic Brazil – and the ostensible global admiration of their country.¹⁸⁸

Reactions on the Latin American side were twofold: for one thing, hundreds of letters reached the organisers, and, while many inquired about the lack of freedom of religion in the Soviet Union, the overwhelming majority commented positively. The average fan first expressed admiration for the exhibits, then uttered his wish, usually to study in the USSR or to get

¹⁸⁷ NIKITA CHRUSHČEV: ‘Poslanie k posetiteljam sovetsoj vystavki v Rio-de-Žanejro’. *Vnešnjaja Torgovlja* 42/6 (1962), pp. 3–5.

¹⁸⁸ *Sovetskaja Vystavka v Rio-de-Žanejro* (1962), RGAKFD #19909.

medical treatment or technical literature.¹⁸⁹ The second type of reaction was less positive: already on the second day, the Soviet exhibition had to shut its doors temporarily, after an anti-communist group of army officers had planted a bomb that would have destroyed the entire fair but was found before it went off. In its anti-imperialist rhetoric and friend-foe schemata, the Soviet media could not but take this conspiracy as a prime example of the evildoings of the frequently invoked reactionary circles.

Soviet cultural diplomacy, with its musicians and sportsmen as well as with the depiction of technological feats, hardly ever mentioned the communist political system of the Soviet state. To be sure, behind the colourful façade of cutting edge technology and high-brow culture still stood a deep belief in the prospects of a de-Stalinized socialism. These were the last heydays of a phase of optimism during the Thaw. Yet the Soviets had learnt that in order to reach a broad worldwide audience and to interact with “bourgeois nationalist governments”, they had to tune down their rhetoric. Internal documents show that, in the run-up to the exhibition in Rio de Janeiro, long conversations were held with Eastern-Europe experts of the Brazilian foreign ministry.¹⁹⁰ All designated publications and exhibits had to be proof-read and authorised by Brazilian officials. A galley in the GKKS-documents demonstrates how that happened: the term “Communist” was replaced with “Soviet”, the “CPSU” with “The Soviet government” and all references to the Cold War (such as “overtaking the capitalist countries in 20 years”) were completely cut out. A big Lenin bust in the entrance hall was the only remaining trace of ideology in the exhibition.

Parliamentary Delegations

Another new sphere of interaction, which can be considered part of post-Stalinist cultural diplomacy, represented the Soviet Union not only as a trail-blazer for the future of mankind, but also as a modern state which played according to the rules of the political world system: the GKKS organised the exchange of parliamentary delegations with Third World countries. Four Soviet groups toured Latin America in 1954.¹⁹¹ Members of the Supreme Soviet were

¹⁸⁹ Posol'stvo SSSR v Braziii GKKS, Ob izdanii vystavočnoj literatury, 3-3-1962, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.223 l.13-15; ‘Soviet Exposition Opened in Brazil. Diversified Show is Russia's Biggest in Latin America’. New York Times, 4-5-1962; BOL'SAKOV 1962, pp. 96f.; IU. DUBININA: ‘Sovetskij Sojus v Rio-de-Žaneiro’. Ogonek 20 (1962), p. 2.

¹⁹⁰ Reatamento de relações diplomáticas com a União Soviética, Jorge de Cervalho e Silva, Ministro, Chefe da Divisão da Europa Oriental to Secretario-Geral Adjunto para Assuntos da Europa Oriental e Asia, 5-12-1961, AHMRE 920.1 (42) (74).

¹⁹¹ KASACK 1973, p. 371.

sent to the inauguration of president Frondizi in Argentina in May 1958 and arranged some cultural and economic contacts.¹⁹² Another big delegation of the Supreme Soviet followed some weeks later to Brazil, where they discussed student and scientific exchange and took part in an international congress of parliamentarians that debated (unsuccessfully) common resolutions on geopolitical issues.¹⁹³ They went to see the Brazilian Academy of Science, visited factories and power plants and the construction site of the future capital Brasília. After meeting several Brazilian politicians, including President Juscelino Kubitschek and both his future successors, Governor Jânio Quadros and the head of the worker's party João Goulart, they finally signed a cultural treaty between their countries.¹⁹⁴

When the GKKS invited (non-communist) parliamentary delegations to the USSR, they tried to convey the same image as in their self-representation abroad. As many as 26 Latin American delegations had already toured the Soviet Union by 1954.¹⁹⁵ In 1957, 50 Brazilian federal and state parliamentarians were invited to the cheerful Moscow Youth Festival – strictly as private men as the Brazilian Foreign Ministry rushed to declare.¹⁹⁶ By the end of the 1950s, Third World parliamentarians, including from most Latin American countries, flocked in almost weekly. A Peruvian delegation of parliamentarians and journalists, to name but two more or less representative examples, marvelled at Ukrainian Kolkhozes in May 1959. And twelve Colombian senators and congressmen spent three summer weeks on a paid trip through the USSR, going to the Caucasus and several Soviet cities, seeing factories and academies and visiting the theatres and museums.¹⁹⁷ In their own countries, these guests were usually political backbenchers; in the USSR, they were given paid holidays, and they were often accorded the honour of meeting the highest representatives of the Soviet state, such as Khrushchev or Mikojan, or famous cosmonauts. As a result, many of these ensnared

¹⁹² STEPHEN CLISSOLD (ED.): *Soviet Relations with Latin America, 1918-1968. A Documentary Survey*. London, Oxford University Press 1970, pp. 182–183.

¹⁹³ Zapis' besedy členov delegacii verchovnogo soveta SSSR s rukovodstvom institute kulturnych svjazej "Braziliya-SSSR", 4-8-1958, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.322 1.82-85.

¹⁹⁴ Očet o poezdke delegacii Parlamentskoj gruppy SSSR v Braziliju na 47-ju Konferenciju Mežparlamentskogo Sojusa (1958), undated, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.322 1.56-72.

¹⁹⁵ KASACK 1973, p. 371.

¹⁹⁶ Undated, RGASPI f.3M op.15 d.271.53/204; Itamaraty to the Brazilian mission at the UN. Viagens de brasileiros a União Soviética, 7-8-1957, AHMRE 920.1 (42) (74).

¹⁹⁷ GUSTAVO VALCARCEL: *Reportaje al futuro. Crónicas de un viaje a la U.R.S.S.* Lima, Perú Nuevo 1963, pp. 160–162; undated, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.339 1.119- 120.

parliamentarians, while not harbouring big sympathies for communism, found, upon their return, the Soviet Union quite a nice place.¹⁹⁸

By the early 1960s, Western observers were noting that most of this political tourism was kept separate from any operations of the Communist parties.¹⁹⁹ These visits and invitations of lower-ranking political delegations did not primarily serve the establishment of cultural relations or the preparation of diplomatic ones. In fact, members of the Supreme Soviet had hardly any political influence at all. They were, however, used in Soviet internal and external self-representation. On the one hand, they were supposed to present the Soviet Union as a normal state actor in international politics, with a dash of Third World solidarity. On the other hand, just like all other Soviet activities abroad, they had a self-confirmative purpose and were covered broadly in all Soviet media. In late 1960, yet another delegation of the Supreme Soviet travelled to Bolivia, Chile, Argentina and Brazil – a colourful booklet with many photographs was composed and spread for the Soviet readership.²⁰⁰ And when, in August 1961, Michail Georgadse, secretary of the Supreme Soviet, led a delegation through Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico and Cuba, a Soviet film team followed them at every turn and showed how they were received again by the most high ranking and illustrious hosts. The Soviet audience could revel in the global importance of their socialist homeland.²⁰¹ At the same time, the foreign political guests could learn of the normality and inoffensiveness of the Soviet Union. In its official self-representation concerning politicians, and towards the public in Latin America, the Soviet Union was no longer the cradle of world revolution, but a technologically advanced and cultivated European state with a highly educated and happily consuming population.

Courting the world's youth. Young Latin Americans in the Soviet Union

Soviet attempts at creating a favourable image of themselves throughout the Third World not only included activities abroad. Foreigners came to the Soviet Union in increasing numbers, too, in order to follow different programmes set up by official organs. From the mid 1950s,

¹⁹⁸ PARLAMENTARIOS COLOMBIANOS EN LA URSS Boletín del Instituto Cultural Colombo Soviético 3/4 (1967), p. 3; VALCARCEL 1963, pp. 160–162; Otčet o rabote s byvšim ministrom vnutrennich del, vidnym političeskim dejatelem Ekvadora Manuelem Araucho Idal'go, 23-8-1962, GARF f.9518 op.1. d.341 l.28-31; 'Grupo de parlamentarios bolivianos visita Rusia'. Presencia, 3-7-1960.

¹⁹⁹ ALEXANDER 1961, p. 10.

²⁰⁰ N. RODIONOV: *V strane Inkov. Putevye očerki*. Alma-Ata, Kazgoslitizdat 1963.

²⁰¹ RIZA; QUIRK 1968, p. 34; Poezdka M. P. Georgadse v strany Latinskoj Ameriki (1961), RGAKFD #22357.

the Soviets made considerable efforts to win over especially young people, after all the future of mankind, from Third World countries as friends of the Soviet Union. Just as Soviet self-representation in the Americas, the state-controlled receptions of Latin Americans in the USSR were part of the new cultural diplomacy. In the same way as for the activities abroad, examining how the Soviets presented themselves and their state to their foreign guests allows to draw conclusions that go beyond the categories of propaganda and deceit: the carefully mounted and beautified versions of Soviet life give an understanding of the self-conception of Soviet internationalists and their role towards the Third World. Three elements of this programme will be examined: the reception of Latin Americans on the 1957 Moscow Youth Festival, higher education in the USSR and youth tourism. As before, the focus of the survey will be on the representative character of these events and institutions and the image of the Soviet Union they were to convey to the visitors.

Latin Americans at the World Youth Festival in Moscow

In the summer of 1957, more than 30,000 young people from all over the world flocked into the USSR in order to attend the sixth World Youth Festival in Moscow. After years of planning, the “new” Soviet Union wanted to present itself to the youth of the world with its openness and spirit of optimism. The foreign guests were invited to attend artistic, cultural and sports programmes, and to debate on international meetings of students and workers.

The festival is rather well researched, but as for so many aspects of cultural exchange during the Cold War, there is a certain bias: the focus is almost exclusively on how the festival opened a gateway for Western consumer goods and values and thus undermined its very purpose. Yet the 1957 festival, this tends to be a bit neglected, was directed not least to the youth of the Global South. Analysing the projected image of the Soviet Union and the interactions between Soviet officials, their Latin American guests and ordinary Soviet youngsters who attended the festival offers a more balanced view of the cultural transfers and influences that happened in the summer of ‘57. How did the Soviet Union present itself specifically to the Latin American guests and how did the Soviet population react to these “exotic” people? As argued for other aspects of Soviet official internationalist activities, the addressees were not only the foreigners, but also the Soviet population itself. Western visitors to the USSR may have received an ambivalent impression of the socialist world, but the

effects on Latin Americans and young Soviet citizens were much more successful from a Soviet point of view than is usually acknowledged.

While the CPSU and the Komsomol actually pulled the strings in the organisation of the festival, the World Federation of Democratic Youth and the International Union of Students were presented as the organisers of a preparatory committee in Budapest. The public image of the Moscow youth festival they conveyed differed clearly from former festivals of that kind. It was supposed to appear apolitical; young people were to participate irrespective of their political conviction, race and even religion, as was emphasized in all brochures and posters that were sent around the world. The official slogan 'For peace and friendship' was hazy enough to be agreed on by almost everyone. In contrast to former festivals, political symbols had disappeared in official self-representation, both in advertisements and in Moscow during the festival. Flowers, colours and Picasso's peace dove replaced the iconography of Stalin or Mao. Communist parties worldwide were instructed to send as many non-communists as possible.²⁰² For two weeks, Moscow presented itself at its best, not as a grim communist capital, but as a modern, colourful city of youth, peace and solidarity. During the festival, all cinemas, circuses, exhibitions, sporting events and even public transport were free. Radio Moscow established a round the clock 'Festival Radio' that also broadcast shows in Spanish with topics tailored for the Latin American audience. One show, 'Latin American Youth at the Moscow Festival', featured Latin American music, often presented by prominent artists and intellectuals such as the Argentinean singer Horacio Guarany or the Venezuelan poet Carlos Augusto León.

On organised excursions, the young visitors could get to know the entire Soviet Union, and these trips had an interesting Third World specific: while guests from the Western countries were primarily sent to the European cities of Leningrad or Kiev, youngsters from the Third World could marvel at Soviet achievements in the modernisation of Central Asia and the Caucasus. It was probably no coincidence that Latin Americans tended to be sent to Christian Georgia and Arabic youths predominantly to Muslim Uzbekistan.²⁰³

While, in theory, the festival was open to every young person, most visitors were, in fact, dependent on scholarships. Even though the Soviets invested 600 Million roubles in the

²⁰² PIA KOIVUNEN: 'The 1957 Moscow Youth Festival. Propagating a New, Peaceful Image of the Soviet Union', in: MELANIE ILIC (ED.): *Soviet State and Society under Nikita Khrushchev*. London, Routledge 2009, pp. 46–65; KRISTIN ROTH-EY: 'Loose Girls' on the Loose? Sex, Propaganda and the 1957 Youth Firefestival', in: MELANIE ILIC, SUSAN E. REID and LYNNE ATTWOOD (EDS.): *Women in the Khrushchev Era*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan 2004, pp. 75–95.

²⁰³ Ob ekskursii delegatsii na VI. Festival Molodeži, undated, RGASPI f.3M op.15 d.37 l.9-11.

festival, most guests had to cover their own travel expenses. Just the flight to Moscow, however, remarked one Chilean visitor, cost as much as a craftsman in his country would earn in a year.²⁰⁴ Even under these difficult circumstances, about 850 participants from all Latin American countries arrived to the festival – the only exception was Panama, whose entire delegation was immediately arrested at the airport by the Panamanian authorities. The Mexican painters David Siqueiros and Diego Rivera endowed some of their works in support of the delegates. Communist parties distributed the proceeds among preparatory committees that had been organised in most Latin American countries. Yet less than one third of the Latinos were Communists or sympathizers, and many of them were completely apolitical. In Chile, a beauty queen contest sent this year's winner to Moscow; in Bolivia, the best national folklore combo in a contest got the trip to the festival paid.

For one year, a Spanish language edition of the newspaper *Festival* was circulated all around America. Nonetheless, most participants came without any notion of what awaited them in Moscow. All Central Americans were in the Soviet Union for the first time, and, according to their translators, had no precise idea what the USSR actually was (quite to the contrary, some of the 133 delegates from Argentina did have a very precise idea of the Soviet Union: half of them were Jewish emigrants who seized the opportunity to visit relatives – under the suspicious gazes of the Soviet authorities). Many Latin American students who at the time were attending Western European universities asked to be invited to Moscow. Hundreds of letters from West Germany, France but also Prague and Belgrade arrived at the organising committees, where many were declined because officials did not know how to handle their visa procedures.²⁰⁵ Yet some of them managed to join their compatriots, who on their way to Moscow made a stopover in Europe. Gabriel García Márquez was at the time a young newspaper correspondent in Paris. Though an unknown but staunch communist, he was declined a visa to visit the USSR four times. His friend Anuel Zapata Olivella, a future famous Afro-Colombian author, had a folklore combo called *Delia Zapata* that was to play in Moscow. García Márquez and his colleague Plinio Mendoza seized their chance, passed themselves off as accordion players and singers, joined the group and finally made it beyond

²⁰⁴ HÉCTOR CAMPO: 'Das 6. Weltjugendfestival. Die Jugend trifft sich in Moskau'. *Neue Zeit* 15/26 (1957), pp. 18–19.

²⁰⁵ O sostave i pribyvaniy delegacij Latinskoj Ameriki na Vsemirnom Festival'e Molodeži, undated, RGASPI f.3M op.15 d.204, here: 1.52-142; Materialy o podgotovke VI. vsemirnogo festivalja v stranach Lat. Ameriki, RGASPI f.3M op.15 d.77. All, usually untitled and undated, documents in the following belong to the RGASPI Komsomol holdings (f.3M op.15) on the World Youth Festival, the titles in most cases refer to entire files, not single documents.

the Iron Curtain.²⁰⁶ In the course of the festival, dozens of similar Latin folklore bands played hundreds of concerts that were always overcrowded. *Los Caballeros* from Paraguay alone played 14 concerts, the Argentinean composer Ariel Ramírez came with his *Compañía de Folklore*. The Uruguayan folk singer Roberto Sagor, Bolivian Carnival ensembles and many more interpreters of indigenous, black, shepherd and even religious music laid the foundation for a longstanding fascination with Latin folklore (which will be examined further in chapter two). Not only music, but also art from the Americas was on display during the festival: paintings at an exhibition depicted the despair and dignity of ordinary Latin American people in their “daily struggle against imperialism”.

An interesting aspect is that many of the invited guests could not even in a lavish definition be considered young. A remarkable number of (older) Latin American intellectuals came to Moscow. The writers Pablo Neruda (53 years old at the time), Nicolás Guillén (55), Miguel Angel Asturias (57), Jorge Amado (44), María Rosa Oliver (58) or composer Gilardo Gilardi (68) represented the jet set of leftist Latin American intellectuals, playwrights, poets and musicians. Although they were all beyond the prime of their lives, they happily accepted invitations to the Moscow youth festival. Hitherto unknown but later influential figures at the festival included sneaky García Márquez, but also a young Cuban teacher called Antonio Núñez Jiménez. Together with compatriot students from Norway, he rallied for solidarity with oppressed Cuba. Only three years later, he would return as the first official envoy of revolutionary Cuba. Carlos Fonseca, future leader of the Nicaraguan Sandinista movement started his half year stay in the Soviet Union with the festival. According to unverified allegations of KGB-renegade Vasilij Mitrochin, he was lured by the Soviet secret service to be an agent at this occasion.²⁰⁷ The bulk of ordinary visitors though were no celebrities or future spies. The participants of the Moscow Youth Festival were presented a modern Soviet Union and met young Soviets who seemed to care honestly about their home countries and their hardships as well as their artistic and intellectual abilities.²⁰⁸

The official depiction, however, was only one side of the coin. Behind the scenes, before the festival, unwanted persons who did not comply with the spirit of optimism were “cleaned” off the streets. In order to show the city only at its best, the Moscow police arrested or deported

²⁰⁶ DASSO SALDÍVAR: *García Márquez. El viaje a la semilla, la biografía*. Barcelona, Folio 2005, pp. 354–358.

²⁰⁷ ANDREW; MITROCHIN 2005, p. 82; CARLOS FONSECA: *Un nicaragüense en Moscú*. Managua 1980.

²⁰⁸ I. GOLOMŠTOK; I. KARETIKOVA: *Iskusstvo stran Latinskoj Ameriki*. Moskva 1959; Meždunarodnyj podgotovytel'nyj komitet VI. vsemirnogo festivalja, RGASPI f.3M op.15 d.27, here in particular: l.17, 53, 144-151 and 204; RGASPI f.3M op.15 d.192 l.64-129; O radioveščenie na VI. vsemirnom festival'e, RGASPI f.3M op.15 d.263 l.395; Besedy o podgotovke VI. vsemirnogo festivalja v stranach Lat. Ameriki, RGASPI f.3M op.15 d.76, here in particular: l.153-161.

prostitutes, gypsies and the homeless for the duration of the festival. Also the apolitical character of the festival does not stand closer examination. In the official discourse, the Soviet organisers underlined their politically neutral stance towards their Latin American guests. Posters and brochures, distributed in Spanish a year in advance in the Americas, promised “no political or philosophical or religious tendencies”. An internal paper of the preparatory committee, however, reveals that “in the official programme, some measures with propaganda intention are not included.” There were, for example, 50 to 60 daily meetings of specially trained young Soviet citizens with foreigners in Moscow or on excursions. What they were expected to say was considerably more traditional and less colourful and liberal than the official discourse. The document laments serious deficiencies in the political training of these Soviet youngsters up to that time – they needed to be more prepared in the spirit of proletarian internationalism and to show Soviet patriotism by proudly praising the USSR’s achievements.²⁰⁹ The young guides and translators had to write reports on their work that included questions about the political orientation of their guests.²¹⁰ Moreover, during the festival, all 830 Latin Americans from all 19 countries (and the Caribbean group in an extra session) were asked to participate in a meeting behind closed doors. Here, the objective was distinctly political: “to strengthen Latin American brotherhood and anti-[US]Americanism”. Komsomol activists realised the dangers of such an endeavour, but stated that it was “important to do this, even though the enemy will milk it in their counterpropaganda”.²¹¹ How petty the supervision *could* be, is shown by an anonymous report about three Uruguayans who made themselves conspicuous only by not smiling and applauding in the stadium!²¹² But the bulk of reports on the Latin American visitors, written mostly by their guides and translators, were very benevolent, and the guests were usually described as pleasant and friendly. Some Peruvians tended to be more interested in Soviet girls than in politics, which according to one translator made them the exact opposite of the delegates from the GDR. Some stereotypes seem to have existed already – or were created quickly: “due to the South-American tendency towards anarchy and casualness, these people do not understand the organisational bases and the subordination of the younger to the elder”, wrote one particularly fussy guide, after his charges had complained about the unbearable bureaucratic hierarchies they were confronted

²⁰⁹ O podgotovie VI. vseirnogo festivalja molodeži i studentov za mir i družbu, 16-2-1957, RGASPI f.3M op.15 d.90 l.87-100.

²¹⁰ Radioveščenie, RGASPI f.3M op.15 d.263 l.334-433; Meždunarodnyj podgotovyitel’nyj komitet, RGASPI f.3M op.15 d.23-26. Očety gido-perevočikov o rabote s delegaciej iz stran Latinskoj Ameriki na VI. Festival’e Molodeži, RGASPI f.3M op.15 d.205 as well as d.235. The bulk of the reports are very favourable though.

²¹¹ RGASPI f.3M op.15 d.191 l.74-79.

²¹² Spiski učastnikov Latinskoj Ameriki, RGASPI f.3M op.15 d.205, here: l.79.

with. Yet these were exceptions rather than the rule. When, towards the end of the festival, the guides asked their guests about their impressions, they usually got positive answers, and themselves added how much they liked the work with their newly found friends. And even in the more political measures not made public, the goal was never to incite revolutions or convert people to communism.²¹³

After the festival, reliable Latin American participants wrote in the Soviet media about their profound impressions in Moscow.²¹⁴ Their reports, written for an exclusively Soviet audience, elucidate again how much the festival was also directed towards the Soviet population itself. Soviet television broadcast ten hours daily from the festival and spread the new images all over the Union. The ostensible or real enthusiasm of their guests reinforced a spirit of optimism and a sense of the Soviet Union as an altruistic friend of the peoples of the world. In underlining how interested important intellectuals from all over the world apparently were in their country, but also in the folklorisation of their guests' cultures (while Soviet musicians, again, played classical European music²¹⁵), a certain sense of cultural superiority resonated. But the effect on many a young Soviet was indeed a sense of solidarity with his or her contemporaries from the Third World, which reinforced their belief in socialism and their country's leading role in the global struggle for it. The impact of (after all: apolitical) Western consumer goods need not be at odds with the fact that young people saw an aspect of Soviet internationalism in front of their eyes and liked what they saw. The intentions of the festival's organisers were not necessarily limited to fostering this view, but it was certainly a factor that mattered. True enough, the Soviets did hear a lot of less enthusiastic comments as well. Most of them had spent their entire lives under Stalinism and hence isolated from the world and from outspoken criticism about their country and its political system. The young foreign visitors now openly remarked on aspects such as the oppression of religion, Stalin's crimes, boring architecture or annoying bureaucracy. Yet this was, in most cases, a Western European point of view. In relation to the Third World, the festival proved a success. Many Latin Americans, admittedly most with leftist leanings, liked what they saw in Moscow and the rest of the USSR, and Soviet front organisations received letters of commendation by the sackload. Soviet official internationalists got their proof that they were doing something right.

²¹³ RGASPI f.3M op.15 d.205, e.g.: O robote s delegacij Peru na VI. Festival'e Molodeži 1.29-36; or: Očet o robote s delegacij Paragvaja na VI. Festival'e Molodeži i studentov, 23. Ijulja - 15. Avgusta, l. 45-51.

²¹⁴ So did for example the head of the leftist Mexican "People's Youth", RAFAEL ESTRADA: 'Moe mnenie o VI festivale'. *Molodež' mira* 7 (1957), p. 6.

²¹⁵ As the programme bills for the festival reveal: RGASPI f.3M op.15 d.92.

Universities

While the Moscow Youth Festival was limited to two weeks in 1957, the Soviets found another field through which to present their state positively in the long term: higher education. Moscow State University (MGU) began to establish contacts with Latin America in 1955 and from 1957 regularly interacted with the Latin American Association of Universities. Already by 1960, some 200 professors from Brazil, Argentina (most notably Risieri Frondizi, philosopher, head of the Buenos Aires University and brother of Arturo, Argentina's left reformist president), Peru, Chile, Cuba and Uruguay had been received as guests and were shown the prosperity of Soviet higher education.²¹⁶ And students from the Third World increasingly attended universities all over the Soviet Union.

In the case of the Latin Americans, the numbers until the late 1950s were almost negligible. In January 1959, there were seven, and even five years later, after years of active Third World engagement, Moscow State University hosted only 27 Latinos.²¹⁷ Universities in Leningrad, Kiev, Odessa or Minsk also had their growing but always small share of Latin American students. In contrast to their fellow students from Asia or Africa, the majority of Latin American students in the Soviet Union attended one particular institution in Moscow: in 1960, Khrushchev prompted the foundation of a university in Moscow only for students from the Third World. Named after the late Congolese prime minister from 1961, the 'Patrice Lumumba University of the Friendship of the Peoples' provided, in the 1960s alone, some 2500 young Latin Americans with higher education during their fully funded five to seven year stays in Moscow.²¹⁸ Their points of view, their expectations, experiences, further careers and memories will be examined in chapter four. Here, in line with the perspective of this chapter, an analysis of the official Soviet discourse will examine higher education and in particular the Lumumba University as parts of Soviet cultural diplomacy. They were to represent the Soviet state to potential and arriving students and visiting foreigners.

In clear distinction from former endeavours of the 1920s and 30s, when Communist cadres from all over the world got their ideological education in several Soviet institutions, the

²¹⁶ Predloženiya po pašireniju svjazej Moskovskogo universiteta s universitetami stran Latinskoj Ameriki, 31-3-1960, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.339 l.237-242.

²¹⁷ O kaličestve studentov-inostrancev iz kapitalističeskich i kolonial'nych stran obučajušičhsja v vuzach SSSR, 1-1-1959, RGASPI f.1M op.46 d.248 l.12.

²¹⁸ TOBIAS RUPPRECHT: 'Gestrandetes Flaggschiff. Die Universität der Völkerfreundschaft in Moskau'. *Osteuropa* 1 (2010), pp. 95–114; Communist Cuba, however, was no longer put in the category "developing countries" from the early 1960s, so their numerous (about 1000 in Moscow alone as of 1964) students were not allowed to attend Lumumba and do not appear in statistics for the Third World.

Lumumba University, officially, did not address itself to communist youth. Its credos were no longer class struggle and revolution, but internationalism, anti-colonialism and support for economic progress and national independence.²¹⁹ The choice of the name is telling: the first head of government of an independent Congo had recently been tortured to death with the assistance of Belgian and US secret services. He was an icon of African anti-imperialism, but not a communist. A new type of missionary thought now prevailed in the Soviet Union. In a quite similar way to the West, the USSR presented itself as a generous benefactor, sharing its own achievements with the backward rest of the world. “[Students] come from far away to study in our country. They come from Asia and Europe, from Africa and America, to the land of space ships and nuclear power plants, to drink from the inexhaustible source of knowledge the Soviet people has amassed“, *Izvestija* put it straightforwardly.²²⁰ In every official statement, the university emphasised its non-political character and its spirit of internationalism and patriotism.²²¹ The initiative, it was proclaimed, came from “progressive circles in the Soviet Union and abroad.” Contacts with the Communist party allegedly did not exist. On the occasion of the opening ceremony, which was monitored by and palpably addressed to the world public, both designated Head Sergej Rumjancev and Khrushchev himself underlined again the absence of ideology and politics in the studies.²²² As a matter of fact, throughout the early 1960s, the Lumumba University was the only institute of higher learning in the Soviet Union without the obligatory classes in Marxism-Leninism. Its faculties focused on subjects that were of immediate use in Third World countries. Agriculture, medicine and engineering were the most popular subject areas.

In their self-representation towards the world, the Soviet state used the Lumumba University to establish its image as an altruistic friend of the peoples of the world. Student representatives were expected to collaborate with the SSOD, the Soviet equivalent of a PR-company. From the very first class, Soviet news agencies, journals and newspapers employed students to praise Soviet achievements and generosity in their respective languages.²²³ In weekly accounts of their lives, selected students were to convey this message to the world on

²¹⁹ V. STANIS: ‘Kuznica kadrov dlja razvivajuiščichsja stran’. *Latinskaja Amerika* 7 (1972), pp. 117–124, p. 118.

²²⁰ V *Universitete Družby Narodov*. *Izvestija*, 21-8-1963.

²²¹ N. SOFINSKIJ: ‘Pomošč v podgotovke kadrov’. *Latinskaja Amerika* 8 (1977), pp. 125–128, p. 127; ALEXANDRE FRADKINE (ED.): *Le monde sous un même toit. Documents sur les études et la vie des étudiants de l’Université de l’amitié des peuples Patrice Lumumba à Moscou*.

²²² BERT DIRNECKER: ‘Die "Patrice Lumumba-Universität für Völkerfreundschaft" in Moskau’. *Moderne Welt* 3 (1961/62), pp. 211–224, p. 217; *Pravda*, 24-3-1960; Rešenje Soveta Ministrov, Ob organizacij Universiteta Družby Narodov, 5-2-1960, GARF f.5446 op.1 d.698 l.698.

²²³ ‘Das lateinamerikanische Seminar in Moskau’. *Kultur und Leben* 4 (1969), p. 32; *Sobre el seminario permanente de estudiantes latinoamericanos en la URRS*, undated, RGASPI f.1M op.39 d.399 l.17-143.

Radio Moscow's foreign language programme.²²⁴ A guided tour of the campus, sometimes accompanied by internationally known and popular public figures like Gagarin, was an inherent part of itineraries when Third World delegations came to Moscow.²²⁵

This advertising was of course also directed towards the students themselves. This meant first of all free education, food and accommodation during the academic year in Moscow, but included also their spare time activities. During their long summer breaks, students could voluntarily join camps that the university organised in the periphery of the Union. In Moldavia, students worked for three to four hours a day in local Kolkhozes and, afterwards, followed seminars on the 'developing countries' and a recreation programme of sports and music. Similar projects were held in Central Asia and all around the Black Sea, where a summer study camp took place in Georgian Abkhazia in July and August 1965. In the company of fellow students from the GDR, Iraq and Africa, the Latin Americans discussed the socioeconomic situation in their continent with high ranking lecturers, who even included the Chilean ambassador to Moscow. Also in this case, participants learned about local, agricultural methods. In what was called an "internship in tropical agriculture", Georgia apparently served as a role model of how the exotic guests should engage in farming back home. The additional political seminars had no doubt a certain political bias, but never called to arms or had the aspiration to mould communists. Indeed, many Latin American students kept asking for *more* political education during their summer holidays – which they got from 1965 on a yearly basis.²²⁶

Outside the classroom, there were the continuous attempts to present Soviet cultural and technological progress during spare time activities. Even seemingly purely recreational tourist trips usually included some Soviet achievement to marvel at. A popular destination for students as well as for foreign short-term visitors, were schools and universities, factories, canals and hydrological power plants, as one student remarkably enthusiastically recalls.²²⁷

The official image the Soviet Union tried to convey of itself towards its students hence was the same one it sent directly abroad: that of a culturally and technologically superior modern nation. Devoted to the friendship of the peoples, to international peace and economic and

²²⁴ STANIS 1972, p. 122.

²²⁵ ALVIN RUBINSTEIN: 'Lumumba University. An Assessment'. *Problems of Communism* 6 (1971), pp. 8–10, p. 65; ALBERTO DANGOND: *Mi diario en la Unión Soviética. Un conservador en la U.R.S.S.* Bogotá 1968, pp. 334–336.

²²⁶ *Ibidem*; STANIS 1972, p. 121; O meroprijatach po letnemu otdychu studentov Universiteta Družby Narodov im. Patriša Lumumby 1968g., undated, RGASPI f.1M op.39 d.143 l.50-52; letters to the Komsomol, RGASPI f.1M op.39 d.138.

²²⁷ SOTO 2008, pp. 201f.

cultural progress, it was an altruistic USSR in this picture, which let the rest of the non-Western world partake of its achievements.

Practice did in this case not differ much from the official discourse. To keep control of the students, the heads of student councils were appointed by the university – which ensured that they were usually members of their respective Communist parties. Soviet students at Lumumba University were all CPSU or Komsomol members and were to keep an eye on their fellow students.²²⁸ But there were no systematic attempts to influence the foreign students ideologically. The reports to the Komsomol were in most cases not on individuals, but on national groups, which were classified along Cold War categories. Anti-Soviet sentiment was hardly ever encountered. To be sure, students were not all free to say and act as they wished without getting into conflict with the ever-conspicuous Soviet authorities. During the times of peaceful coexistence and then the schism with China, however, the ideological frontlines changed. The greatest concern now were Maoist sentiments among the students, *id est* a propagation of a violent revolutionary path for their home countries – just what Western observers were so afraid of.

Tourism

In addition to possibilities in education, *Radio Moscú* regularly told its young listeners in Latin America about the great holiday opportunities in the Soviet Union, sightseeing in new and old cities, spectacular museums, cultural centres, sports and landscapes. The SSOD allegedly sponsored these trips lavishly with scholarships.²²⁹ In June 1958, the Komsomol created the youth travel organisation *Sputnik*. In the five years to come, it organised short stays in the Soviet Union for some 60,000 young tourists and sent 40,000 young Soviets abroad.²³⁰ Yet the bulk of them came from and went to the people's democracies in Eastern Europe. As for the Third World, (youth) tourism is a clear example of the financial limits that constrained Soviet internationalists and of the gap between talking big and acting small that characterised many Soviet promises to the Global South. Towards Latin American youngsters, *Sputnik* made a lot of promises that it was at no point able to keep. Hundreds of youngsters applied to the SSOD – and, if at all, received rejections. Two letters from 1959

²²⁸ O situacii studentov iz Latinskoj Ameriki v SSSR, 13-5-1966, RGASPI f.1M op.39 d.30 l.1-14; Položenie v zemljačestvach studentov iz stran Latinskoj Ameriki i o sostojanii raboty s etim kontingentom inostrannyh učaščichsia v SSSR, 13-5-1969, RGASPI f.1M op.39 d.231 l.53-79.

²²⁹ SAPATA; KULIDŽANOV 1977; ROMANOVSKIJ, ED. 1966, pp. 47f.

²³⁰ Internal report of Sputnik, undated, RGASPI f.1M op.31 d.42 l.12-15.

stand for many more of the same kind: a young Colombian had heard of the invitations for travel in the radio show *El buscón del oyente* (“the listener’s corner”). And a Peruvian reported that he and all his friends had heard about the Soviet Union on Radio Moscow. Now they wanted to come to the promised paradise, see all the fantastic Kolkhozes, factories and universities and sights, and possibly stay, work and die in the USSR.²³¹ Most of the many requests of this kind did not even get an answer. If someone in the SSOD bothered, they would usually refer to other institutions or decline politely. In no way did the Soviets have the means to meet the demands that people sent.

But Soviet public diplomacy even in such far away areas of the world as Latin America had shown its effects, people had tuned in to *Radio Moscú* and had believed what they heard. One remarkable effect of the new self-representation as a modern state was that most of the letters the Soviet authorities received now were by non-communists. Often they made that clear explicitly in their letters, as in “I am by no means a communist, but I am deeply impressed by the achievements of the Soviet people”, or – as in most cases – communist vocabulary is simply not used at all. Yet the Soviet Union did not want and probably could not afford to pay for all the interest in it.

From the mid 1960s, *Sputnik’s* policy changed somewhat. Still without the means to pay for the trips and with other Soviet institutions reluctant to jump in, they started to run their agency as a business. Most letters were answered now, but the supplicants were presented with a bill: the standard tour Moscow-Leningrad cost 76 Dollars in Cash – without the travel to Europe! The translator/guides still had to write their reports that were mostly featureless to vaguely positive. The only remarkable aspect about them is that now the guests, mostly still with somewhat leftish leanings, began to complain about the complete lack of “talks about social issues”. Even at this late point in the mid 1960s, the number of young Latin American (without Cubans) tourists to the Soviet Union was only at around 200-300 per year. When Komsomol and Soviet embassies in the region noted that all Western European countries were building closer ties to Latin America and therefore asked for an expansion of the invitations to young people to the USSR for free or heavily reduced prices, *Sputnik* could only refer to its empty tills.²³² They now even actively promoted commercial tourism to the Soviet Union via the front organisations. In a letter to the Soviet-Colombian Friendship Association,

²³¹ Letters to Sputnik, RGASPI f.5M op.1 d.50, here 10-3-1960, 1.13; 18-1-1959, 1.16.

²³² Očety gido-perevočikov o pribynanij v SSSR turističeskich grupp iz Argentiny, Brazilii, Urugvaja, Čili, 1965-68, RGASPI f.5M op.1 d.633; internal reports of Sputnik and Argentinean co-organisation Turismo Mundial, 23-9-1968, RGASPI f.5M op.1 d.556 1.4-15.

Sputnik offered itineraries through old Russian cities, the capitals of the republics or cruises on the Black Sea – for 150 Roubles!²³³

The failure of tourism as an element of Soviet cultural diplomacy towards the Third World, shows the financial limits of Soviet abilities to present itself as favourably as possible on a global level and is characteristic of the increasing pragmatism it displayed from the late 1960s. It also reveals that the activities of cultural foreign policy did find a curious audience, which went – as designed by Soviet authorities – beyond the usual circles of communists. Tourism was indeed kept separate from the operations of the local Communist parties.²³⁴ Foreigners still came for political tourism in the form of delegations from societal groups. Yet an *Intourist*-brochure for Spanish-speaking guests illustrates what the bulk of ordinary tourists got to see now in the USSR: the sights, monuments and museums of old Moscow (“city of eight centuries”) and the Golden Ring of cities around the capital, to that ballet and sports performances. Modern Moscow’s treats were its architecture and the memorial sites of the space programme. Finally, organised tours to Leningrad, Irkutsk, the hydrological power plant of Bratsk, Tashkent, Tbilisi, Erevan or Baku were on offer.²³⁵ The word communism does not appear once.

Space: the inner periphery as stencil. Time: Stalinist legacies

In all Soviet self-representation towards Latin Americans, as has been hinted at several times, the regions of the inner Soviet periphery played an important role. The Soviet stance towards the Third World had one of its ideational roots in the forced modernisation of Central Asia and the Caucasus. The spatial perception of the outer world, with the rise of the new internationalism from the 1950s, was framed by this experience of socialist internationalism within their own empire from the 1920s. Before summarising what was new in Soviet self-representation to the world abroad, this section recalls some continuities and old categories that had prevailed over time.

Already back in the mid 19th century, Russia’s political elite had regarded the colonial project in Central Asia as their entrance ticket to the circle of European colonial states. The rhetoric later changed from inner colonialism to proletarian internationalism. But in fact, the

²³³ Letter by Sputnik to the Soviet-Colombian Friendship Association, undated, around 1970. Archive of the Instituto Cultural Colombo Soviético.

²³⁴ ALEXANDER 1961, p. 10.

²³⁵ *Moscú. Intourist*. Moskva,

Bolsheviks basically continued the project of a “civilising mission” – including an old sense of Europe’s cultural superiority.²³⁶ At the bottom of the Soviet courting of the Third World thus lay a paradox. It claimed to be the non-imperialist alternative to European modernity. By the same token, however, it presented the Moscow-led modernisation in its inner periphery as a role model. From the mid 1950s, the Soviets perceived the largely unknown Third World countries as categories of what they felt they already knew from their non-European Central Asian and Caucasian, “backward”, parts of the empire.

Many examples have been given so far of this experience and its ostensibly positive outcome dominated in the self-representation towards Latin Americans. Journals and radio broadcasts reported broadly on the progress of the Soviet republics. Soviet exhibitions featured large tables on industrialisation and effective agriculture in Kazakhstan or Kirgizstan. Visitors for the 1957 Youth Festival, tourists and hundreds of delegations of teachers, doctors, engineers *et cetera* were shown around from Tbilisi to Baku and Tashkent. Students of Lumumba University spent their summers in work and study camps in Georgia or Turkmenistan. The journal *Problems of the Far East* was translated into Spanish.²³⁷ Interesting is also the choice of representative heads of delegations and friendship societies. The group of the Supreme Soviet that travelled to Bolivia in 1960 was led by the Kazakh Communist Party boss, the next group to Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico and Cuba by the head of the Supreme Soviet, Georgadse, who happened to be Georgian.²³⁸ The Tajik author Mirso Tursun-Sadeh became chairman of the Soviet Committee for Solidarity with the Afro-Asian countries and organised both a 1958 film festival with African and Asian filmmakers and a congress for Third World intellectuals – in Tashkent. The Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian headed the Soviet-Latin American Friendship Society, the Azeri Raúf Gadžiev the Cuban-Soviet Institute. In a talk with a Cuban journalist in 1963, Khrushchev explained once more the role model character of Soviet development. He also pointed out why he made Mikojan his “agent for Cuba”: he was a native-born Armenian and he had experience in the “modernisation” of the Caucasus.²³⁹ Mikojan himself also referred to his provenance on his trips to Mexico and Cuba – and declared to the Mexican minister of education, while elucidating wall charts of the

²³⁶ STOLBERG, EVA MARIA: *Transnationale Forschungsansätze in der Osteuropäischen Geschichte*, <http://geschichte.transnational.clio-online.net/forum/2005-03-002> (last access: 09-03-2008); JÜRGEN OSTERHAMMEL: ‘The Great Work of Uplifting Mankind’, in: BORIS BARTH and JÜRGEN OSTERHAMMEL (EDS.): *Zivilisierungsmissionen. Imperiale Weltverbesserung seit dem 18. Jahrhundert*. Konstanz, UVK 2005, pp. 396–399.

²³⁷ BLASIER 1983, p. 215.

²³⁸ RIZA; QUIRK 1968, p. 34; RODIONOV 1963.

²³⁹ FURSENKO 2003, pp. 884-903 bd.3.

Soviet exhibition in Mexico City: “education and training of cadres are the keys to development. We have learnt that after the Civil War in Central Asia and the Caucasus”.²⁴⁰

Even in the late 1960s, Soviet regional experts underlined in scientific treatises the parallels between the “Soviet East” and Latin America. A 1969 talk at an internationalist conference in Frunze, Kirgizstan, confirmed the theory of the non-violent path to socialism. Central Asia after all, it was argued there, did not have a violent revolution either, and had skipped – thanks to help from Moscow – the capitalist phase of development. The contributor emphasised that there was no reason to demonise different ways to socialism, as the Maoists did, and that there was no antagonism between city and countryside, as proven by the marvellous conditions in the Central Asian Soviet republics. Marxism-Leninism, he finished in a telling example of Soviet missionary thought, is “the feeling of historic optimism and the experience of the peoples of the Soviet Union. Only they can teach the right path.”²⁴¹

At the same conference, several representatives from Venezuela, Panama, Bolivia and Chile gave talks on how similar the conditions in their countries were to Kazakhstan in the 1920s.²⁴²

More Latin American intellectuals, these albeit usually members of Communist parties, took over this colonial attitude readily: Rodolfo Ghioldi, an Argentinean journalist, travelled to Uzbekistan in 1956. In his book *Uzbekistan. El espejo* (“Uzbekistan. The mirror”) he described the recent history of Central Asia as a one-on-one role model of what needed to happen in his homeland.²⁴³ The Paraguayan Efraín Morel came to the Caucasus the same year. The ancient advanced civilisations that had fallen victim to imperialism reminded him of his own people, and the solution of socialism apparently found his approval.²⁴⁴ And the Peruvian Gustavo Valcárcel dedicated one chapter of his travelogue to Central Asia: *Kasajstan, un ejemplo para América Latina* (“Kazakhstan, an example for Latin America”) depicted the modernisation of Kazakhstan as a role model for Latin American development.²⁴⁵

Another issue on which many Latin Americans agreed with the official Soviet view was contempt for US pop culture. Claiming to speak for all Latin Americans, many leftish and communist intellectuals felt the need to share their anti-US views with the Soviets. “While

²⁴⁰ 19-11-1959, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.343 l.177.

²⁴¹ ŠUL'GOVSKIJ 1972, p. 13; A. ŠUL'GOVSKIJ: ‘Latinskaja Amerika i opyt respublik Sovetskogo Vostoka’. *Latinskaja Amerika* 5 (1970), pp. 82–89.

²⁴² R. PUČKOV: ‘Opyt Sovetskogo Vostok i razvivajuščiesja strany’. *Latinskaja Amerika* 6 (1970), pp. 171–175.

²⁴³ RODOLFO GHIOLDI: *Uzbekistan. El espejo*. Buenos Aires, Editorial Fundamentos 1956.

²⁴⁴ 10-5-1956, RGANI f.5 op.28 d.439 l.201.

²⁴⁵ GUSTAVO VALCARCEL: *Medio siglo de revolución invencible. Segunda parte de "Reportaje al futuro"*. Lima, Ediciones "Unidad" 1967, pp. 50–64.

Soviet youth cares about the progress of their nation and their studies, youth in the United States cares about Rock 'n Roll, youth criminality, racial discrimination, which means, every youngster from the US is a threat to the world, because, in spite of all their lack of cultivation, they still consider themselves a superior race. [... We Latin Americans are] against the sexual criminal novel in the US style”²⁴⁶, wrote a young Cuban in a personal letter to Khrushchev. Julieta Campusano, member of the Chilean CP deplored the “increasing flood of films, books, records and concerts of so-called ‘stars’ like Paul Anka [...], who are supposed to woo our youth to a path of vice and amusement”.²⁴⁷ The Brazilian writer Eneida de Moraes, in her talk on the III. Congress of Authors in Moscow in 1959, was, for a Communist, quite defeatist about the youth as such: “those whom we call the Coca-Cola-generation wear Texas-shirts, dance Rock ‘n Roll, chew north-American gum and imitate everything from the Yankees. These boys and girls no longer say *sí* (“yes”), but *okey*. They do not even know our composers nor do they love our beautiful music, but they are crazy about Jazz and know all the famous stars of Hollywood and Broadway. [...] They are victims of the corrosive impact of US films and those hideous north-American criminal novels. [...] Our intellectuals, however, still know the Russian authors of the past. We follow the political life, the scientific discoveries and the cultural achievements of the Soviet Union.”²⁴⁸

These views fit perfectly with Soviet cultural policy. On a regular basis, Soviet publications, internal as well as international ones, underlined their own cultural superiority by fiercely attacking US pop culture. Soviet journals presented US literature as a blend of worthless pornography and gangster-comics, its films as capitalist propaganda and its abstract paintings as a sign for the decay and the decadence of contemporary America. Over and over again, all the media repeated Soviet achievements in education. Before the revolution, one typical line of argument went, 46 million books existed in Russia. Now more than 400,000 libraries offered 1.5 billion volumes for free.²⁴⁹

Like the reference to the *space* of the inner periphery, this cultural superiority complex goes back to the *time* of the 1920s and 30s. “Conservative-puritan mass culture”²⁵⁰ on the one hand and the constant defamation of *nekul’turnye* (“uncultivated”) US Americans on the other maintained the continuity of the so-called *kul’turnost*-concept and were hence a Stalinist legacy projected on the Third World. High culture had been propagated among the non-

²⁴⁶ Letter to Chruščev by a young Cuban, 28-3-1960, RGASPI f.1M op.30 d.258 l.1-3.

²⁴⁷ J. CAMPUSANO: *Probleme des Friedens und des Sozialismus* 1 (1962), pp. 69f.

²⁴⁸ ENAIDA MORAIS: ‘Mein Brasilien’. *Neue Zeit* 25 (1959), p. 19, p. 19.

²⁴⁹ ALEXEJ SURKOV: ‘Interv’ju’. *Sovetskaja Literatura* 8 (1961), pp. 172–175, p. 175.

²⁵⁰ CAUTE 2003, p. 8.

Russian population as a measure of social disciplining. After the destruction of their traditional social structures in the years of revolution and civil war, open violence, vandalism, alcoholism and all kinds of deviant behaviour were the order of the day. The propagation of “cultivated behaviour” was an attempt to stabilise the country and to form “backward” peasants and nomads into members of modern socialist society.²⁵¹ This *kul’turnost*-concept, without being explicitly named, was now transferred on the “backwards” countries of the Third World. As the internationalist ideological central organ put it: “the creative activity of the masses, including those of the countries of non-capitalist development, is an important factor of progress. Raising their cultural level and awareness is a necessity. The masses of the people have to grow culturally [...]. The fight for culture is also a fight against Western mass culture.”²⁵² By propagating their notion of culture as third column of progress, besides planned economy and technology, the Soviets, in the mid-1960s, unwittingly still perceived the world in the Stalinist categories developed in their own country 30 years before.

The term ‘friendship of the peoples’, too, widely used in Soviet national and international media, had already been introduced by Stalin in 1935. It essentialised the concept of the nation and folklorised everything non-Russian. Only “truly national art, flamingly patriotic, helps prevent the blind mimicry of decadent foreign role models”, Soviet cultural officials still recommended to artists in Latin America still in the 1950s.²⁵³

Folklorisation or exotisation of other ethnic groups constructed a cultural gradient to them, be they Uzbeks in their colourful traditional garments or Latinos with their guitars and moustaches (see chapter two). It was only consequent that the rehabilitated great Russian past and its high culture were used in the cultural diplomacy. In the early 1920s, this attitude would have been criticized heavily as chauvinistic; from the 1930s, it was presentable again, and from the 1950s, Russian high culture and folklorised versions of other traditions dominated Soviet cultural relations with the Third World.²⁵⁴

While these interactions with distant parts of the planet were indeed new, a certain mistrust in foreigners and the world abroad, while never as strong towards the Global South as towards the West, still prevailed. A small but increasing number of Soviet artists and intellectuals

²⁵¹ VADIM VOLKOV: ‘The Concept of kul’turnost’. Notes on the Stalinist Civilization Process’, in: SHEILA FITZPATRICK (ED.): *Stalinism. New directions*. London, Routledge 2000, pp. 210–230.

²⁵² GEORGES BATAL; ZEREWIJN DAWAGSUREN; PEDRO MOTTA LIMA: ‘Oktoberrevolution und Fortschritt’. *Probleme des Friedens und des Sozialismus* 11 (1966), pp. 845–851.

²⁵³ VERA KUTEJŠČIKOVA; LEV OSPOVAT: ‘Progressivnaja Kul’tura Latinskoj Ameriki’. *Sovetskaja Literatura* 6 (1956), pp. 212–217, pp. 212f.

²⁵⁴ TERRY MARTIN: *The Affirmative Action Empire. Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press 2001, pp. 443–444; STITES 1999, p. 92.

were allowed to leave the country now, but they were still monitored closely. Documents reveal numerous examples of travellers being ordered back to the Soviet Union and interrogated because they aroused suspicion with such major crimes as “leaving the group for more than an hour”.²⁵⁵

The Soviet elite of the 1950s claimed optimistically to be back on the path of Leninism. The political concepts were indeed adapted accordingly. Yet they still carried some ballast of Stalinist thought, which had not disappeared overnight. Internally, the new leadership did denounce terror and the personality cult. In their self-representation abroad, the Soviets nonetheless still celebrated the rise of the Soviet Union to an industrial superpower within only 30 years as a role model for the Third World. That this enforced progress had only come about thanks to the ruthless system of Stalinism was overlooked discreetly. In the end, it was not only Leninist socialist internationalism, but also many other categories that had come into existence during Stalinism which now pre-shaped interactions with the Third World.

Peace and friendship. Soviet self-representation and internationalism from the 1950s

Soviet self-representation to Latin Americans from the mid 1950s had its ideational roots both in Leninist internationalism and in Stalinist categories of thought. Yet, as this chapter has outlined, the way the Soviet Union wanted to be perceived by the Global South was quite different from before. Tremendous changes happened in the institutional structuring and implementation of ‘propaganda’ and ‘cultural diplomacy’. While the international department of the Central Committee of the CPSU, internally, kept direct control of most activities, a number of newly founded organs were to convey the impression that it was the Soviet state, not the Communist Party, which was in charge of cultural affairs. Anti-imperialism and the support of non-communist national leaders referred to older Leninist concepts, but Latin American states and populations for the first time were targets of Soviet activities on a large scale. Relations with Moscow-oriented Communist parties of course continued, and some journals, like the *World Marxist Review*, still chewed over ideological questions of socialism. But more to the foreground was now a self-representation that, by and large, dropped the topos of communism. Soviet media and international cultural activities became increasingly more colourful and appealing to a broad audience. They presented Soviet achievements in the

²⁵⁵ E.g.: on a trip to Chile: KGB Central’nomu Komitetu, 14-6-1963, RGANI f.5 op.55 d.28 l.117-118.

fields of highbrow culture, education and health care and put a strong focus on industry and science as motors of this progress. In this image, new cities and factories, with their energy supplied by new hydroelectric and nuclear power plants were the habitat of the modern Soviet man. Technological and scientific feats had paved the way for social advancement: atomic energy and space travel, both intrinsically linked to military purposes also in the Soviet Union, were always embedded in a rhetoric of peace and happiness – and contrasted to the military rockets that imperialists installed everywhere on earth or atomic bombs that they dropped on defenceless people. The US interventions in Guatemala and the Cuban Bay of Pigs, the quasi-colonial US presence in the Guantanamo Bay, in Panama and Puerto Rico, and their support for the anti-communist military dictators were contrasted with an altruistic image of the USSR. In this picture of the new Soviet Union, harmony prevailed: there was social justice, free education and health care, its peoples lived together peacefully and happily. The catchphrases of the new Soviet internationalism were *mir* (“peace”) and *družba* (“friendship”), its iconography boasted Picasso’s peace dove and shaking hands of different skin colour. The Soviet Union of the Thaw period presented itself to the world as the trailblazer of the modern world, with a healthy, educated and happily consuming population. This harmonious *status quo*, had ostensibly been achieved quickly and without the hardships of capitalism such as the pauperisation of the masses or the exploitation of others.

Within the Soviet Union, to be sure, very un-modern and un-idyllic phenomena such as clientilism, corruption, less than adequate health care or a dire consumer situation prevailed. Even though, remarkably enough, Ignat’ev had suggested also mentioning their own shortcomings, there was never a trace of self-criticism, let alone of the terrible consequences the Soviet path to modernity had had for millions of people; the famines, purges and bloodily repressed revolts that accompanied it were not allowed to tarnish the harmonic image.

In many respects, this attitude – pushing the recent past to the back of the head and looking to the future optimistically – was not only a Soviet specificity, but child of its times and shared by many others peoples worldwide in the 1950s and 60s. Europeans, with good or bad consciences, wanted to forget the World Wars behind them. An undiluted belief in the benefits of technology and optimism in historical progress had captured large parts of the planet regardless of political orientation in the Cold War. And also the Soviets no longer pursued old Marxist questions of alienation of the human being, on man-nature relations or on the structural deformation of North-South economic relations as had been done back in the 1920s. They now joined the global hooray for development and modernisation.

Soviet self-representation, as presented in this chapter, was, first and foremost, an image campaign that conveyed an idealised depiction of the new USSR. There were, initially, few distinctions made between different addressees of this charm offensive within the Global South. Concrete suggestions on how to improve life in Latin America or any other part of the Third World, questions of land reform, of how to organise precisely government planning or execute nationalisations, were, with the important exception of Cuba, not made. Political developments were rather debated in scientific journals. Instead of a perception of the entire Global South as a quite homogenous bloc, reflections on distinctive Third World areas, countries and their cultural specificities were increasingly undertaken from the mid 1960s. These attempts at adjusting activities to local specificities were not an easy endeavour as knowledge about the destinations had to be collected after years of international isolation. How the Soviets dealt with this lack of knowledge will be further examined in chapter five.

The shortcomings and generalisations of Soviet self-representation towards Latin Americans should not mislead one to underestimate its impact. In times of the Cold War and decolonisation, Soviet rhetoric that emphasised peace, international solidarity and anti-imperialism did find an audience. From the mid 1950s, the Soviets succeeded with relatively modest efforts to make themselves heard in the Americas. Left reformers in Argentina or Brazil, in their desire to modernise their countries quickly and through state-led initiatives, had a strong interest in certain aspects of the Soviet concept and readily collaborated with the USSR in many of its activities of cultural diplomacy. First contacts with the Cuban revolutionaries came about in this context. Millions of Latin Americans flocked to Soviet exhibitions, venerated *Sputnik* and Gagarin or marvelled at their ballet shows. In the long run, attempts at presenting the Soviet Union as a peace-loving state and reliable partner, paved, from the late 1960s, the way for the establishment of diplomatic relations with most Latin American countries, which had no interest in Communism, but a lot in development and integration into the global system of states instead of disadvantageous unilateral relations with the United States. In terms of Cold War rivalry, if one wants to consider this a success, the Soviets also managed to scare the United States substantially with their activities in their “backyard”. These questions of success and shortcomings of Soviet cultural diplomacy will be reconsidered with a closer examination of the Latin American perspective in chapter three on intellectuals and chapter four on students in Soviet higher education.

After a few years of Soviet activities in Latin America, the events of the Cuban Revolution seemed to validate the Soviet conception of the course of world history. Fidel Castro’s victory

therefore boosted the prevailing Soviet optimism in their prospects in Latin America, where Soviet internationalists were most active in the years between 1959 and 1962. To some extent, the enthusiasm waned again, after the Cuban crisis showed the limits of Soviet influence and the dangers linked with it. A 1963 report does still list many Soviet cultural activities in Latin America, but the tone of optimism that characterised former writings had given way to a rather sober analysis and references to the “difficult political conditions”.²⁵⁶

This chapter has looked at Soviet self-representation towards Latin Americans as part of a renewed internationalism after 1953. Drawing on elements of socialist internationalism of the 1920s and 30s as well as on developments of cultural internationalism from the 1950s, the Soviets presented their own state as a highly developed modern state with idyllic and harmonic living conditions for its peoples. Formulating and propagating one’s path externally has a lot to do with affirming one’s own identity internally by dissociating from some and expressing solidarity with others. What Frederick Cooper attributed to the European empires of the 19th century, goes also for the Soviet Union: it “had to provide publics at home with an acceptable view of the state they lived in.”²⁵⁷ Many cultural activities directed to foreigners also reached the Soviet public back home, which participated in their state’s global activities through all media channels. It is striking how dominant the renewed internationalism also was in media that were directed to an exclusively Soviet readership. They could revel in their country’s global importance and got an ostensible proof that they were on the technologically, culturally and morally superior side of the system conflict. Chapter two explores how the new contacts with the Third World, not necessarily only state-led activities, initially did more to support Soviet citizens’ belief in the state they were living in than to question it.

²⁵⁶ SSOD, Očet o rabote na strany Latinskoj Ameriki za 1963 god, 17-10-1963, GARF f.9576 op.10 d.1 l.1-27.

²⁵⁷ FREDERICK COOPER; JANE BURBANK: *Empires in World History. Power and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, Princeton University Press 2010, p. 20.

2.
Moscow learns the Mambo.
The topos *Latin America* and internationalism in Soviet popular culture

The end of isolation. Soviet culture after the death of Stalin

- Ivan’s window on the world. Latin America in Soviet cinemas and concert halls
 - Soviet intelligentsia abroad. Exoticism and revolutionary romanticism in travelogues
 - ‘Magic’ ousting ‘Socialist’ Realism. Latin America in Soviet belles lettres
 - Heroes of their time. Fidel, Che and the Cuban Revolution in Soviet perception
- Exoticism and internationalism. Latin America in Soviet arts and its reception
-

*The frontiers oppress me,
I feel it awkward
Not knowing Buenos Aires,
New York.
I want to wander
As much as I like
In London,
To talk, however brokenly,
With everybody . . .*

Yevgeny Yevtushenko, 1958²⁵⁸

*Revolucii
nužen
ritmi!*

Yevgeny Yevtushenko, 1962²⁵⁹

The end of isolation. Soviet culture after the death of Stalin

For the arts in the Soviet Union, the emerging Cold War from 1947 had not made life easier. The ageing dictator Stalin was tightening the strings on Soviet cultural life; terror and international isolation, which had to some extent slackened during the World War, came back with a vengeance. The Soviet Union was stuck in a renewed maelstrom of violence, fear and the ever expanding personality cult of their leader. The man in charge of cultural affairs was

²⁵⁸ ‘A Longing for Truth. Russia’s New Generation’. *Time*, 13-4-1962.

²⁵⁹ “The revolution needs rhythms!”, EVGENIJ EVTUŠENKO: *Nežnost’*. Moskau 1962, p. 135.

Andrej Ždanov, who launched a vendetta against everything foreign. Even though he actually died in 1948, his policy, the *Ždanovščina*, prevailed until the death of the dictator in 1953. Cosmopolitanism became a perilous offence, the Pushkin Museum with its Western art was closed for years, and artists who displayed any foreign influence risked persecution.

Things changed quickly after Stalin's death as Soviet artists demanded an outright change of cultural policy. In October 1953, Ilya Ehrenburg in the reformist journal *Novyj Mir* ("new world"), in November, Aram Khachaturian in *Sovetskaja Muzyka* ("Soviet music"), and, finally, in December, Vladimir Pomerancev again in *Novyj Mir* accused the state of interfering massively in their work, with the result that Soviet artists had become boring and meaningless.²⁶⁰ The Second Congress of Soviet Writers in 1954 reiterated this accusation and declared an end to the dogma of socialist realism. In the years that followed, the empty heroism of Stalinist art was replaced by a more authentic style, and many Soviet authors wrote about the problems of the common Soviet man (and, to a lesser extent, the Soviet woman).²⁶¹ Vladimir Dudincev's *Not by Bread Alone* (1956) and Aleksandr Solženicyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovič* (1962) were the outstanding literary examples of the epoch, as they depicted their protagonists in a struggle against bureaucracy and for survival in the gulag respectively. What authors criticised now were not only their personal artistic restrictions, but the moral and social norms of a widely prevailing Stalinism.

Historiography in the field of Russian/Soviet cultural history has acknowledged the diversification of cultural life, of literature, music, theatre and film, after 1953. Culture was the field in which the departure from Stalinism was most pronounced and dynamic. Yet one important aspect of the changes in Soviet cultural production has often been overlooked: for writers and artists, the death of Stalin also meant the end of a stultifying international cultural isolation and the chance for Russia to resume its rightful place in world culture. The influence of – and frictions with – Western modernist art, however, are usually the only point of reference in the tremendously increased cultural interactions with the world abroad that came into being after the isolation of Stalinism. Richard Stites has described the "new era of contacts with the West" in Russian cultural history, but he, as most other scholars, all but ignored the impact of the rest of the world.²⁶² Yet for a better understanding of Soviet society

²⁶⁰ ILYA EHRENBURG; ARAM KHACHATURIAN; VICTOR POMERANTSEV: 'Three Soviet Artists on the Present Needs of Soviet Art'. *Soviet Studies* 4 (1954), pp. 412–445.

²⁶¹ JOHANNES HOLTHUSEN: *Russische Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert*. Tübingen, Francke 1992, p. 177.

²⁶² RICHARD STITES: *Russian Popular Culture. Entertainment and Society since 1900*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2000, pp. 116–123; CATRIONA KELLY; DAVID G. SHEPHERD (EDS.): *Russian Cultural Studies. An Introduction*. Oxford, Oxford University Press 1998; a notable exception is: SUDHA RAJAGOPALAN: *Leave Disco Dancer Alone! Indian Cinema and Soviet Movie-Going after Stalin*. New Delhi, Yoda Press 2008.

after 1953, it helps to have a look at what Edward Said has called “previously unreachable temporal and cultural frontiers” and the “distribution of [the new] geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts”.²⁶³

Andrei Yurchak is one of the few scholars who have written about the Thaw-generation’s fascination with exotic worlds, real and imagined (albeit only in a side note to the story of their children’s generation). He found an “explosion of interest in the 1960s in various cultural and intellectual pursuits based on the experience of a faraway elsewhere”.²⁶⁴ In their search for self-assurance and orientation, Soviet intellectuals, artists, and with them the recipients of their art and writings, now increasingly dealt with hitherto unknown, difficult to reach and thus exotic places beyond their usual horizon. The periphery of the gigantic Soviet Union itself, the Far East, Kamchatka or the Arctic began to fascinate artists, authors and their readers alike. From the mid 1950s, the exotic yearning found expression in travelogues from the many Soviet peripheries and even from countries outside the socialist bloc, from Scandinavia, Australia or the Middle East, by renowned authors such as Daniil Granin, Jurij Nagibin or Vasili Aksenev.²⁶⁵ Long before the Beatles conquered the USSR, popular, but still official musicians played with the topos of the exotic of their own peripheries of empire, as did the Azerbaijani Muslim Magomaev or Edita Piecha, who – even though fluent in Russian – always kept an artificial Polish accent in her songs.²⁶⁶ The Ukrainian-Russian painter Igor’ Savickij was enthralled by the region of Karakalpakstan by the Aral Sea, finally moved there and began his huge collection of Russian and Uzbek Avant-garde art. Yevgeny Yevtushenko, who prefaces this chapter, published his *Stichi o zagranice* (“poems about the outland”) in 1962.²⁶⁷ Remarkably many Soviet films of the Thaw, Grigorij Aleksandrov’s *Russkij souvenir* (“the Russian souvenir”, 1960) or Georgij Danelija’s *Ja šagaju po Moskve* (“I stroll around Moscow”, 1963) feature foreign, usually Asian, tourists in prominent roles. Later in the 1960s, the bard Jurij Vizbor lost his heart in the Tajik Fan-Mountains (*Ja serce ostavil v Fanskich Gorach*), and millions of Soviet cinema goers were blinded by *Beloe solnce pustyni*, the white sun of the Uzbek desert.

The internationalisation of Soviet culture after 1953, underplayed in most literature on the history of the Thaw, allowed Soviet artists and writers to (re-)connect to colleagues and trends

²⁶³ EDWARD SAID: *Orientalism*. London, Penguin Books 2007, pp. 12; 120.

²⁶⁴ ALEXEI YURCHAK: *Everything Was Forever, until It Was No More. The Last Soviet Generation*. Princeton, Princeton University Press 2006, p. 160.

²⁶⁵ HOLTHUSEN 1992, p. 248.

²⁶⁶ ARTEM TROITZKY: *Back to the USSR. The True Story of Rock in Russia*. London, Music Sales 1987.

²⁶⁷ HOLTHUSEN 1992, p. 289.

worldwide, and it fostered the fascination of a broad public for faraway places in popular culture. Latin American art and the adaptation of Latin American topoi in Soviet culture represented a significant share of the new exotic element in Soviet culture from the mid 1950s. Unlike in their relations with other “exotic” world regions that now loomed on the Soviet horizon, black Africa or South East Asia for instance, Latin America played a prominent role for Soviet artists and intellectuals, because they could build on contacts with and an imagery of the Hispanic world that had existed already in the 1920s and 30s. In many ways, however, Soviet culture during the Thaw, with its longing for the exotic outland, was also in line with global developments of the 1950s and 60s.

Exoticism and folklorism in East and West in the 1950s and 60s

In Europe and the United States, too, exotic ‘other’ worlds in popular arts enjoyed great popularity at the time. After the sufferings of the Second World War and the hardships of the immediate post-war era, people found sanctuary in the idyllic worlds of modern entertainment. Tropical islands or Mediterranean beaches in songs and films brought their audience, if only for short imaginary moments, to distant places that were still, for most people, unreachable in reality. Exotic entertainment promised felicitousness, cosiness and happiness, and a dash of eroticism, and distracted from the traumatic past and the monotony of everyday life.

The exoticism of the 1950s and 60s was part of the cultural internationalism of its times; but just as much, it was a culmination of a phenomenon with a long history that went back to the early days of European colonialism. Humble living conditions and restrictive morals at home made people project their spiritual and sensual fantasies onto spheres at the edge of the known world. These distant places were experienced directly by only few travellers and sailors, but those back home shared the thrill of the new worlds sitting in armchairs and reading their travelogues and adventure stories. Like Tahiti for the French from the 18th century, Oceania or Brazil were for Germans in the 19th century not only colonial possessions or areas of settlement, but lands that spurred fantasies of a harmonic and innocent existence unspoiled by the vices of modern life. Around the same time, tsarist Russia saw similar literary mythologisations of the recently conquered Caucasus and Turkestan by Pushkin, Lermontov, Dostoevsky or Tolstoy. While these views of the empire (as well as the “exoticising” view of

Russia itself by the West) have been studied thoroughly, scholars have not yet used this category for an analysis of the Soviet “orientalist” view of the world after 1917.²⁶⁸

For Westerners and Soviets alike, a mythological Latin America was around 1960 something comparable to what Tahiti or the Caucasian mountains had been a century before. Cultural theories have usually defined this exoticism strictly politically, as Eurocentric epistemological imperialism, as a strategy of legitimisation of political and economic dominance and as derogatory representation of the other that shaped and privileged the European identity. Marxists such as Adorno or Barthes saw exoticism, and popular entertainment in general, only as an escapist pseudo-solution, a flight of the petty-bourgeois from the repressive living conditions of (late) capitalism. While it is certainly correct to say that “exoticism is an expression of power relations”²⁶⁹, it also contains a dimension that has nothing to do with power and politics. The depiction of the Third World in the folklore of post-war Europe (including the Soviet Union) was not free of a certain sense of superiority. Yet the positive stereotypes of the ‘exotic’ expressed a somewhat naive curiosity and an escapist, and for that matter very apolitical, yearning for distant places – and not so much cultural imperialism.

Cultural echoes from the 1920s and 30s

While Latin America as a topos of Soviet arts was part of the worldwide escapist exoticism of the 1950s, it had also roots in the leftist culture of socialist internationalism of the 1920s and 30s.²⁷⁰ The Russian avant-garde poet Vladimir Mayakovsky had described his experiences in Cuba, Mexico and Spain in several poems and a travel diary.²⁷¹ Sergei Eisenstein had directed the *Proletcult*-theatre production *The Mexican*, based on a tale by Jack London, in Moscow in 1921, starring Ivan Pyr’ev, and developed a fascination for Mexico. Later, in 1930 to 1931, Eisenstein spent almost an entire year there, together with the camera operators Eduard Tisse

²⁶⁸ A small selection of many more: DAVID VAN DER SCHIMMELPENNINCK OYE: *Russian Orientalism. Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration*. New Haven, Yale University Press 2010; MICHAEL DAVID-FOX: *Orientalism and empire in Russia*. Bloomington, Ind, Slavica Publ 2006; MARTIN MALIA: *Russia under Western Eyes. From the Bronze Horseman to the Lenin Mausoleum*. Cambridge, Mass, The Belnap Press of Harvard University Press 1999; KALPANA SAHNI: *Crucifying the Orient. Russian Orientalism and the Colonization of Caucasus and Central Asia*. Bangkok, White Orchid Press 1997.

²⁶⁹ THOMAS KOEBNER; GERHART PICKERODT (EDS.): *Die andere Welt. Studien zum Exotismus*. Frankfurt am Main, Athenäum 1987, p. 7; see also: IFA STUTTGART (ED.): *Exotische Welten, europäische Phantasien. Ausstellungskatalog*. Stuttgart, Edition Cantz 1987, p. 10.

²⁷⁰ TOBIAS RUPPRECHT: ‘Die Liebe der Linken zu Lateinamerika. Vom radical chic zur Nikaragua-Solidarität’. *Le Monde Diplomatique* 11 (2010), pp. 16–17.

²⁷¹ VLADIMIR MAJAKOVSKII: *Meksika. Pervye očerki*. Moskva, Biblioteka Ogonek 1933; VLADIMIR MAJAKOVSKII: *Ispanija. Okean. Gavana. Meksika. Amerika. Stichi*. Moskva, Gosizdat 1926; VLADIMIR MAJAKOVSKII: *Moe otkrytie Ameriki*. Moskva, Gosizdat 1926.

and Grigorij Aleksandrov. Their never officially completed epos *¡Qué Viva Mexico!*, which they had shot on this occasion, was an anthological portrayal of Mexican history from the arrival of the *conquistadores* to the Mexican Revolution.²⁷²

Intellectuals, mostly from Leningrad, had run an *Ispano-Amerikanskoe obščestvo* (“Hispanic-American society”) from 1929. Several members, including the president David Vygodskij, translated many big names of Spanish and Latin American literature into Russian for the first time and, among others, discovered the young Communist Brazilian author Jorge Amado for a Soviet readership. The young Ilya Ehrenburg had used the perspective of a Mexican on post-revolutionary Russia in his 1922 satire *Neobyčajnye počozdenija Chulio Churenito* (“the unusual adventures of Julio Jurenito”). In his Paris exile, Ehrenburg had learnt Spanish and had made friends with the Mexican painter Diego Riviera, who stirred Ehrenburg’s interest in Mexico and inspired him for the character of Julio.

Rivera also introduced him to several Latin American intellectuals during Ehrenburg’s time as a war reporter in Spain. In the International Brigades, he met the Cuban poet Nicolas Guillén, the Chilean Pablo Neruda, and the Mexican painter David Siqueiros, all of whose work Ehrenburg would later introduce to the Soviet Union. Just as among leftists from all over the Americas and Europe, the Spanish Civil War had stirred a revolutionary romanticism with many Soviet intellectuals. Indeed, many fought in Spain indeed, and many – most notably the journalist Michail Kol’cov – fell victim not to Franco’s *Falange* but to Stalinist purges in Spain and back in the Soviet Union. Ehrenburg dedicated more than 200 exuberant pages in his 1960s memoirs to his experiences in Spain.²⁷³ Thousands of Communist refugees from the Civil War and their families formed small Spanish speaking communities in several Soviet cities, which would prevail until the 1970s, when they were allowed to return to Spain after the end of Franco’s rule – many, however, had long assimilated to their Russian environment and decided to stay.

With the isolation of High-Stalinism and the early Cold War years, Spain and Latin America all but disappeared from the Soviet cultural horizon. The Hispanic-American society was closed by the suspicious authorities as early as 1933. Ehrenburg miraculously survived Stalinism, but Vygodskij was arrested in 1938 for anti-Party agitation and died in the Gulag in 1943. Ivan Lichačev, another prominent translator was accused of espionage and fascist propaganda through the *obščestvo*, was sentenced to forced labour and exile in Central Asia

²⁷² MASHA SALAZKINA: *In Excess. Sergei Eisenstein's Mexico*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press 2009; KUTEJŠIKOVA 2000, p. 91.

²⁷³ EHRENBURG 1977, pp. II, 198; 349-502.

and was rehabilitated only in 1957.²⁷⁴ While Spain remained sealed off territory for the Soviets until well into the 1970s, Latin America experienced a comeback with the official reappraisal of internationalism from the mid 1950s.

Internationalism after Stalin and Soviet society

Two strands of ideas defined the image of Latin America in Soviet arts from the mid 1950s: on the one hand a revolutionary romanticism that dated back to early Soviet perceptions of the Mexican Revolution, and, to a much larger extent, to Spanish-language leftist songs and the heroic struggle of the internationalist brigades in the Spanish Civil War; on the other hand the worldwide (or at least: Northern-Hemispheric) rage for a mythical-exotic Latin America.

This chapter will trace the topos *Latin America* in Soviet art and the dissemination of Latin American cultural products in the USSR from the mid 1950s. It looks at both Soviet artists, who produced it or were inspired by it, and at the Soviet public, which consumed it. That encounter with Latin America and its cultural representations was part of what Soviet society experienced as rekindled Soviet internationalism. The principal argument of this thesis holds true also in the realm of Soviet culture: this internationalism after Stalin combined ideas of socialist internationalism of the 1920s and 30s with elements of the global cultural internationalism of the 1950s and 60s.

As a credo of Soviet self-representation to the world abroad, Soviet internationalism after 1953 has been analysed in chapter one. Here, internationalism is defined beyond that also as a mindset and a functional principle *within* the Soviet Union. During the Cold War, internationalism was not only about winning the world public over, but also directed inwards, advocated by intellectuals, embraced by artists and carried over to the Soviet population.²⁷⁵ Even in the most remote areas, Soviet citizens were confronted with a flood of signs, demands, rituals and symbols of internationalism. This internationalist discourse has often been downplayed as empty rhetoric, compelled from above and ignored or ridiculed from below. This perception of internationalism is part of a long lasting mono-directional understanding of the relation between the Soviet state and its citizens between support and opposition. It was believed that Soviet power was based on passive loyalty to and sullen acceptance of the system. Integrative moments, which convinced not only the political and

²⁷⁴ KUTEJŠČIKOVA 2000, p. 86; <http://www.sakharov-center.ru/asfcd/auth/?t=author&i=396> (last access: 22-11-2011).

²⁷⁵ KLAUS GESTWA: *Die Stalinschen Großbauten des Kommunismus. Sowjetische Technik- und Umweltgeschichte, 1948-1967*. München, Oldenbourg 2010, p. 329.

intellectual elite, but also ordinary citizens of the superiority of their state and societal model, have long been underestimated, Only lately have the victory in the Second World War or the successes of the space programme been interpreted in this sense.

The concept of *egemonia culturale* that Gramsci coined for capitalist society can be applied just as well to the Soviet Union after Stalin: no longer did the state rule its subjects through terror and physical violence. The consent of the political and intellectual elite and the majority of the population was now based on shared cultural and ideological conceptions. To preserve this status quo of public compliance, the state – besides supplying the basic material needs – only needed to make sure that certain cultural forms predominated over others. Western modernist art or Rock 'n' Roll music were considered dangerous, for they seemed to promote anti-authoritarian individualism, uncontrolled emotions and sexual libertinism. They were banned and could not reach a mass audience in the USSR until the 1970s. Most Latin American culture, however, was considered rather to support the Soviet view of the world in content and form.

This chapter will show that rekindled internationalism, and the world view Latin American art helped to create and sustain, added to the ideational cohesion of Soviet society from the mid 1950s: it provided a coherent world view that reassured intellectuals and ordinary citizens of the superiority of their own political and societal model. Two sections will analyse the impact of the topos *Latin America* in Soviet cinema and music, both of Soviet and Latin American origin. They prove that internationalism found its expression not only in state directed plain propaganda, but also in branches of cultural production that found a receptive mass audience. It was through this mass culture that the majority of ordinary Soviet citizens developed their idea of the outside world. Based on the positive stereotypes of post-war exoticism, many of them not only learned to dance the mambo, but at the same time incorporated their own interpretation of the ideals of international solidarity. Looking at cultural products by Soviet artists who included topoi of the world abroad into their artistic repertoire also gives an idea of how these artists perceived their role in the propagation and implementation of the renewed Soviet internationalism and their stance towards the new regime.

A third section will look at a privileged class of intellectual elites who were allowed to travel abroad again from the 1950s. The travelogues they wrote about their trips to many countries of the Americas give insights of their conception of themselves within the new global order of the Cold War, their conception of Latin America and their conception of internationalism after Stalin. The craze for Latin America reached its peak after Fidel Castro's revolution. A

last section will show the huge impact Cuba had back on the Soviet Union not only politically but also in the realm of culture. At least for some time in the early 1960s and not least thanks to the Cuban Revolution, internationalism, embraced by all while interpreted differently by political elites, intellectuals or ordinary people, had become an integral part of Soviet identity.

Ivan's window on the world. Latin America in Soviet cinemas and concert halls

The average Soviet citizen got his first glimpse of Latin America most probably during a night out at the movies, through an imported film or through a Soviet production that dealt with the area. Among modern media, cinema was cutting edge in the 1950s. And filmmakers were, after long years of international isolation, the first Soviets to travel to Latin America and give an account to their compatriots of what was happening there.

Soviet film theatres had a tradition of showing opening programme pictures, usually news, cartoons or short documentaries. With the end of Stalinism, the latter enjoyed increasing popularity as they served a demand for new authenticity in the arts during the Thaw. The Moscow cinema *Novosti Dnja* (“news of the day”) drew huge crowds screening solely these openers and documentaries. For just such a short feature, Igor' Bessarabov and Sergej Gusev filmed the Soviet exhibition in Buenos Aires in 1955 and, in the aftermath, toured the country and shot their *Putešestvie po Argentine* (“journey through Argentina”). It documented Argentinean cities, monuments, architecture, the everyday life of townspeople, inhabitants of the Pampa and native tribes, and ended with performances of the song-and-dance company *Chucaro* and a meeting with the Argentinean actress Lolita Torres.²⁷⁶ In the following year, their colleague Ilja Kopalin repeated their trip – and shot another film of the same name.²⁷⁷ Violinist Igor' Bezrodnyj was also a hobby-filmmaker and, while touring Latin America as one of the first artists of the renewed Soviet cultural diplomacy, captured his travel impressions on celluloid.²⁷⁸ In the years to come, numerous films were shot by Soviets all across Central and Southern America. Guram Asatiani and Melor Sturua depicted their impressions of Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela and Cuba in a film called *Raznoetažnaja Amerika* (“multi-storeyed” or “multilayered America”). The title alluded to Ilja Ilf's and Jevgenij Petrov's famous 1936 United States travel report *Oдноetažnaja Amerika* (“one-

²⁷⁶ *Putešestvie po Argentine* (1955), RGAKFD #9811.

²⁷⁷ *Pravda*, 25-3-1956.

²⁷⁸ Undated, GARF f.5283 op.14 d.672 l.7.

storeyed America“). What Asatiani and Sturua found multilayered in the neighbouring southern countries, was not only the architecture, but above all the enormous social imbalances in both Americas – and as the sole culprit of this misery they picked the United States. In the tradition of Sergei Eisenstein, Georgij Kublinskij declared his love for Mexico in another documentary (*Meksika, kotoruju my ljubim* – “the Mexico we love”), which he later abandoned for new affairs with Cuba (*Divo Kuby* – “the miracle of Cuba”) and Peru (*Peru: Tysjača i tri goda* – “Peru: one thousand and three years”, all before 1962). The Azerbaijani El'beka Rzakuliev added even more pictures to the Soviet perception of Mexico on a trip in 1960.²⁷⁹ Lev Danilov was allegedly the first Soviet citizen ever to visit Ecuador, where he shot the movie *Den' v Ekuadore* (“one day in Ecuador”), later followed by a documentary on Brazilian cities (*Po gorodam brazilii*).²⁸⁰

These films gave the Soviet audience a mental picture of Latin America, which was characterised by a fascination with exotic landscapes and peoples on the one side – and the depiction of underdevelopment, poverty and US backed exploitation on the other. Also in the field of cinema, experience with Central Asia and the Caucasus shaped the Soviet view of the Global South: between 1945 and 1953, Soviet filmmakers had shot documentaries on every Soviet republic. Having measured cinematographically the traditions and histories of their inner periphery, the Soviets now incorporated the Third World into their cultural horizon.

To some extent, these first views abroad carried over old Soviet cinematic and literary traditions. Their style was declamatory, and in the content, they essentialised national cultures and blamed all of the Americas’ hardships on US imperialism. Prime examples were the ideologically overloaded historical re-enactments by Roman Karmen (“the Soviet Leni Riefenstahl”). With the same pathos and manichaeism that characterised his earlier works from Turkmenistan or Kazakhstan, he now shot an entire series of films on the Hispanic world. The writers Konstantin Simonov and Genrich Borovik assisted in the production of films of the Cuban Revolution (*Kuba Segodnia*, “Cuba today”, 1960), the invasion in the Bay of Pigs, *Pylajuščij ostrov* (“the blazing island”, 1961) and later also the Spanish Civil War: *Grenada, Grenada, Grenada moja* (“my Granada” 1967) was inspired by the 1959 song of the same name by Victor Berekovskij (who himself took the lyrics from a 1920s poem by Mikhail Svetlov).²⁸¹ Karmen also made films on Chile (*Čili. Vremja bor'by, vremja trevog*, “Chile. A time of Struggle. A time of alarm”, 1974), *Serce Korvalana* (“Corvalán’s heart”,

²⁷⁹ I. KARETNIKOVA: ‘Po Meksike’. *Tvorčestvo* 10 (1960), p. 17.

²⁸⁰ PETR TUR: ‘S kamerov po Latinskoj Amerike’. *Iskusstvo Kino* 11 (1962), pp. 16–19.

²⁸¹ Telegramm Romana Karmena Fidel’ju Castro, 25-3-1974, RGALI f. 2989 op.1 d.325 l.2.

1975), and entire Southern America, *Kamaradas. Tovarišč* (“camaradas. Comrade”1974), *Pylajuščij kontinent* (“the blazing continent”, 1972). Karmen’s films are full of revolutionary pathos, very well shot technically and very convincing emotionally. But they were highly ideological propaganda in best Stalinist tradition. In the Hispanic world, he found inspiration and emotional fuel for his revolutionary fervour, which many of his contemporaries of the 1950s and 1960s had already lost or replaced with a less radical revolutionary romanticism. By the same token, these new films from the 1950s offered a new window on faraway countries to all Soviet cinema goers and captured their imagination. Soviet citizens got an image of the broad expanses of a hitherto hardly known outer world, an image which was full of appealing exotic otherness and which was full of sympathy for the wretched of the earth. In this sense, these “realist” films stood not only in old Soviet internationalist tradition, but also in an international context of the 1950s: feature films in the style of documentaries, usually with historical and sociocritical topics, *Neorealismo* in Italy or *Cinéma Vérité* in France, were popular throughout Europe at the time.

Just as in the West, these dramatic and realist films lost favour with the public by the end of the decade to more entertaining and easily enjoyable productions. In October 1957, Sergej Michalkov, long-term chairman of the Union of Russian Writers (famous for having written the Stalinist, the post-Stalinist and the post-Soviet Russian anthem) staged for the first time his play *Sombrero*. In it, Moscow youngsters develop a fascination for Mexico when one of their brothers returns from a diplomatic post in Mexico-City and teaches them the Spanish language and local folk tunes. With its many Hispanic songs and colourful costumes, *Sombrero* became one of the most successful children plays, popular throughout the history of the Soviet Union, with dozens of reprints and over 800 performances in Moscow alone until 1972. Already in 1959, the cinema cooperative *Progress* filmed *Sombrero* under the direction of Tamara Lisician at the Gorky Film Studios.²⁸² Just as popular with adults was the science fiction film *Čelovek-amfibija* (“amphibian man”), directed by Gennadij Kazanskij and Vladimir Čebotarev. More than 65 million Soviet citizens saw it in 1962, which made it the most successful production of the Thaw period. They were thrilled by the story of a supposed sea monster falling in love with a beautiful girl to the backdrop of a mythical exotic Latin American country. Based on a 1928 novel by Aleksandr Belaev, who had set the story in Buenos Aires, the film adaption is somewhat more careless with geography and culture; it mixes a Caribbean type landscape with Mexican dresses and Spanish dances and songs, which

²⁸² ‘Sombrero’. *Kultur und Leben* 8 (1960); SERGEJ MICHALKOV: *Sombrero. Komedija v 3 dejstvijach, 5 kartinach*. Moskva, Iskusstvo 1957.

are played throughout the film. The film was shot before the Cuban Revolution had made its full cultural impact on the Soviets; hence Mexico still shaped the perception of Latin America. Artists had to base their work on a limited number of images of the subcontinent, and they used and combined what they knew from Mayakovsky, Eisenstein and the Spanish Civil War. The exotic setting and the Spanish style (but Russian language) music in *The Amphibian Man* contributed to the lasting popularity of the film. That the exotic elements were a mismatch did no harm to its success whatsoever.

Latin American film productions found their way into the Soviet Union, too. The Argentinean actress Lolita Torres was a celebrity throughout the 1950s and 60s. Soviet journals featured articles about her glamorous life, Soviet television interviewed her personally, and she received countless fan letters from all over the USSR. Torres' films, always guaranteed success in the Soviet Union, were usually simple love stories with a lot of dancing and jolly music. She sang herself and, knowing of the Soviets' enthusiasm for Latin American music, she toured the Soviet Union as a singer in 1963 with huge success – and Lolita became a popular name for a generation of Soviet girls.²⁸³

Two particularly popular films of the 1950s came from Argentina, too: *Mi pobre madre querida* (“my poor beloved mother”) and *Las aguas bajan turbias* (“the waters run turbid”, published in the US as “The Rivers Run Red”), both directed by Hugo del Carril. The latter film is a South American classic about a workers' revolution in the Argentinean-Paraguayan border region, based on a novel by Alfredo Varela. The topic of the movie and the political stance of the author superficially complied with Soviet preferences. That Varela, a socialist but passionate anti-Stalinist, had served time in an Argentinean prison for urinating against the Soviet embassy, officials in Moscow probably did not know. The Soviet audience loved the film for its catchy Paraguayan folklore music: in a letter to the Latin American Friendship Society, a group of librarians from Novosibirsk expounded how much they adored the film and that would be grateful for the lyrics and the sheet music.²⁸⁴ In remarkable responsiveness to their petitioning citizens, the officials organised a visit of Hugo del Carril to the Soviet Union.²⁸⁵ Varela, friends with Ehrenburg, organised the contact with Carril, who, in 1961, took part in the Moscow film festival with his *Esta tierra es mía* (“this is my land”).²⁸⁶

²⁸³ DONALD J. RALEIGH: *Russia's Sputnik Generation. Soviet Baby Boomers Talk about their Lives*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press 2006, p. 167; JORGE GRECO: “Moe serdce s vami” pišet Lolita Torres čitateljam Smeny”. *Smena* 34/4 (1957), pp. 22–23; JUAN GELMAN: ‘U Lolity Torres’. *Ogonek* 48 (1957), p. 28.

²⁸⁴ 22-7-1958, GARF f.9576 op.8 d.6 l.141-142.

²⁸⁵ Undated, GARF f.9576 op.8 d.7 l.42/43.

²⁸⁶ Pis'mo Varely Erenburgu, 5-7-1961, RGALI f.1204 op.2 d.1354 l.11.

Millions of Soviet citizens saw the films by the directors Gabriel Figueroa and Emilio Fernández, called ‘El Indio’.²⁸⁷ Deeply influenced by their collaboration with Eisenstein and cameraman Edvard Tisse’s in the 1930s, they reinvented Mexican cinema in the 1950s. Their films glorified the Mexican Revolution, the beautiful Mexican landscapes and often featured stories reminiscent of Wild West movies in the United States – and they were blockbusters all across the Wild East.

Latin American films met two crucial criteria for films to be successful in the Soviet Union: with their settings in far-away countries and with their adventurous stories, they were different from the everyday and thus good escapist entertainment. “These films were melodramatic, naive and exotic and there was always a beautiful heroine,” Vera Kutejščikova, grande dame of Soviet Latin Americanistics remembered, “this opened the audience’s hearts and explains their success.”²⁸⁸ By the same token, the sociocritical and often anti-US message behind complied perfectly with the expectations of Soviet cultural officials. Continuing both the folkloristic depiction of the other and the revolutionary romanticism, El Indio, Carril and the like remained popular throughout the 1970s in the Soviet Union.²⁸⁹ “The Soviets love all these Mexican and Argentinean films”, a Brazilian visitor had noted already in 1955. It was probably more a sign of his own chauvinism than a valid assessment of Soviet cultural preferences that he added: “that is not a sign of good taste.”²⁹⁰

Sombrero, moustache, guitar. Folklorism and Latin American music

When, in 1957, tens of thousands of young people from all over the world flocked into the Soviet capital for the Sixth World Youth Festival (see chapter one), things turned out rather differently from how officials had planned it. Youngsters from Western countries brought jeans, short skirts and jazz records, and some Soviet girls apparently took the rapprochement of the peoples too literally. Much less disturbing for Soviet authorities and parents than pregnant *komsomolci* and Western consumer goods was another, almost forgotten influence: dozens of Latin American folkloristic bands played hundreds of shows – and enjoyed enormous success among the Soviet audience. The pseudo-folklore of Soviet nationalities, in particular of the Caucasian and Central Asian ones, had been a common phenomenon during

²⁸⁷ VERA KUTEISHCHIKOVA: ‘Mexican Art Popular in USSR’. Moscow News 74 (1960), p. 7.

²⁸⁸ KUTEJŠČIKOVA 2000, p. 19.

²⁸⁹ STITES 2000, p. 170.

²⁹⁰ JOSÉ GUILHERME MENDES: *Moscou, Varsóvia, Berlim. O povo nas ruas*. Rio de Janeiro, Editôra Civilização Brasileira 1956, p. 53.

Stalinism.²⁹¹ Foreign popular musicians, however, were a rare sight in the Soviet Union until the festival.

The first Latino combos, among them one by the name of *Los Mexicanos*, had played concerts in Leningrad and Moscow in the mid 1950s. Their appearance corresponded to that of many Latino bands to come: three or four men of stereotypical appearance – big hats, moustaches, revolver belts and guitars – sang songs about love and other yearnings and combined their music with some comedy elements.²⁹² A very similar group, the Trio *Los Caballeros* from Paraguay, came for the Moscow festival, played 14 shows and was invited at least twice more to the Soviet Union.²⁹³ The Argentinean group *Los trovadores del norte* and Brazilian singer Silvio Caldas added a somewhat more sophisticated variant of Latin American folklore. Many other groups followed during the festival and thereafter.²⁹⁴

It made little difference where the Latino bands came from exactly, be it Brazil or Cuba or Chile or Argentina. What they played was usually not authentic music “of the folk”, but a combination of elements of all kinds of traditional music from all Latin American regions. *Los de Ramón*, yet another folklore group to play in the USSR, in their response to an invitation of the Soviet embassy in Chile, even boasted they would play tunes from every one of the 20 Latin American countries.²⁹⁵

The common Soviet citizens seem to have been a grateful audience, which ignored professional music critics. The specialist journal *Muzykal'naja Žizn'* (“musical life”) may have found fault with the groups' boorish behaviour and their touchy-feely and technically bad singing.²⁹⁶ Yet people flocked to their concerts and liked what they saw and heard. By the mid 1960s, these concerts would take place every other week. The Brazilian singer Victor Simón came several times, once with 20 men and women of a dancing company. They played 50 shows all over the Soviet Union in summer 1966, and combined folklore music with historic re-enactments of the history of Latin America. In their show, indigenous people fought against the conquistadores, Negroes against slavery and coffee planters against evil landlords. Honouring the repeated responsiveness and hospitality of his Soviet audience, Simón

²⁹¹ FRANK MILLER: *Folklore to Stalin. Russian Folklore and Pseudofolklore of the Stalin Era*. London, Sharpe 1990.

²⁹² ‘Trio "Los Mechikanos"’. *Sovetskaja Muzyka* 21/8 (1957), p. 126; FYODOR YARIKOV: ‘Moscow Likes Latin American Music’. *Moscow News* 30.6 (1956), p. 7.

²⁹³ O sostave i pribyvanii delegacij Latinskoj Ameriki na Vsemirnom Festivalе Molodeži, undated, RGASPI f.3M op.15 d.204 l.52-142.

²⁹⁴ ‘Melodie Mexikos und Gedichte Perus’. *Kultur und Leben* 2/8 (1958), pp. 55–56; OSKAR FEL'CMAN: ‘Gosti iz Braziliј’. *Muzykal'naja Žizn'* 14 (1958), p. 21; O podgotovke Vsemirnogo Festivalja Molodeži, undated, RGASPI f.3M op.15 d.27 l.25.

²⁹⁵ Posol'stvo SSSR v Čili GKKS, 8-2-1966, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.1017 l.40.

²⁹⁶ PAVEL PIČUGIN: ‘Ansambli' iz Paragvaja’. *Muzykal'naja Žizn'* 7/12 (1964), p. 23.

added an extra surprise: in the final scene, Brazilian dancers in costumes of the Soviet cosmonauts sung Rio de Janeiro's Samba-anthem *A Cidade Maravilhosa* and celebrated a *Carnival on the Moon!*²⁹⁷

Besides the above mentioned actress and singer Lolita Torres, another female artist enjoyed huge success in the Soviet Union: the at the time world-famous Peruvian singer Yma Sumac with her *Inca Taky Trio*. Sumac, too, played a fashionable mix of Peruvian folk music with elements of different Latin American styles such as Cuban mambo. In 1960, the group planned to come for two weeks to the Soviet Union, but proved so popular that, in the end, they stayed for six months and performed in 40 cities. Already before her tour across the Soviet Union, Yma had enjoyed certain popularity there. Stories of her life as a half-indigene in the United States and of her exotic music sung in Quechua were recurring topics in Soviet journals.²⁹⁸ A film shot during her lengthy visit assembled all the stereotypes the Soviets had gathered about Peru and exotic Yma, the “soul of a faraway people”. It combined clips from her Moscow concert in the Tchaikovsky-Theatre with images from her home country. Spooky stone gods and ruins alternated with wild animals, crocodiles, peacocks, snakes, parrots and indefinable creatures – and the Soviet viewers learned some facts about Peruvians and their country, about their lives and about their language Quetchua. Sumac's career is described with a somewhat overdone depiction of her as a talented but completely unsuccessful and impoverished artist in the United States – in fact she was a world star (albeit with monetary difficulties) before she came to the Soviet Union. Her concerts in the USSR, in any way, were a complete success; the enthusiasm shown by the Moscow crowd at the end of the film appears very authentic.²⁹⁹

All these concerts were organised by official Soviet organs, the VOKS until 1957, then the GKKS and the SSOD in collaboration with *Goskoncert*, the state concert organiser. From the official point of view, they were propaganda measures to promote internationalism, in the tradition of the depoliticising folklorisation of the peoples of Central Asia and the Caucasus. Yuri Slezkine once called these folklore evenings “one of the most visible and apparently least popular aspects of Soviet official culture”.³⁰⁰ This may have been true of the Azerbaijani dances or Armenian poetry Slezkine mentions. The Latinos, however, struck a chord with the

²⁹⁷ Posol'stvo SSSR v Rio de Žanejro Ministerstvo Kultury, 30-11-1965, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.324 l.225-229

²⁹⁸ VADIM BIRJUKOV: 'Doč' solnca'. *Ogonek* 47 (1960), p. 29.

²⁹⁹ Pesnja Imy Sumak (1961), RGAKFD #20083; A. MEDVEDEV: 'Poet Ima Sumak'. *Muzykal'naja Žizn'* 4/2 (1961), p. 12.

³⁰⁰ YURI SLEZKINE: 'The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism'. *Slavic Review* 53/2 (1994), pp. 414–452, p. 448.

audience, which did not care so much about the political heritage, but appreciated the new, fresh, rhythmic, corporeal, earthy and thus exotic entertainment. Internal evaluations of the GKKS reveal that “ensembles like *Los Lanchos*, *Los Mexicanos*, and *Los Gallos* enjoyed great success”.³⁰¹ In 1958, the Soviet audience saw concerts by 29 Latin American folkloristic artists, a number that rose to 59 the year after.³⁰² The film classic *Ja šagaju po Moskve* portrayed Moscow as a sunny and romantic capital with a happy population – the boy-meets-girl-story happens in Gorky Park to the backdrop of a big concert of Latin American musicians. In the same vein, in a late 1950s scene of the Oscar winning Soviet ‘Sex in the City’, *Moskva slezam ne verit* (“Moscow Doesn’t Believe in Tears”, 1980), the first of the couples portrayed gets physical – and young Katerina pregnant – while Lucho Gatica sings the entire *Bésame mucho*.

This enthusiasm was not limited to the big cities of the Union. Reports from the provincial towns of Soči, Kazan, Čeboksary, Joškar-Ola or Odessa describe the “enormous success” of groups like *Los Bravos*.³⁰³ Neither did the craze for Latin American folklore pass unnoticed with foreign visitors: the Peruvian philosopher Francisco Miró Quesada, touring the Soviet Union in the summer of 1959 was surprised to see that “everyone preferred Latin American music ... over European music” and that “many girls were able to sing tunes in Spanish.”³⁰⁴ The visiting Colombian politician Alberto Dangond remembered that his young guide Ludmila was very “aficionada a los ritmos latinoamericanos”.³⁰⁵ The Brazilian communist Enaida Morais was pleasantly surprised that the band in her Moscow hotel played Brazilian music.³⁰⁶ And her compatriot journalist Nestor de Holanda was overwhelmed to hear Rumba and Samba in a restaurant in the Black Sea resort town Soči.³⁰⁷ At some point in the mid 1960s, the Soviet embassy staff in Brazil even reported to the Minister of Culture, Ekaterina Furceva, that they had difficulties finding enough appropriate folklore bands for Soviet demands. However, most professional artists had by this time been influenced too strongly by

³⁰¹ Spravka o sostojanii i perspektivach razvitija kul’turnich i naučnich sviazej meždu SSSR i Meksikoj, 28-11-1963, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.344 l.139-141.

³⁰² Očety o pribyvanii artistov, undated, RGANI f.5 op.35 d.85 l.1-57 sowie f.5 op.36 d.56.

³⁰³ ADELINA ZUNDEJAS: ‘Der kulturelle Austausch erweitert sich’. *Kultur und Leben* 10 (1973), p. 28.

³⁰⁴ FRANCISCO MIRÓ QUESADA: *La otra mitad del mundo. Treinta años despues*. Lima, Editorial Perla-Perú 1989, p. 115.

³⁰⁵ DANGOND 1968, p. 21.

³⁰⁶ ENAIDA MORAIS: *Caminhos da Terra. URSS, Tchecoslovàquia, China*. Rio de Janeiro, Antunes 1959, p. 12.

³⁰⁷ NESTOR DE HOLANDA: *O mundo vermelho. Notas de um Repórter na URSS*. Rio de Janeiro, Editora Pongetti 1962, p. 135.

Western music, as Ambassador Sergej Michajlov complained personally – and he recommended paying artists to sketch programmes specially tailored to the Soviet taste.³⁰⁸

Many more guest performances of Latin American groups took place in the Soviet Union throughout the 1960s. Some could be considered high culture, such as the concerts by the Argentinean classical guitar player Maria Luisa Anido, who appeared at least five times on Moscow stages. But the overwhelming majority, in response to Soviet public request, were folkloristic bands, which presented – or were asked to present – a stereotypical view of Latin America. On the grounds that it would not interest the Soviet audience, officials occasionally declined offers to play by interpreters of classical music from Latin America.³⁰⁹ It was entertainment the audience wanted and it was entertainment it got!

Folkloristic tunes were a very modern phenomenon of their time. ‘Folkloristic music’ – as opposed to ‘folklore’ or ‘folk music’ – is a type of mass-produced modern entertainment that syncretically draws on elements of traditional cultures and creates certain national or regional clichés. Not necessarily pure invention, misleading or “wrong”, as Adorno would have called it, the ‘folkloristic’ is the use of a tradition outside the cultural context in which it was created. This reference to this folklorism in popular music, in the East as in the West, reflected a yearning for exotic outlands in the 1950s and 60s. This happened most notably in Western Germany’s *Schlager*-music, where (besides the more approachable Italy) Latin America became a projection screen for exoticist dreams of sun and insouciance. While Soviet Ivan Ivanovič learnt to dance the Mambo with *Los Amigos*, German Heinz celebrated *Fiesta Mexicana*, and ordinary Joe in the United States swayed to *Quizás, quizás, quizás*. Marxists criticised the escapist entertainment on both sides of the Iron Curtain, but average citizens appreciated these tunes as a window on exotic countries that they would never be able to visit. Latin American music boasted – sometimes – African inflected catchy rhythms and a still commonly acceptable physicality; but they were still quite close to European listening habits, which may explain why it was groups and tunes from the Americas that became popular, not African or Indian ones. They were exotic, but not too much.³¹⁰

Exoticist entertainment in general became widely popular at the time because it served a demand for escapism; eventually, from the mid 1950s, it could be met everywhere in the Northern hemisphere, which had overcome the worst hardships of war, the post-war era and Stalinism. The contrast with the Soviets’ own cultural self-representation towards Latin

³⁰⁸ 21-2-1966, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.997 l.23.

³⁰⁹ Letter of Goskonzert to the GKKS, 26-12-1963, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.223 l.345.

³¹⁰ CHRISTOPH MAREK: *Pop/Schlager. Eine Analyse der Entstehungsprozesse populärer Musik im US-amerikanischen und deutschsprachigen Raum*. Wien, LitVerlag 2006, pp. 59f.

Americans, however, reveals another, very European aspect of this folklorisation: in their attempt to appear modern, civilised and cultivated, the USSR sent mostly high-brow artists abroad. By doing this, they constructed a cultural gradient between Soviet representatives of classical European high culture and the – selectively invited – folkloristic groups from Latin America. This practice shows a sense of cultural superiority Europeans maintained towards the rest of the world, be they from the East or the West of the old continent.

This escapist, and by definition conservative, folklore mingled in the following years with a different branch of Latin American popular music. Again both in Western Europe and in the Soviet Union, the success of *Los Bravos* and the like paved the way for the reception of the more political, leftist folk music of the 1960s. Similar to the ‘folkloristic’ music, the *Música popular brasileira*, the *Movimento de música popular Argentina* and, especially renowned, the *Nueva canción chilena* put together elements from all Latin American and Spanish folk music traditions, but combined them with politically left lyrics on the living conditions of the poor and the impact of imperialism. Most Europeans who sang along to the refrain of *Guantanamera* (a popular melody also in the 1960’s Soviet Union) most probably did not know that it was originally written by the Cuban national hero José Martí and an anthem for many left movements world wide. The latter had had a preference for Spanish-language songs ever since the days of the Spanish Civil War, when composers as Ernst Busch or Hanns Eisler wrote their catchy tunes for the *International Music Bureau* at the Comintern. When Victor Jara, later martyr of Chilean socialism and global leftwing icon, came to Moscow in 1961, he was only an actor in a theatre company. Standing in for a colleague who had fallen ill, he found himself singing and playing the guitar. The audience’s reaction to the beloved Latin American music was so overwhelming that he decided to become a singer, and, in the same night, wrote his first song in a Moscow hotel room. Together with Dean Reed, a US singer who also interpreted many Spanish-language protest songs, Jara was widely listened to in the Soviet Union – with the censors’ benevolence and the audience’s sympathy. After his assassination in Chile in 1973, the Soviets named a recently discovered asteroid after him, and some years later, an opera on the events surrounding his death was staged in Moscow.

By that time, Soviet musicians had long begun to include Latin American songs and topics into their own repertoire. Not only had the Latin American groups performed at concerts, but they had brought records and sheet music. The Soviets began to reproduce them, and they

proved so popular that publishing houses constantly had to increase the number of copies.³¹¹ Soviet publishers were no sticklers for details of copyright law in this context: several Latin American companies complained about this behaviour, as did an Argentinean record label in an angry letter in 1958.³¹² Soviet musicians now used both elements, the exoticist-folklorising view and the political message. The bard Viktor Berkovskij melodised Mikhail Svetlov's *Grenada* in 1959. The – of course political – song on the Spanish Civil War became a classic in the repertoire of many other contemporary musicians. But until today, Berkovskij is most famous for his 1968 romantic hit *Na dalekoj Amazonke* (“at the far away Amazon”). Together with Moris Sinel'nikov he had set to music a poem by Rudyard Kipling (himself notorious for his “White Man's Burden” poem), *The Beginning of the Armadilloes*. Its lyrics repeat the narrator's longing to see Brazil once in his lifetime, while he watches ships leaving the harbour: “and I wonder, will I see Brazil, Brazil, Brazil, will I see Brazil before I get old?” Jurij Vizbor, one of the most famous Soviet bards of the 1960s, wrote some of his songs on Latin American topics, too. Like his fellow-bards Vladimir Vysockij or Bulat Okudžava, Vizbor became famous via *samizdat* hometapes; the music he wrote by no means represented official policies – yet still expressed sympathy and internationalist solidarity with the heroic feats of Soviet submariners in the Caribbean (*Karibskaja Pesnja*, “The Caribbean Song”, 1963), admired Latin America culture (*Bossanova*, 1965) and celebrated its socialist martyrs (*Ballada o Viktoru Chara*, “The Ballade of Victor Jara, 1973).

In the upshot, foreign influence on Soviet culture was not necessarily in conflict with the authorities or involved an act of resistance. Some internationalist songs were indeed produced with propagandistic intention (which again does not mean that they were necessarily unpopular, see the section on Cuba). Yet many others were written and played by ordinary musicians. Internationalist solidarity was not just an empty political phrase of Soviet apparatchiks. It was embraced by many Soviet artists and citizens – even more so if there was no service to pay in return and if it could be expressed by singing or listening to a nice Latino tune.

³¹¹ E.g.:PAVEL PIČUGIN: *Narodnaja muzyka Argentiny*. Moskva, Izdatel'stvo Muzyka 1971; ‘Lateinamerikanische Literatur’. *Kultur und Leben* 12 (1961), pp. 16–18.

³¹² Undated, GARF f.9576 op.8 d.7 l.138.

Soviet intelligentsia abroad. Exoticism and revolutionary romanticism in travelogues

Soviet intellectuals had maintained few personal contacts with Latin Americans through Stalinist isolationism. Ilya Ehrenburg was among the small number of Soviets who could travel abroad at all throughout the 1940s and 50s. Being the most prominent, cosmopolitan and internationally recognised intellectual with much experience of the Western world, he served a purpose that may have saved his life during Stalinism: he was sent around Eastern Europe to convey a cultured image of the Soviet Union to the new Soviet satellite states. When, after Stalin's death, Latin America loomed on the Soviet horizon, it was again Ehrenburg who (re-)established contacts and signalled that the Soviet Union was willing to join global intellectual discourses. In 1954, he was sent to Chile to award the Chilean poet Neruda with a Soviet peace medal; later he met old acquaintances, the Brazilian novelist Jorge Amado and the exiled Spanish poets Rafael Alberti and María Teresa León, in neighbouring Argentina. Ehrenburg remembered great relief and excitement at the same time about this first trip of a Soviet intellectual to Latin America in many years. He felt that "the Cold War was drawing to close" while the "the world had broadened up" for him personally, he who had known only Europe and the United States so far.³¹³

With the cautious opening of the Soviet Union from the mid 1950s, Soviet writers, little by little, reconnected to the world abroad. Some ten years later, they were again recognised as intellectuals rather than as political agents and could travel rather easily all around the world. Yevgeny Yevtushenko spent long periods in Chile and was even invited to military ruled Brazil.³¹⁴ In the mid 1950s, however, the first attempts to overcome their isolation were still confronted with serious difficulties and had to break down barriers built up from all sides. Ehrenburg erred, the Cold War was still far from over in 1954: his visit to Santiago de Chile was accompanied by angry anti-Soviet manifestations. The widespread fear of Communism all over the world made it difficult for the Soviets to obtain entry visas, and some air companies even bluntly refused to take them on board. Soviet authorities, too, remained highly suspicious and restrictive. Every Soviet person who wished to travel abroad needed to run through a long procedure to get their exit visa; employers, the Party and the KGB had to give their approval to every applicant.³¹⁵

³¹³ EHRENBURG 1977, pp. III, 476-480; 566.

³¹⁴ JEWGENI JEWTSCHENKO: *Der Wolfspass. Abenteuer eines Dichterlebens*. Berlin, Volk und Welt 2000, p. 187; 23-6-1967, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.998 l.75; 4-1-1966, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.997 l.14.

³¹⁵ ZUBOK 2009, pp. 88-120.

Besides bureaucratic hindrances, there were mental barriers and cultural hurdles to surpass. A lack of qualified translators made communication difficult (later the Soviets would ask their Spanish refugees to help out). And in a more encompassing sense, it was not only linguistic knowledge of the world abroad what was lacking after the long isolation. The Soviets had their notion of Latin America exclusively from books, moreover from books with a certain political leaning. The travellers thus embarked for Latin America with a somewhat naive cultural bias that, in a different context, Edward Said has called a "textual attitude".³¹⁶ Being intellectuals, all the early Soviet travellers to Latin America wrote about their experiences in travelogues or at least short articles. Their writings give an idea of the way they perceived not only the New World, but also their own role in new Soviet internationalism. Their reports and books were published in millions of copies and read by many Soviet citizens and therefore shaped the way common Soviet citizens thought of both Latin America and the role of Soviet internationalism.

Vera Kutejščikova, back then one of the few Spanish speaking employees at the VOKS, went to Mexico in 1956 and – among others – met with Alfonso Reyes.³¹⁷ The Ukrainian author Ljubomir Dmiterko, accompanied by a member of the Academy of Science, followed in late summer that year. They spent three weeks in Argentina, also in order to (re-)establish contacts with local intellectuals and scientists.³¹⁸ Their travel report, a small cheap paperback with many drawings and photos, published both in Ukrainian and Russian, set the standard in format and layout for many more travel reports to come.³¹⁹ They forewent the harsh ideological rhetoric of former publications of the kind – including Dmiterko's own writing during late Stalinism, when he himself had supported the anti-cosmopolitanism campaign. Instead, the new travel reports now devoted more space to emphatic descriptions of the countries they covered, their history, geography, culture and people – albeit not without blaming imperialism for any shortcomings.

Konstantin Simonov made a similar trip to Uruguay, Chile and Argentina a year later. Just as for Dmiterko and Ehrenburg before him, his task was to establish contacts, and he was asked to report on the situation in the Latin American Soviet friendship societies. Simonov, a highly decorated war poet during Stalinism, initially had his problems adjusting to his new duty of courting non-communist intellectuals. Among the many writers he met were Jesualdo Sosa and his wife, the translator Susanna Sosa. For Simonov, they and the entire Uruguayan

³¹⁶ SAID 2007, pp. 92f.

³¹⁷ KUTEJŠČIKOVA 2000, p. 265.

³¹⁸ Spravka, undated, RGANI f.5 op.28 d.463 l.136-139.

³¹⁹ LJUBOMIR DMITERKO: *Pod Južnym Krestom*. Moskva 1958.

Writers' Committee were annoying "rich leftist bourgeois" and he angrily recommended they should never again be invited to the Soviet Union. Other artists, however, and various public figures found Simonov's approval, and he laid the foundation for many subsequent visits to the Soviet Union (see chapter three).³²⁰

In 1958, Aleksej Adžubej, chief editor of the Communist Youth's newspaper *Komsomolskaja Pravda* covered the inauguration of Arturo Frondizi as the new president of Argentina.³²¹ Afterwards, together with Nikolaj Gribachev, chief editor of the journal *Sovetskij Sojus*, Anatolij Sofronov, head of the most important weekly journal *Ogonek*, and two other journalists, they started a long trip through four countries and wrote about their experiences in several books and many contributions to journals.³²²

Most of the time, the group was hosted and guided by local intellectuals. In Buenos Aires, the communist writer Maria Rosa Olivares fed them; Pablo Neruda put them up in Santiago de Chile; and in Uruguay, the old communist historian Francisco Pintos took care of them; only in Panama did the Soviet group have to find their own way.³²³ In his travelogue, Adžubej lionised the possibilities of Latin America, its wonderful peoples and impressive landscapes. Essentially, he liked everything he saw; he welcomed the election of Frondizi ("finally progress and independence for Argentina"), a left-liberal reformer, but certainly no communist. If only, he wrote, there were not the [US] Americans: it was they who had brought poverty and social injustice and years of oppression and backwardness to Latin America. Adžubej told his readers how terrorist US puppet regimes in Guatemala and Cuba (the trip took place before the revolution) suppressed their people. In cultural terms, too, Adžubej, a Jazz aficionado, deplored the influence of the United States. He loved the Argentinean national dance *Cueca* and tried to learn it. When the US rock 'n' roll star Bill Haley performed in his favourite *Cueca* club, Adžubej was appalled that this "fat psychopath" attracted a bigger crowd than his beloved folk dance. He warned of dangerous American cultural imperialism and denounced the young fans as petty bourgeois Philistines. It is noteworthy that Adžubej considered this episode so central for his trip that he named his book *Kueka i modern meščane* ("Cueca and the modern petty bourgeois"). In the world view of

³²⁰ PABLO NERUDA: *Confieso que he vivido*. Barcelona, Plaza & Janés 2001, pp. 300–303; Konstantin Simonov: Nekotorye soobshčenja k otčetu o poezdke v Urugvaj, Čili i Argentinu, 29-12-1957, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.320 l.160-167.

³²¹ ALEKSEJ ADŽUBEJ: *Na raznyh širotach*. Moskva, Pravda 1959, pp. 103–110.

³²² ANATOLIJ SOFRONOV: 'Dobro požalovat' v Čili!'. Moskva 7/5 (1963), pp. 196–204; ALEKSEJ ADŽUBEJ: *Kueka i modern-meščane*. Moskva, Pravda 1959; ADŽUBEJ 1959; NIKOLAJ GRIBAČEV: *Dym nad vulkanom. Očerki o stranach Latinskoj Ameriki*. Moskva, Molodaja Gvardia 1959; ANATOLIJ SOFRONOV: 'Otkrytie Južnoj Ameriki'. *Ogonek* 37 (1958), pp. 9–12.

³²³ ADŠUBEJ 1990, p. 217; ADŽUBEJ 1959, p. 36; ADŽUBEJ 1959, p. 41.

leading Soviet intellectuals such as Adžubej, being truly *kul'turnyj* (“cultivated”) required savouring either highbrow culture or at least sticking to one’s own, national traditions. US cultural influence, to him, meant decadence, loss of national identity, egocentrism and sexual libertinage, and was thus despicable. In a conversation with Haley after the concert, Adžubej let him know of his stance and added dutifully that he did not like abstract art, either. He was certainly right when he added that many elderly Argentineans agreed with him in this respect.³²⁴

In Uruguay, their first impression was one of a peaceful and clean capital city Montevideo: “a deceitful silence”, as Adžubej entitled this chapter. His trained gaze, however, soon found the expected social injustice, poverty and the “almighty US monopolies”. In Uruguay, too, the Soviet group sought contact with local intellectuals: the Senator and newspaper editor Luís Tróccoli, welcomed them for a scholarly debate, and they met several other journalists and artists. The graphic artist Angelo Hernandez agreed to do the artwork for Sofronov’s first travel report in *Ogonek*.³²⁵

On their tour through Chile, a US entrepreneur joined the group. They strongly disagreed, of course, on the impact of US enterprises in Chile, their exploitation of copper and the treatment of the workers.³²⁶ Yet the fact alone that they discussed these issues openly with a representative of the arch enemy shows a major change of Soviet attitudes. Throughout their reports, both authors repeatedly underlined their open dealings with non-communists and even their respect for religious feelings – a respect that believers back in the Soviet Union were completely denied at the time.

On the whole, the undertone in their reports is very optimistic. Adžubej and Sofronov, the latter a notorious conservative watchdog against perceived anti-socialist tendencies in Soviet literature with a past as notorious “cosmopolitan” hunter, led their readers to believe that Latin America was about to burst its chains of imperialism and would overcome its backwardness soon. In his final chapter, Adžubej summed up: the days of the imperialists are numbered, friendship with the Soviet Union is on the increase everywhere, and even the US army based on Cuba will not be able to stop the insurgence of the Latin American peoples.³²⁷

A recurring topic in these as in many other travelogues of the kind is an encounter with unhappy Soviet émigrés. Stanislav Kalesnik, member of a group of Soviet scientists who spent two months in Brazil, did not write much about his scientific endeavours, but instead

³²⁴ ADŽUBEJ 1959, pp. 23f.

³²⁵ ADŽUBEJ 1959, pp. 90–96; SOFRONOV 1958.

³²⁶ SOFRONOV 1963; ADŽUBEJ 1959, pp. 96–103.

³²⁷ JEWTUSCHENKO 2000, p. 187; ADŽUBEJ 1959, p. 61.

described his travels through the country and his encounters with nature, history and people in Brazil. On several occasions he ran into different groups of people who had emigrated from the Soviet Union, a Ukrainian priest, a former general of the White Guards and many war refugees. All, according to Kalesnik, lived miserable lives and regretted bitterly having left the Soviet Union.³²⁸ The Uzbek football team, too, wrote a book about their tour in South America for their fans back home. After a description of the countries visited – and their football tactics – the sportsmen reported how they met Armenians who “cursed the day they left the Soviet Union and followed the rumours of sweet life in the West”.³²⁹

Even more than the travels in relatively developed, more Europeanised Southern America, impressions from countries like Honduras or Bolivia with their indigenous majorities and a living standard below the Soviet one were apt to reinforce with Russian travellers the textbook belief in Soviet superiority and Western malice. Some months after Adžubej and Sofronov, another Soviet writer undertook a long journey across Latin America: Vasilij Čičkov, *Pravda*-correspondent in Mexico, drove several thousand miles through Central America and the Andean countries in late 1958. Like his predecessors, he wrote articles for *Ogonek* and also published a series of books, starting with *Buntujuščaja Zemlja* (“a rebellious land”), about his journeys in late 1958 and early 1959.³³⁰ These countries, largely dependent on US capital and, in Central America, indeed in the grip of US companies, must have appeared to Soviet eyes as prime examples of imperialist exploitation and consequent underdevelopment. Čičkov saw and reported to his Soviet readers an illiteracy rate of 70% in Bolivia, economic and human rights crimes of the *United Fruit* Company in Honduras, *apartheid*-conditions in Panama and showed pictures of *campesinos* in their primitive clothes and accommodations. He climbed down a shaft with local miners, who told him that at least since the nationalisations of 1952 things had become a bit more bearable.

Čičkov’s depiction of Latin America, like that of the other Soviet writers, on the one hand underlined the beauty of the landscape and the dignity of the people – including positive racial stereotypes of the ‘noble savage’ and ‘hot blooded latino’ type.³³¹ On the other hand, it deplored the underdevelopment and made harsh accusations of oppression by the United

³²⁸ STANISLAV KALESNIK: *Po Brazilij. Putevye očerki*. Moskva, Gosizdat geografičeskoj literatury 1958. quote: p. 42.

³²⁹ KRASNICKIJ 1964.

³³⁰ VASILIJ ČIČKOV: *Buntujuščaja zemlja. Putešestvija i vstreči*. Moskva, DetGiz 1961; VASILIJ ČIČKOV: *Pod sozvezdiem južnogo kresto*. Moskva, DetGiz 1960; VASILIJ ČIČKOV: *Zarja nad Kuboj*. Moskva, Izdatel'stvo Instituta Meždunarodnyh Otnošenij 1960; VASILIJ ČIČKOV: ‘V vysokich Andach’. *Ogonek* 24 (1959), pp. 14–16.

³³¹ ČIČKOV 1961, p. 46.

States. The US citizens in his writings were caricatures of capitalists with big cars, nice villas and a constantly insulting manner, including towards him personally. All the depicted misery and poverty notwithstanding, Čičkov's travelogues sparkled with optimism. He reported of uniting workers, of the development of a political consciousness and increasing strikes. The title itself is telling, as it ascribes a revolutionary spirit to the area – even before the outbreak of the Cuban Revolution.

Another popular author of travel reports from Southern America was Oleg Ignat'ev, the former *Sovinform*-head in Mexico and now correspondent to Brasília. Throughout his career, he wrote more than a dozen books and booklets about his journeys in Latin America and Portuguese Africa. Ignat'ev's work found a large readership. Not only did he publish many books and articles in the usual magazines, but his works were published in several editions and translated into many languages of the Union and of Eastern Europe, too.³³² In 1961, he published a commissioned work for the *Znanie* publishing house, a very typical travelogue of the time about a journey from Argentina to Venezuela, colourful, with many drawings, relatively short, cheap and directed to a rather broad audience.³³³ The optimism shown in earlier works prevailed. The readers, who used to “know nothing about Brazil but coffee and football”, learnt about Brasília, the “ultra-modern city”, built by Oscar Niemeyer, a leading character of the Brazilian Communist party. They were told how a nationalised oil industry had led to great progress and economic independence. It is interesting to see how Brazil's history was paralleled with the Soviet Union's. The situation in Brazil during the left progressive government of President João Goulart, according to Ignat'ev, could be likened to the Soviet one after the Civil War. Step-by-step, Brazil now had to nationalise its economy, as the USSR had done, then they would also be able to build a metro, as Moscow had done. Brazil allegedly saw its role model in the development of the Soviet Union.³³⁴

Ignat'ev's parallelisation is a telling example of Soviet internationalist thought at the time; the idea that the Third World would follow the Soviet path was paternalistic and somewhat naive at the same time and had not changed much from the ‘textual attitude’ of the first travellers some years before. Ignat'ev considered Argentina to be in the same schematic category as Brazil: it had nationalised its natural resources, but US monopolies still had too much influence – which explained in his view the poverty of many Argentines.³³⁵ The neighbouring countries Paraguay, Peru and finally Venezuela under the former regime of

³³² OLEG IGNAT'EV: ‘Skripka barabanščika’. *Vokrug Sveta* 9 (1960), pp. 13–16.

³³³ OLEG IGNAT'EV: *Ot Argentiny do Venesuely*. Moskva, Pravda 1961.

³³⁴ IGNAT'EV 1961, pp. 1–23.

³³⁵ IGNAT'EV 1961, p. 57.

dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez served as the counterexample to Brazil. Ignat'ev described the many sick people in the streets, the ubiquitous poverty and the brutality of the US backed military junta in Paraguay. While excoriating the political system, Ignat'ev did not forget to mention some of this country's nicer aspects and continued also the exoticising trajectory of Soviet writing on Latin America: it is a "tropical paradise" with beautiful landscapes – and its folklore was popular all across Latin America and also already in the Soviet Union.³³⁶

Many more of these small booklets of travel reports were available to the Soviet readership from the mid 1950s, and increasingly after the Cuban Revolution had captured the interest of many Soviet citizens. Renowned journalists and writers, but also members of political delegations and of scientific excursions shared their experience abroad.³³⁷ *Kurs na Gavanu* ("tack towards Havana") told the adventures of a steamer crew of oceanographers from Kaliningrad and their research between Argentina and Cuba. It combined the longing for the exotic outland with elements of adventure and science fiction.³³⁸

Like the craze for Latin American music, this fascination was not limited to the inhabitants of the big cities of the Soviet Union. Authors from Tadjikistan or Latvia wrote similar travelogues.³³⁹ Some of the most popular came actually from two Czechoslovakian travellers: the adventures of Jiri Hanzelka and Miroslav Zikmund on their voyages in a Czech *Tatra* car all over Latin America and Africa filled hundreds of hours of radio broadcasts and several books that were all translated into Russian. The most famous one, "From Argentina to Mexico" was even made into a film.³⁴⁰ Several Soviet magazines of the time, namely *Vokrug Sveta* ("around the world"), *Na suše i na more* ("ashore and afloat"), *Novoe Vremja* ("new times") and the aforementioned *Ogonek* ("little flame") served, from the late 1950s, their readership's growing desire for stories and pictures from exotic places. The layout of these journals was colourful, they featured many photographs and they toned down the ideological fervour of former similar publications like *Za Rubežom* ("abroad") with their vitriolic, hyper-ideologised rhetoric. They modelled themselves on US journals like *TIME-LIFE-Magazine* or *Look* and were enormously popular. Compared to Africa and Asia, Latin America has a very prominent position in these magazines. From 1959, the year of the revolution, Cuba takes up

³³⁶ IGNAT'EV 1961, pp. 79–85.

³³⁷ CLISSOLD, ED. 1970, pp. 182–183; RIZA; QUIRK 1968, p. 34; RODIONOV 1963; Spravka o poezke v Brasiliju (1958), undated, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.322 l.56-73; Poezdka M. P. Georgadse v strany Latinskoj Ameriki (1961), RGAKFD #22357; see also chapter one.

³³⁸ IURIJ IVANOV: *Kurs na Gavanu*. Kaliningrad, Kaliningradskoe knižnoe izdatel'stvo 1964.

³³⁹ JUSTAS PALECKIS: *V Meksike. Putevye zametki*. Vilnius 1964.

³⁴⁰ JIRI GANZELKA; MIROSLAV ZIKMUND: *Ot Argentiny do Meksiki*. Moskva, Izdatel'stvo Detskoj Literatury 1961.

the most space, of course, but every single other Latin American country appears from time to time.

These journals were not always looked upon favourably by the Soviet leadership: already in 1958, its focus on international stories earned the editorial staff of *Ogonek* an admonition from above.³⁴¹ But this should not lead to the assumption that these publications, nor probably their readership, were overly critical of the current Soviet system. On the contrary, as already shown, their editors and authors were convinced socialists, in many cases also in leading positions of the Soviet *nomenklatura*. Their first experiences in the Third World did more to affirm their beliefs than to topple them. The reports from the exotic Third World also assured Soviet readers back home that they were on the morally superior – and the solid side of the system conflict. In a veritably Proustian literary move, an author of *Ogonek* shared his impressions from a journey through Colombia in 1962: back home in the safe Russian haven, the savour of a cup of coffee brought back to him the traumatic experience with images of the poverty and the imperialist oppression of the Colombian people.³⁴²

All these travelogues around 1960 had a number of characteristics in common. They all described Latin America with an exoticising admiration for its landscapes and cultures. At the same time, they compassionately depicted the poverty, the social imbalance, squalor, underdevelopment and economic backwardness of Latin American societies. Not one writer failed to blame the United States for this misery, for widespread illiteracy, for the enormous gap between the wealthy and the poor, for cultural imperialism that destroyed national identities, and one Soviet traveller to Brazil found fault with the Yankees even for the publically displayed “sexual licentiousness”.³⁴³

Exploitation and backwardness notwithstanding, all authors are remarkably positive about future developments in Latin America. This optimism was not unfounded; several dictators were overthrown in Latin America at the end of the 1950s, the time when most travelogues were written. The reports local Latin American communists and leftists cabled to Moscow took the same optimistic line: social protests are on the increase, Latin America is bursting its bonds and the semi-colonial system is on the point of collapse.³⁴⁴ Some Soviet authors also referred to the Latin American revolutionary tradition and felt a “revolutionary spirit” across

³⁴¹ Postanovlenie CK KPSS: O ser'eznich nedosdatach v sodержanii žurnala *Ogonek*, 9-9-1958, in: V. Afiani; E. Afanas'eva: *Ideologičeskie komissii CK KPSS 1958-1964. Dokumenty*. Moskva 1998, p. 87-88, quoted from: SUSAN EMILY REID: 'Cold War in the Kitchen. Gender and the De-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev'. *Slavic Review* 61/2 (2002), pp. 211–252, p. 215.

³⁴² IURIJ GVOZDEV: 'Gork'ij kofe Kolumbii'. *Ogonek* 51 (1962), pp. 28–29.

³⁴³ KRASNICKIJ 1964.

³⁴⁴ So does for instance the CIA-toppled Guatemalan ex-premier Jacobo Arbenz in *Pravda*, 26-10-1960.

the continent already before Fidel Castro's march to Havana. A later section will explore, how the Cuban Revolution finally was celebrated as *the* beacon for the liberation of Latin America from century-old oppression.

In the travelogues from continental Latin America, all authors contrasted an allegedly superior Soviet living standard and Soviet technological and infrastructural achievements as role models for the visited countries. More or less explicitly, the message was always that the Soviet way of nationalising the economy and hence gaining true national independence was the key to progress. The perceived backwardness, in particular that of the less industrialised countries of the Americas, endorsed the progressive character of the Soviet state according to their own indicators of technology, industry and science.

While Soviet travellers to Western countries tended to question the official depiction of the Soviet Union and the world, the experience gathered in the Third World rather became a source rather of moral self-confirmation and general high self-esteem throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Soviet travellers to the West may have found that the USSR looked backward upon their return – to those who went to Bolivia it looked like a successful modern industrial state with a very good living standard.

The authors of the travelogues were part of the Soviet intellectual elite, literary writers, journalists and often both. They were supporting elements of a new, de-Stalinized Soviet Union in times of peaceful co-existence, and they were convinced of the prospects of socialism. When these intellectuals, politically socialised in times of Stalinism, went to Latin America (or other parts of the world) for the first time, they only gained new insights and broadened their horizons to some extent. Above all, they filled their already existing categories of thought with new images. A eulogy allegedly given by an elder physician to Adžubej somewhere on his journey symbolises what the Soviets wanted to hear from their Third World friends: “the first satellite in the sky – yours. *Ob*, Moiseev's dancing company – yours. (...), the best pavilion at the Brussels world exposition – yours, the victories at the Olympic games – yours as well, Ojstrach – yours, and no one ever staged the Quijote as humanly and emotionally as you did.”³⁴⁵ To continue the reference to *Don Quijote*: the first Soviet travellers to Latin America in the late 1950s saw themselves as knights fighting for a better world. But, like Don Aleksej Adžubej and his Sancho Panza Anatolij Sofronov, they kept their ideological ‘textual attitude’ and perceived the world still in the schematic categories of their existing book-knowledge – just like the Knight of the Sorrowful

³⁴⁵ ADŽUBEJ 1959, p. 58.

Countenance with his chivalric novels. The Soviets' experience in Latin America only corroborated their belief in the superiority of their own ways. They returned to the USSR to encourage a stronger engagement in the Third World, and the travelogues they wrote were part of this propagation, to political decision makers as well as to the Soviet public.

The successful careers many of the travellers had after their return made them influential advocates for Soviet Third World activities: filmmaker Melor Sturua later became Deputy Foreign Editor for the newspaper *Izvestija*, was an influential member of the "brains-trust" of Soviet foreign policy and a speech-writer for Nikita Khrushchev. Konstantin Simonov was already chief-editor of *Novij Mir* and secretary of the Union of Soviet Writers when he travelled to Latin America; later, he even became a member of the Central Committee of the CPSU. Journalist Aleksej Adžubej was at the time of his travels head of *Komsomolskaja Pravda* and – in informal Soviet power networks certainly just as important – married to Khrushchev's daughter. From 1959, he was chief-editor of *Izvestija*, and as a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and Khrushchev's personal counsellor one of the most influential political figures of the Soviet Union. Adžubej's fellow traveller, Nikolaj Gribačev, was editor of the journal *Sovetskij Sojus* for almost 50 years, secretary of the Union of Soviet writers, candidate for the Central Committee and eventually head of the Supreme Soviet. Sofronov remained loyal to Latin America and became head of the newly founded Spanish language radio station *Progreso* from 1964.³⁴⁶

For Soviet readers, the travelogues satisfied a growing curiosity about the world abroad and combined it with a political message. Colourful with many pictures, relatively short, cheap and published in large numbers, they reached a broad audience back home and carried their internationalist spirit and self-confirming attitude across to common Soviet citizens. Adžubej's books alone all had a six-figure circulation, and many travelogues were re-printed in second editions. Together with the documentary and feature films and the musical folklore, the travelogues established the view the broad Soviet population had of Latin America. Not only did these books entertain and inform their readers about the history and current cultural and political affairs of a hitherto little known area of the world, their function was also to assure the Soviets they were on the right track themselves, to showcase the admiration they ostensibly got from the exploited peoples of the earth, and condemn the evil intentions of US backed imperialism.

³⁴⁶ *Izvestija*, 24-7-1964.

The new Soviet internationalism allowed authors and readers alike to combine their fascination for the exotic outland with a political self-affirmation of their own superiority. In the late 1950s, early 1960s, the Third World was an important momentum of the self-conception of parts of the intellectual Soviet elite and they shared it in their books and articles with millions of Soviet readers. The impressions they got on their travels and conveyed back home were ideologically determined, but the prevalence of poverty, social injustice, oppression and exploitation in many Latin American states was real enough to support their world view considerably.

‘Magic’ ousting ‘Socialist’ Realism. Latin America in Soviet belles lettres

Latino-music, exotic films and the first travelogues from the Americas rekindled a fascination also among fictional writers. The Lithuanian poet Vytautas Sirijos-Gira wrote his first novel, *Buenos Airés*, in 1956, in which the Argentinean capital was a chiffre for pre-war Kaunas, his own home town. The Russian Jurij Slepuchin already had some firsthand experience of the Americas: he was a displaced person after his incarceration in a German prisoner of war camp during the Second World War. After the war, he emigrated to Argentina and wrote his first books in Spanish, but, in 1957, decided to move back to the Soviet Union, where he finally had some success with a series of novels on Latin American topics. *Džoanna Alarika* (“Juana Alarica”), a tragic tale of a young girl in Guatemala during the 1954 putsch, appeared in 1958. In his 1961 novel *U čerty zakata* (“at the edge of sunset”), motifs of Slepuchin’s own odyssey were mixed with descriptions of Argentina and most of all Buenos Aires. His alter ego in the book, a talented French artist of the realist school, does not find recognition for his work in Western Europe, where abstract art dominates. He decides to seek happiness and fulfilment in South America.³⁴⁷ Julij Annenkov's *Šachterskij senator* (“the miners’ senator”) of 1962 is a fictional novel featuring non-fictive Pablo Neruda. It combined Neruda’s poetry with photographs from Chile and made-up stories of his encounters with ordinary people, who adore him – strikingly similar to Antonio Skármeta’s *Ardiente Paciencia* 20 years later, which was adapted in the famous movie *Il Postino*.³⁴⁸ Poems, too, reflected the re-discovery of the Americas: the translator and lyricist Margarita Aliger, who went on a delegation journey to

³⁴⁷ JURIJ SLEPUCHIN: *U čerty zakata*. Leningrad, Lenizdat 1961.

³⁴⁸ JULIJ ANNEKOV: *Šachterskij senator*. Moskva, GosIzDetLit 1962.

Latin America in 1963, put her Chilean experience into a chapbook called *Čilijskoe leto* (“a summer in Chile”) two years later.

Besides this handful of novels and poetry collections, a considerable number of shorter tales on Latin America found their way into Soviet literary journals. Oleg Ignat’ev, the correspondent in Brasília, also had a vocation for *belles lettres*. His *Skripka barabanščika* (“the drummer’s fiddle”) is a novella about Venezuelan lovers Osvaldo and Katia and their struggle against the stooges of the dictator Jiménez.³⁴⁹ Also Vladimir Kuz’miščev, a historian at the Moscow Institute of Latin America (see chapter five), wrote several historical novels on Latin American subjects. His *Tajny žrecov maja* (“the secrets of the Maya priests”), and *Carstvo synov Inkov* (“the realm of the sons of the Incas”) found an enthusiastic young readership from the end of the 1960s till long after the end of the Soviet Union. In their representation of Latin America, these fictional works followed the same pattern as the travelogues: they mixed a fascinated view of exotic peoples and landscapes with a more politicised depiction of exploitation and revolutionary spirit.

The world abroad had an increasing impact on Soviet cultural production from the mid 1950s not only via *Soviet* writers. Works of *foreign* authors and artists were published and exhibited in ever larger numbers, too. Western modernist art and literature had a hard time as it was profoundly disliked at least by Soviet authorities (and, just as in West, probably by the majority of the population as well). African and Asian literary cultures were, mentally not spatially, much further away and therefore not easily accessible for a mass readership. Latin America filled the gap: as early as 1959, the number of works by Latin American authors translated into Russian exceeded 1500.³⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the Soviet Association of Authors demanded the publication of more Latin American works in the Soviet Union and put together a series of anthologies.³⁵¹

Already since the 1930s, two Latin American authors had been particularly influential on the Soviet literary scene. Cuban author Nicolás Guillén combined the European literary tradition with Afro-Cuban elements in his *mestizaje* poetry. His work, translated by Ilya Ehrenburg, was widespread in the Soviet Union long before Castro’s Revolution made him the Cuban national poet. Guillén enjoyed tremendous popularity not only among Russians, but all across the Union. By the mid 1960s, his poems had been translated into Bashkir, Lithuanian, Tatar,

³⁴⁹ IGNAT’EV 1960.

³⁵⁰ JOSEPH GREGORY OSWALD: ‘Contemporary Soviet Research on Latin America’. *Latin American Research Review* 1/2 (1966), pp. 77–96, pp. 77–96; MIGUEL ANGEL ASTURIAS: ‘Die russische Literatur in Lateinamerika’. *Kultur und Leben* 3 (1958), pp. 46–49.

³⁵¹ Ob izdanii knig latinoamerikanskich pisatelej v 1958-1960 gg., undated, RGALI f.631 op.26 d.4380 1.1-2.

Rumanian (for the Moldavians), Latvian, Chuvash, Estonian, Armenian, Tajik and Georgian.³⁵² Even more important for the Soviets was the godfather of Latin American poetry in the 20th century: the Chilean Pablo Neruda not only saw all his works translated and distributed throughout the Soviet Union, he experienced worship close to a personality cult. He was highly celebrated on his several visits to the Soviet Union, and after his death a library and a Spanish language high school in Moscow were named after him.³⁵³ Even in the early 1980s, Neruda (just like Victor Jara) was celebrated in a rock opera based on his libretto *Splendour and Death of Joaquin Murieta*, written by Pavel Gruško, and made into a movie by Vladimir Grammatikov.

Both Guillén and Neruda, however, were convinced party-line communists. Their celebration in the Soviet Union did therefore not come as a big surprise. Their work of course continued to be published – as did writings by other, much less gifted communist authors. From the mid 1950s, however, also non-communist Latin American authors were published and read widely in the USSR. To meet a growing demand, the Soviet publishing house for *belles lettres* established its own Latin American department – as did the Soviet Association of Writers under the leadership of Elena Kolčina.³⁵⁴ The *boom* of Latin American books began with belated translations of works written in the 1920s. The classic of Magic Realism, *Doña Barbara* by Rómulo Gallegos, for a short time president of Venezuela in 1948, was finally published in Moscow in 1959. The first edition of 150,000 copies was sold out within a few days.³⁵⁵ It was reviewed very positively in Soviet literary journals, which irritated a Venezuelan communist, who, in a letter to Moscow, felt the need to snipe that Gallegos was a staunch anti-communist.³⁵⁶ The Colombian writer José Eustasio Rivera sold over 300,000 copies of his 1924 novel *The Vortex* in two weeks, when it was finally published in 1961, which made it the most successful work of fiction in the Soviet Union at its time.³⁵⁷

³⁵² LEV OKINSEVIC; ROBERT G. CARLTON: *Latin America in Soviet Writings. A Bibliography*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press 1966.

³⁵³ A. SCHPETNY: 'Wir lernen Spanisch'. *Kultur und Leben* 10 (1971), p. 39; the so-called *specškoly* were Soviet high schools where some classes were conducted in a foreign language. They were especially popular among families of the urban intelligentsia, who were ambitious about their offspring's careers. The Spanish one in Moscow was *Specškol No. 25; Čile - Rossija. 100 let diplomatičeskich otnošenij 1909-2009*. Moskva 2009, p. 5.

³⁵⁴ 'Lateinamerikanische Literatur in der Sowjetunion'. *Kultur und Leben* 3 (1958), p. 46; VALCARCEL 1963, p. 211.

³⁵⁵ VERA KUTEISHCHIKOVA: 'Latin American Literature in the Soviet Union'. *Moscow News* 48 (1960), p. 7.

³⁵⁶ Undated, RGALI f.631 op.26 d.4397 l.1-3.

³⁵⁷ GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ: *De viaje por los países socialistas. 90 días en la 'Cortina de Hierro'*. Bogotá, La Oveja Negra 1982, p. 162.

Bookstores and publishing houses were not able to supply the growing demand for Latin American literature with their translations and printings.³⁵⁸

The Latin American Friendship Societies helped to find translators and to establish contacts with authors – and they gave Spanish classes, so Soviet readers could read the originals. Latin American literature was selling “like hot cakes”, as Vera Kutejščikova put it.³⁵⁹ Between 1959 and 1964, at least a further 425 books by contemporary authors followed.³⁶⁰ The most important Soviet journal for international literature, *Inostrannaja Literatura* (“foreign literature”), acknowledged the trend and published a special issue on current developments in Latin American writing in 1960.³⁶¹ One of the most popular authors throughout the Soviet Union was the Brazilian Jorge Amado, whose novel *Subterraneos de Libertad* (“submarines of freedom”) nearly everyone in the country knew. The Soviet author Michail Apletin, in a letter to Amado, assured him of his popularity and quoted from many letters the Soviet Association of Authors had received, expressing their admiration for Amado’s work.³⁶²

By the end of the decade, the number of Latin American literary works distributed in the Soviet Union already exceeded five million copies, even before the most influential Latin American novel of the time found its way to Soviet readership.³⁶³ The publication of Gabriel García Márquez’ *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, firstly in *Inostrannaja Literatura* in 1971, had an enormous impact on Soviet literary life. The Russian translation and commentary, not an easy task considering the numerous specific Colombian expressions and the poetic language of the novel, was done by Valerij Stolbov and found widespread approval.³⁶⁴ The already questioned socialist realism came under severe attack from its magical counterpart, which presented Latin America as the “Arcadia of revolutionary socialism”³⁶⁵ – and fostered the image of Latin America as a very exotic place. More than one million copies of García Márquez’ *opus magnum* were sold in the Soviet Union, and even though some passages were considered too erotic and fell victim to puritan censors, Soviet readers were overwhelmed by what they read. García Márquez repeated many times over the years the anecdote of an elderly Russian woman who copied the whole novel word for word by hand, because she

³⁵⁸ N.N. 1961.

³⁵⁹ KUTEISHCHIKOVA 1960, p. 7.

³⁶⁰ OKINSEVIC; CARLTON 1966, pp. 198–220.

³⁶¹ *Inostrannaja Literatura* 12 (1960).

³⁶² Pis’mo Michaila Apletina Žoržy Amado, undated, RGALI f.631 op.26 d.4461 1.3-4.

³⁶³ RIZA; QUIRK 1968.

³⁶⁴ Undated comment by co-editor Tomaševskij, RGALI f.631 op.26 d.5324.

³⁶⁵ WALTER BRUNO BERG; MICHAEL RÖSSNER: *Lateinamerikanische Literaturgeschichte*. Stuttgart, Weimar, Metzler 2007, p. 529.

could not believe what she had just read. Her explanation: “I needed to know who had gone crazy, the author or me.”³⁶⁶

The fascination with the Latin American novel continued throughout the 1970s, parallel with a similar *boom* in the West. Juan Rolfo’s *Pedro Paramo* came out in 100,000 copies in its first print in 1970. By the mid 1970s, books by Mexican authors alone exceeded 2 million, the successful writings by Carlos Fuentes contributing to this high volume most of all.³⁶⁷ The reason for this popularity was similar to that for Mexican and Argentinean films since the 1950s or for the visual art of muralists Diego Rivera and David Siqueiros: they all combined a realist form (still in 1961, the Latin American commission of the Soviet authors’ association declared: “the fight for realism is the fight for art as such!”³⁶⁸) with a mix of social criticism and exoticism in the content – an aesthetic that suited both Soviet officials and audience. Readers loved the exotic worlds these novels and images unfolded – censors loved the fact that these foreign authors upheld the official Soviet view of the rest of the world as a place of oppression, exploitation and imminent revolution.

State run publishing houses and political interference in the process of cultural production do not allow us to view high numbers of editions as evidence of actual popular appreciation. Yet the impressions of foreigners confirm the popularity of Latin American writing in the Soviet Union completely. Hardly any of the many visitors from the Americas fail to mention the widespread deep knowledge Soviet citizens had about Latin American literature. When the Chilean author and politician Raúl Aldunate was shown around Moscow State University in 1959, his 17 year young guide lectured him: “the Yankees do not let you study under good conditions, because they do not want you to become too educated. It was very similar with us under the Tsar: the gentry did everything they could to keep the peasants from studying.” Aldunate was ready to contradict but was dumbstruck when the girl endorsed: “it is true, I have read *El roto* and *La Pampa* [sociocritical novels from the 1920s and 30s by the Chileans Joaquín Edwards Bello and Víctor Domingo Silva]!”³⁶⁹ The Dominican student Ramón Alberta Ferreras recalled that the Brazilian playwright Guilherme Figuerreira had huge success in the Soviet Union and that literally everyone knew the books of Jorge Amado and Gabriel

³⁶⁶ KUTEJŠČIKOVA 2000, p. 324; GENE BELL-VILLADA: *García Márquez. The Man and his Work*. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press 1990, p. 4.

³⁶⁷ KUTEJŠČIKOVA 2000, p. 328; SAPATA; KULIDŽANOV 1977.

³⁶⁸ Inostrannaja komissija sojusa pisatelej SSSR, materialy po Latinskoj Amerike i Ispanii, 1-5-1961, RGALI f.631 op.26 d.4381 l.1-12.

³⁶⁹ RAÚL ALDUNATE: *En Moscú*. Santiago de Chile, Ultramar, p. 72.

García Márquez.³⁷⁰ And García Márquez himself remembered being slack-jawed after a young Soviet, who had approached him during a visit on Moscow's Gorky-Prospect, recited long poems by the not particularly well known Colombian poet Rafael Combo over some glasses of beer they shared.³⁷¹

Heroes of their time. Fidel, Che and the Cuban Revolution in Soviet perception

The impacts of Latin America on Soviet cultural life were manifold, but they would have remained a side issue of Soviet cultural history without one decisive event on New Year's Eve 1958. After several years of guerrilla struggle in the woods of Eastern Cuba, the revolutionaries around Fidel Castro expelled the dictator Fulgencio Batista and assumed power in Havana. Based on their perceptions of Latin America as an exploited continent in upheaval, Soviet politicians and intellectuals saw the Cuban Revolution as proof that the world was successfully going the Soviet way of anti-imperialist struggle and overcoming economic backwardness. The numerous influences of the USSR on Cuba, and the "Sovietisation" of the island have been subject to many historical assessments (see introduction). This section will take a look in the other direction, on the impact of Cuba back on the Soviet Union, on its politicians, intellectuals and ordinary citizens. What they heard, saw and read of the events in the Caribbean triggered an enormous craze for Cuba at all levels of Soviet society and catalysed the political and cultural enthusiasm for the entire Latin America.

Situation reports by the Cuban Communist party and translations of the *New York Times*' coverage had kept Soviet officials informed about the activities of the Castro group.³⁷² But initially, the Soviets kept a low profile, hesitant to provoke the near neighbour in the North, and sent only journalists. Short visits by *Pravda*'s Mexican correspondent Vasilij Čičkov and the KGB-affiliated TASS-reporter in Mexico Aleksandr Alekseev in October and November were the only contacts, until the Cubans themselves asked for the Soviet exhibition in Mexico

³⁷⁰ RAMÓN ALBERTO FERRERAS: *¿Infierno? 1974-1980: Vida Estudiantil en la URSS*. Santo Domingo, Editorial del Nordeste 1981, p. 410.

³⁷¹ GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ 1982, pp. 179f.

³⁷² E.g.: US newspaper clippings collection, 8-2-1957, RGANI f.5 op.28 d.498 l.29; O položenii v Kube, 27-10-1956, RGANI f.5 op.28 d.440 l.76-79.

to be held in Havana as well – official diplomatic relations would only be established almost a year later.³⁷³

These journalists wrote accounts of their trips to Cuba, and they took pictures: the bearded revolutionaries with their cigars and sunny beaches with bikini beauties and palm trees suddenly appeared everywhere in the Soviet mass media. On the occasion of the exhibition, Genrich Borovik, reporter for *Ogonek*, and part of Mikojan's entourage, interviewed Fidel Castro and wrote a – later famous – photo story about Cuba for his magazine. His photographs showed Che Guevara admiring models of Soviet accomplishments in the exhibition, but also everyday scenes of life on the island. Meeting Ernest Hemingway in his Havana exile, Borovik presented him with a model of the *Sputnik* and told him how popular his books were among the young generation in the Soviet Union (what he did not tell him was that they had actually been banned between 1945 and 1955, when Ilya Ehrenburg finally pushed through publication of *The Old Man and the Sea* in *Inostrannaja Literatura*).³⁷⁴ Borovik also wrote a booklet of episodes from his experiences on his first trip to Cuba.³⁷⁵ That the first edition came out to the tune of 150,000 copies gives an idea of how popular the island and its tropical imagery had immediately become among Soviet citizens and intellectuals.

In the years until mid 1962, the jet set of Soviet writers made their pilgrimage to the revolutionary island, and most of them wrote about their impressions for Soviet readers back home. Among the Soviet vanguard was a group of journalists lead again by Aleksej Adžubej, who went to Cuba full of “romantic notions of the Cuban events”, as he remembered later.³⁷⁶ Sergej Smirnov, former head of the literary journal *Literaturnaja Gazeta* toured Cuba with the poet (and Neruda translator) Semen Kirsanov.³⁷⁷ Dmitri Gorjunov was one of the most influential journalists of his time, former head of *Komsomolskaja Pravda*, deputy editor of *Pravda* and now president of the news agency TASS. He wrote about his 1961 Cuban trip in a series of articles in *Ogonek*, which proved so successful that they were collected in a book, again with the impressive circulation of 150,000 copies in the first edition. Vera Kutejščikova felt the magnetic effect Cuba and Castro had on her when she came to the island in 1961.³⁷⁸ As Cuba became the Mecca of Soviet intelligentsia, writer Daniil Granin, famous for his novels

³⁷³ MIKOJAN 2006, pp. 17–20; JORGE CASTAÑEDA: *Compañero. The Life and Death of Che Guevara*. New York, Vintage 1997, pp. 173f.

³⁷⁴ JEWUSCHENKO 2000; GENRICH BOROVIK: ‘Pylajušij ostrov’. *Ogonek* 7 (1960), pp. 4–5.

³⁷⁵ GENRICH BOROVIK: *Kak eto bylo na Kube*. Moskva, Pravda 1961.

³⁷⁶ ADŠUBEJ 1990, p. 285.

³⁷⁷ SERGEJ SMIRNOV: *Poezdka na Kubu*. Moskva, Sovetskij pisatel' 1962; SURKOV 1961.

³⁷⁸ KUTEJŠČIKOVA 2000, p. 208.

about Soviet intellectuals, travelled there himself, met with Cuban artists and authors – and uncritically embraced everything he saw in his booklet *Ostrov Molodych* (“island of the youth”).³⁷⁹

All these early Soviet texts about the island displayed a great enthusiasm and optimism for the prospects of an independent and industrialised Cuba. It is also interesting to see that Soviet journalists, initially, saw the Cuban Revolution not as a surprising and exceptional case, but as the somewhat coincidentally first Latin American country to bust the chains of imperialism – others would follow soon. Gorjunov introduced his book with a quote by Neruda about the liberation of the Latin American peoples. He also writes of all the visitors from the Latin American continent, who would soon carry the revolution to their home countries.³⁸⁰

The revolution in the far-away Caribbean filled the imagination of a generation of Soviet writers, and Cuba left its mark on Soviet cultural life in the early 1960s. The journalist Borovik felt so inspired during his first stay in Cuba that, upon his return home, he ventures into literary writing. He wrote the script for Roman Karmen’s historical epic film *Pylajuščij ostrov* (“the blazing island”); and, in his novel *Povest’ o zelenoj jaščerice* (“novella about the green lizard”, the poetic description of Cuba on a map, 1963), he combined short stories that romanticised episodes of recent Cuban history. It was brought out in a huge print run of 215,000 copies.³⁸¹

Vasilij Čičkov, the *Pravda* correspondent in Mexico, made a similar journey from journalism to fiction. His 1961 children’s book *Pepe, malen’kij kubinec* (“Pepe, the little Cuban”) told the story of the Havana street kid Pepe and his pals Negrito, Armando and Luis, with many detailed descriptions of Cuba and especially Havana. The boys cannot afford to go to school and try to make a living through odd jobs and by cleaning the shoes of tourists from the United States. Their lives only change when Fidel assumes power. Pepe and the gang become partisans in the street fights of Havana. Having fought victoriously, they finally get what they apparently always wanted: they can go back to school or get decent jobs and live happily thereafter. In spite of the half-violent, half-didactical story, Soviet youngsters seem to have liked the book. *Detizdat*, the Soviet publishing house for children’s literature, sold 265,000 copies in two editions by 1963.³⁸² It was also adapted into a theatre play, *Mal’čiški iz Gavany* (“the boys from Havana”), and Konstantin Listov set poems by Guillén to music, which were

³⁷⁹ DANIL GRANIN: *Ostrov molodych. Rasskazy o Kube*. Leningrad, Lenizdat 1962.

³⁸⁰ DMITRI GORJUNOV: *Zdrastvui, Kuba!* Moskva, Pravda 1961, p. 32; Soviet regional experts at the time shared this view: LAVRIČENKO 1961, p. 97.

³⁸¹ GENRICH BOROVIK: *Povest’ o zelenoj jaščerice*. Moskva, Molodaja Gvardia 1963.

³⁸² VASILIJ ČIČKOV: *Pepe, malen’kij Kubinec. Povest’*. Moskva, DetGiz 1961.

played during the enactment. The book edition even featured a speech by Fidel Castro to the children of the world.³⁸³

Not only youngsters had the chance to see interpretations of the Cuban Revolution on Soviet stages. The Georgian playwright Georgij Mdivani had been in the crowd of Soviet pilgrims to Cuba. Overwhelmed like all the others, he wrote the three-act play *Den' roždenija Terezy* ("Theresa's birthday"). It premièred in Moscow's distinguished Pushkin-Theatre in early 1962 and came to be the most popular of several Soviet dramas about the Cuban Revolution. The storyline takes place in a village on Southern Cuba's *Playa Girón* ("Bay of Pigs") in April 1961. Teresa Fernandez is celebrating her 40th birthday with her children and the US Artist Adlev Hamilton, a veteran of the Spanish Civil War. Music is playing, people dance, joke and praise the accomplishments of the revolution, when suddenly counterrevolutionaries land on the beach. The group flees to hide in the basement of a former US luxury hotel, but Hamilton is shot on the run by a traitor from within. Finally, Fidel and the Cuban Revolutionary Army defeat the invaders. Theresa enters with an impassionate final monologue, a desperate *J'accuse* to the reactionaries, who would not let the Cubans live in freedom. Ten times in a row she screams "Why do you kill our children?" – and the curtain falls.

The play combined the elements the Soviets thought they knew about Latin America at the time. Happy, music- and dance-loving peoples are harassed by imperialists, as had been the case in the Spanish Civil War. Unlike their government, some US citizens actually support the Cuban Revolution, as represented by the Hemingway's *alter ego* Hamilton. In Cuba, the imperialists have been expelled, the former luxury hotel is now a dwelling house. But people still have to be on the alert for counterrevolutionaries and traitors, as the real invasion of CIA backed troops at the Bay of Pigs had shown. It was good that the Cubans had such a brave heroic leadership, but did not Theresa's screams also call for anti-imperialist help from the Soviet Union?

Mdivani and the officials of the GKKS were keen to know what their new Cuban friends thought of the play. They invited representatives of the Cuban Ministry of Education to see the premièred. The answer they got was a polite slamming: Paco Alonso, head of the theatre department in the Cuban ministry, wrote a letter to GKKS-president Georgij Žukov. After some niceties, he criticised the play heavily: the music they used was not Cuban but *meringue* from the Dominican Republic; the revolutionaries were presented as pretentious rum-boozing

³⁸³ VASILIJ ČIČKOV: *Mal'čiški iz Gavany*. Moskva, DetGiz 1963.

bouncers instead of the humble and restrained human beings they actually were; and the depiction of the Cubans, who would never address their acquaintances with *Señor* or *Señorita*, was full of stereotypes. As in various clichéd depictions of others in (not only Soviet) art, these shortcomings did no harm to the play's popularity. It was considered a success and republished ten years later.³⁸⁴

On an even larger scale than the playwrights, Soviet poets caught fire in the Cuban Revolution. For a 1961 volume of verse, editors Nikolaj Anciferov and Sergej Polikarpov put together 44 of the most renowned lyricists they could get hold of. *Tebe Kuba! Stikhi* ("to you, Cuba! Poems"), they called their volume. More than a hundred poems celebrated the heroism of Fidel and Che, praised the beauty of Cuba and its *guajiras* ("girls") and, full of pathos, pledged their solidarity. Older poets, such as Anisim Krongaus in a poem to his son, *Synu*, remembered their fascination with Spain in their own childhood. One day, the poem goes, the son might remember his "first Romance" just as his father had dreamt of the exotic places of Madrid and Catalonia. Aleksej Adžubej did not contribute pompous poems, but he, too, remembered the romanticism about Spain in his 1930s childhood, when children would wear Spanish berets and play fascists and republicans – their variant of cops and robbers.³⁸⁵ Lev Chalif, too, drew a continuity from the Spanish Civil War to the Cuban Revolution to the anti-imperial struggles in Africa. What had failed in the 1930s was now finally going the Soviet way. As Dmitrij Kovalev put it in his poem *Echo*: "the echo of our Baltic *Aurora* goes around the world. Greetings Africa! Greetings far-off Cuba!"³⁸⁶

The topos of the spreading *revolution* was joined by the topos of *love* in the writings of many poetically inspired Soviet writers: Aleksandr Prokroev's heart was set on fire for Cuba (*Ognennoe Serdce*, "flaming heart"); Marija Borisova was, after some doubts, ultimately convinced that she had fallen in love with Cuba (*Ja ljublju tebjja, Kuba*, "I love you, Cuba"); for Gennadi Maslennikov, Cuba was "all my love". Yevtushenko asked Havana like a lover in bed: *Gavana, mne ne spitsia, a tebe?* ("I can't sleep, can you?"). One of the comments US fair hosts and hostesses most often heard at their exhibitions in the Soviet Union was why they did not share this intimate compassion for Castro and Cuba.³⁸⁷ The young representatives of the United States probably did not grasp that there was a dimension to the Soviet craze for

³⁸⁴ 27-2-1962, GARF f.9518 d.334 l.101; GEORGIJ MDIVANI: *Den' roždenija Terezy*. Moskva, Izdatel'svo Iskusstvo 1962.

³⁸⁵ ADSHUBEJ 1990; for the perception of the Spanish Civil War see also: KARL SCHLÖGEL: *Terror und Traum. Moskau 1937*. München, Hanser 2008, pp. 136–152.

³⁸⁶ NIKOLAJ ANCIFEROV; SERGEJ POLIKARPOV (EDS.): *Tebe, Kuba. Stichi*. Moskva, Sovetskij pisatel' 1961.

³⁸⁷ VAJL'; GENIS 2001, p. 59; SORENSEN 1968, p. 200; GENNADI MASLENNIKOW: 'Kuba - meine ganze Liebe'. *Kultur und Leben* 12 (1966), pp. 36–37.

Cuba that had little to do with communism: Cuba was not only a geostrategic conquest, but the Soviets' very own island of love, an erotic utopia found in imaginations throughout European cultural history. Kythera, the Greek island of Aphrodite's temple was the godmother; the Romans knew the legend of an *insula divina* somewhere beyond the Pillars of Hercules in the open Atlantic, Boccaccio and Torquato Tasso imagined mythical *isole felice*, the Portuguese seafarers fought the austerity on board their ships with stories of the *ilha namorada*. Thomas More's *Utopia* was an island in the Atlantic; later his English countrymen would fantasise about exotic and erotic adventures on Caribbean islands. The French colonial name for the South Sea island Tahiti was *Nouvelle Cythère*; even before Wilhelmine Germans finally got their own colonies, they dreamt about erotic libertinage on oceanic islands in pompous literature.³⁸⁸ Russia, now a world power in its own right, got Cuba.

The translator Pavel Gruško, who spent two years on the Soviet island of love, joined the chorus of cheering lyricists in a series of his own and translated poems about Cuba.³⁸⁹ But of all Soviet writers, no one was as enthusiastic and prolific as Yevtushenko, the celebrated young poet of the Thaw period and “voice of this generation”³⁹⁰. Full of scorn for the old cultural officials in Moscow, he adored Fidel Castro, “who back then was young and full of charm”, as he remembered later.³⁹¹ He travelled three times to Cuba in the early 1960s, learnt Spanish and contributed not only poems to Ancifero's anthology, but published dozens more in several journals. He hailed Fidel and Che as “Mozarts of the Revolution” and the revolution as “Beauty Queen”.³⁹² When Castro gave a speech on the *Placa de la Revolución* in Havana on the occasion of the visit of Yuri Gagarin, Yevtushenko was in the crowd. A young Cuban mother next to him began to breastfeed her baby – an epiphanic moment for him, which resulted in the ponderous poem “On a rally in Havana”.³⁹³ His *opus magnum* on the Cuban Revolution was *Ja – Kuba. Poema v Proze* (“I am Cuba. A poem in prose”). For 87 pages (!), he depicted the prerevolutionary island, teased the decadent US tourists, portrayed the Cuban carnival and celebrated its music and its beautiful girls. The style is remarkably different from the content and very particular. In a monotonous staccato every verse begins

³⁸⁸ DIETER RICHTER: *Der Süden. Geschichte einer Himmelsrichtung*. Berlin, Wagenbach 2009; KOEBNER, PICKERODT, EDS. 1987, p. 241.

³⁸⁹ PAVEL GRUŠKO: ‘Licom k Kube. Stichi’. *Družba Narodov* 1 (1965), pp. 139–145.

³⁹⁰ N.N. 1962.

³⁹¹ JEWUSCHENKO 2000, p. 227.

³⁹² EVTUŠENKO 1962, pp. 127–187; one third of this large volume of poems is dedicated to Cuba, the revolution and Fidel Castro.

³⁹³ EVGENIJ EVTUŠENKO: ‘Stichi’. *Sovetskaja Literatura* 10 (1962), pp. 147–152.

with the subject, there are no conjunctions in the whole poem, only breaks every fifth verse and now and then direct speech. The end sets a pathetic climax:

I am Cuba.
You can kill a man
Hundreds, Thousands
10,000 or 100,000
But to kill a people
That is impossible.
Patria o muerte!
Venceremos!³⁹⁴

Yevtushenko's epic poem was used for a Soviet-Cuban film production also called *Ja Kuba/Soy Cuba*. Starring Cuban amateur actors it tells in four episodes of the oppression and of the liberation struggle of the Cuban people. Enormous technical efforts were made for the film that resulted in spectacular camera work with incredibly long tracking shots. In the end, the Soviet film team around director Mikhail Kalatozov and cameraman Sergej Urusevskij spent almost two years in Cuba. Like most Soviet intellectuals, they had profound sympathy for the Cuban Revolution and they considered *Soy Cuba* as their "contribution to the anti-imperialist struggle" (Kalatozov). Camera operator Aleksandr Kal'catyj later remembered: "we knew little of Cuba, its history, even where it was located. But we were enthusiastic about a revolution with a human face, ostensibly much less cruel (...). Later we came to know more and our opinion changed, but at this time we were completely overwhelmed." The further history of the film and its crew is tragic. Kal'catyj, after two years in Cuba, upon his return to Moscow was unable to reintegrate into the less exotic Soviet everyday life and finally fled to the West. The film itself was the most expensive flop in the history of the Soviet cinema. It was shown only once in Moscow in 1964, where the audience found it too arty, and officials disliked it for its display of a "tropical eroticism" and libertine US lifestyle in prerevolutionary Cuba. The Cubans did not like it for its cumbersome pathos. "No soy Cuba" was the titles used by *Hoy*, the newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party – "I am not Cuba".³⁹⁵ The film reels disappeared in Soviet archives and were re-discovered only in the

³⁹⁴ EVGENIJ EVTUŠENKO: 'Ja - Kuba. Poema v proze'. *Znamja* 3 (1963), pp. 3–89.

³⁹⁵ VICENTE FERRAZ: *Soy Cuba, O Mamute Siberiano* 2005; ENRIQUE PINEDA BARNET: 'Ein sowjetisch-kubanischer Film'. *Neue Zeit* 10 (1962), pp. 16–17.

1990s by US filmmaker Martin Scorsese. Today, the film is considered a classic of world cinema.

The next Soviet-Cuban co-production came only many years later and was less arty. The adaptation of Thomas Mayne Reid's novel "The Headless Horseman" (*Vsadnik bez Golovy*, 1972) was filmed by Vladimir Vajňstok on Cuba. The pathos of *Soy Cuba* gave way to suspense and romance in a Mexican setting – and Soviet youth loved it. While artistic cinema celebrating the Cuban Revolution did not appeal to a broad audience, music certainly did. On the occasion of Fidel Castro's first visit to the Soviet Union in 1963, the lyricists Sergej Grebennikov and Nikolaj Dobronravov and the musician Aleksandra Pachmutova composed the now classic Soviet tune *Kuba – ljubov' moja* ("Cuba is my love"). The lyrics glorified both the heroism of the revolutionaries and the beauty of the "island of the red sunset" (*ostrov zari bagrovoj*); the music is very catchy, albeit closer to a Russian wartime song than to Cuban Mambo. The most famous Soviet crooners like Josif Kobzon and Muslim Magomaeв included the song in their repertoires, and Kobzon even starred in a musical of the same name written in 1963 by Pavel Pičugin and Azerbaijani Rauf Gadžiev (both of whom had been to Cuba themselves). Russian ballet dancers slipped into uniforms in the style of the Cuban revolutionaries, wore fake beards and toted machine guns according to the choreography. Kobzon, who in terms of music, popularity and alleged connections to the mafia has often been compared to Frank Sinatra, later also became the most famous interpreter of the *Ballada o Će Gevary*, ("ballade of Che Guevara"), written by the Belorussian composers Gennadij Buravkin and Igor' Lučenok. Another musical, the *Kubinskaja Novella* ("Cuban novella") followed, and Viktor Vanslov composed an entire opera called *Patria o muerte* ("fatherland or death").³⁹⁶

Another opera on Cuban events was written by Konstantin Listov in 1962. *Doč revolucii* ("daughter of the revolution") recounted the life of Angela Alonso, a Cuban housewife who became a fervent supporter of the revolution. The Cuban newspaper *Noticias de Hoy* had reported the real Angela's story: her husband, critical of the Batista regime, had been tortured in prison. After his release he continued his political activities, but asked his wife to keep a suicide pill and hand it over to him should he be arrested again. In what was later considered a heroic act she did so the next time police showed up. Her beloved husband died, and Angela, so far an ordinary Cuban mother, joined the rebel forces against the dictator. After the

³⁹⁶ PIČUGIN 1964.

revolution, she joined the pantheon of Cuban heroes in the Soviet Union. She was painted by Russian artist Viktor Ivanov and became the heroine of Listov's opera.³⁹⁷

Finally, even the Russian circus followed the Cuban craze. The musician Pacho Alonso (no known relation to Angela and Paco) and his band, the *Bocucos*, joined the Moscow Circus for a show called the Cuban Carnival in October 1962. While the world was coming close to a nuclear war, when US intelligence discovered the Soviet missile base being built on Cuba, a clueless Moscow audience enjoyed an entertaining re-enactment of two years of shared Soviet-Cuban history.³⁹⁸ Precisely on the so-called "Black Saturday", when at the height of the crisis a US destroyer launched grenades at a Soviet nuclear submarine and a US Air Force reconnaissance plane was gunned down by a Soviet rocket on Cuba, *Moscow News* featured an article about "the spectacle of the heroic island".³⁹⁹ A film was screened on-stage, in which Yevtushenko declaimed his poems and 200 actors performed a mass-pantomime about the gunning down of a US airplane over Cuba and the defeat of the counterrevolutionaries at *Playa Girón!* The audience was probably not aware that it was following one of the most absurd and macabre performances ever seen on a stage.

Humankind survived the crisis, and while Soviet geostrategists somewhat toned down their global aspirations, many ordinary Soviet citizens and certainly the intellectuals continued their admiration for the Caribbean island. In 1964, the publishing house *Progress* launched a monthly magazine appropriately called *Kuba*. In a layout strikingly similar to the US TIME-Life magazine, its Cuban-Soviet editors informed their readership in the big cities of the Union of recent developments in the revolutionary process in Cuba and the rest of Latin America.⁴⁰⁰ The first issue's title introduced a motif that became widespread in Soviet (and also US) depictions of Cuba: the revolutionary shotgun dame, who combined two points of interest in Cuba, revolutionary romanticism and tropical eroticism.⁴⁰¹

In the early 1960s, Soviet readers could open any journal to see the iconography of the Cuban Revolution – and if they picked, as many did, *Ogonek* or *Novoe Vremja*, they could hardly avoid it. Fidel Castro and Che Guevara ranked equally with the Soviet cosmonauts as the heroes of their time. They had young, handsome, dynamic faces and apparently honest

³⁹⁷ A. TIŠENKO: *Konstantin Listov*. Moskva 1987, p. 115; I. VERŠININA: 'Anchela Alonso. Geroinea opery'. *Ogonek* 15 (1962), p. 28.

³⁹⁸ N. MICHAJLOVA: 'Spektakl' o geroičeskom ostrove'. *Sovetskij Cirk* 8 (1962), pp. 1–3.

³⁹⁹ E. IVANOVA: 'Cuban Carnival'. *Moscow News* 43 (1962), p. 12, p. 12; MICHAJLOVA 1962.

⁴⁰⁰ OLEG DAL'NEV: "'Kuba" - Novyj žurnal'. *Sovetskaja Pečat'* 9 (1964), p. 56; *Illustrirovannyj žurnal "Kuba"*. *Pazdely žurnala*, undated, around October 1963, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.335 l.131-134.

⁴⁰¹ *Kuba* 1 (1964), compare also: A. GERŠBER: 'Kubinskaja revolucija v fotografijach'. *Sovetskaja Fotografija* 23/2 (1963), p. 5; IVAN SUŠČENKO: 'Patria o muerte!'. *Ogonek* 47 (1962), pp. 14–15; *Živopis' Kuby. Katalog vystavki*. Moskva 1962; *Grafika Kuby. Katalog vystavki*. Moskva 1960.

characters, replacing the boring clichés of late Stalinist propaganda images. When, in the wake of the Cuban Crisis, Castro was invited for a lengthy state visit all across the Soviet Union, he experienced a devotion probably never given to any foreign state representative in any country. During the 40 days that Castro travelled to twelve cities of Uzbekistan, Siberia, the Urals, along the Volga, to the Ukraine, Georgia and finally to Leningrad and Moscow, Soviet media basically reported nothing but his visit. *Pravda* and *Izvestija* ran front-page reports for a month straight.⁴⁰² When he gave his final speech in front of 125,000 people in the Lenin stadium, all the notables of the Soviet state gathered and listened reverently. The Soviet audience was deeply impressed by his improvised speech and his chummy behaviour to his translator – something they had never seen on such official occasions.⁴⁰³ After his first visit, an elaborate coffee-table-book collected exciting pictures and rather boring speeches of his roundtrip, and propaganda films were shot and screened to the Soviet audience.⁴⁰⁴ Castro had become an eminently important propaganda figure and, at the same time, a source of self-affirmation for Soviet officials. But he was also kind of a pop star for Soviet citizens. The enthusiasm people displayed in photographs taken whenever he came to the Soviet Union goes visibly beyond the usual mis-en-scène of putative friendship of the people.

Che Guevara's case is more complicated. In the early 1960s and before his career as revolutionary pop star in the West, he was an officially celebrated socialist superhero in the East. On his first visit to Moscow, he was placed next to Khrushchev on Lenin's mausoleum during the military parade of Revolution Day – in the symbolic politics of Soviet rituals an extraordinary kudos, which he received as the first foreigner after Stalin's death.⁴⁰⁵ His later visits to the USSR were shown live on Soviet television and radio, together with fellow-superhero Yuri Gagarin.⁴⁰⁶ Off stage, Che repeatedly mocked his Soviet hosts for their bourgeois tastes, such as their ties and the porcelain tableware during a dinner at Aleksandr Alekseev's house.⁴⁰⁷ Yet what really lost him Soviet benevolence were his political allegations and endeavours: from the mid 1960s, Che came under attack as a "leftist adventurer". His ongoing attempts to spread the revolution in Latin America and Africa became a thorn in the side of Soviet foreign politicians in times of peaceful coexistence and

⁴⁰² LEONOV 1995, p. 85; GENRICH BOROVIK: 'Pervye šagi po Sovetskoj zemle'. *Ogonek* 19 (1963), pp. 28–29. and the following issues alike; *Pravda* and *Izvestija* 28-4-1963 to 24-5-1963

⁴⁰³ JOAQUIN GUTIÉRREZ: *La URSS tal cual*. Santiago de Chile, Nascimento 1967, p. 75.

⁴⁰⁴ Fidel' Kastro v Sovetskom Sojuze (1964), RGAKFD #22485; *Gost' s ostrova Svobody* (1963), RGAKFD #22437; *Viva Kuba! Vizit Fidelia Kastro Rus v Sovetskij Sojus*. Moskva, *Pravda* 1963.

⁴⁰⁵ JACOBO MACHOVER; HAINER KOBER: *Che Guevara – die andere Seite*. Berlin, Potsdam, Wolbern 2008, p. 83.

⁴⁰⁶ 11-11-1964, GARF f.9576 op.2 d.187a.

⁴⁰⁷ LEONOV 1995, pp. 60–66.

even more so in the context of the rivalry that erupted with Maoist China. That Guevara continuously denounced the Soviets for having betrayed the revolution and the fact that he sought closer contacts with China did not win him many friends in the Kremlin. He was hardly mentioned anymore in Soviet media.

Yet, at the same time, Che developed into a global symbol of socialism and romantic rebellion. Alberto Korda's famous picture turned into an icon of the world-wide student movement, and after Che's assassination in the Bolivian jungle in 1967, more than 50,000 young people gathered in front of Washington's Lincoln memorial to denounce US imperialism. Foreign students in all big cities of the USSR gathered and held obsequies; in Moscow, students of the Lumumba University spontaneously rallied in front of the US embassy.⁴⁰⁸ The leading representative of Soviet counterculture, Artem Troickij, remembered being deeply shocked by the news of Che's death; in his memoirs, he is portrayed sitting at his desk below a huge Che Guevara poster.⁴⁰⁹ Even the KGB's leading Latin American expert, Nikolaj Leonov, usually a rather sober intellectual at the Mexican embassy, remembered being shocked profoundly by the news of Che's death. Eulogising him as a "pure, fearless and to a gigantic extent human apostle", whose murder was "not less significant than Jesus' crucifixion", Leonov recalled that his own "grief and chagrin were infinite."⁴¹⁰

For a long time, the Kremlin had failed completely to recognize the symbolic capital of Che Guevara's death. It took officials "two or three days of intense consideration on how to react to the death of Che Guevara, ... as if it was an issue of complex international character"⁴¹¹, Leonov recalled. Finally, the party leadership paid their tribute to Che's merits in somewhat lackadaisical obituaries.⁴¹² But since a dead foreign "left-adventurist" could himself do no more harm, and with a certain experience in personality cults, they resumed the apotheosis of the hero some years later. The Party-line poets Evgenij Dolmatovskij with *Ruki Gevary* ("Guevara's hands") in 1972, and Dmitri Pavličko and Jaroslav Smeljakov worshiped Che's martyrdom in poems. Latin Americanist Josif Grigulevič published his biography of Che in the book series *Zhizn' zamečatel'nych ljudej* ("remarkable people's lives").⁴¹³ A series

⁴⁰⁸ ANDREW; MITROCHIN 2005, p. 96; undated Komsomol report, RGASPI f.1M op.39 d.231 l.40-45.

⁴⁰⁹ TROITZKY 1987, p. 34.

⁴¹⁰ LEONOV 1995, pp. 99–100.

⁴¹¹ NIKOLAI LEONOV: 'La inteligencia soviética en América Latina durante la Guerra Fría'. Estudios Públicos 73 (1999), pp. 31–63, p. 35.

⁴¹² Pravda and Izvestija, 18-10-1967.

⁴¹³ Grigulevič published under a pseudonym: IOSIF LAVRECKIJ: *Ernesto Će Gevara*. Moskva, Molodaja Gvardia 1972.

established in the 1930s by Maxim Gorky, these biographies represented the pantheon of Soviet heroes and role models. On the 10th anniversary of the execution in Bolivia, another Latin Americanist, Kiva Majdanik, could publish a euphoric eulogy on Che in the scholarly journal *Latinskaja Amerika*.⁴¹⁴

While the singer songwriter Wolf Biermann in the GDR contrasted Che (*Jesus mit der Knarre*, “Jesus with the gun”) as a faithful socialist in opposition to the bureaucrats in his country, official and established Soviet entertainment music, the so-called *estradnaja muzyka* of the likes of Josif Kobzon, ostentatiously celebrated the icon of the New Left, too. Former ideological disagreements were now blanked out entirely. With the onset of the guerrilla wars in Central America in the late 1970s, finally, Che’s theoretical work based on his *foco*-theory was also rehabilitated and translated into Russian. In fact, next to Gagarin, Che Guevara proved to be the most successful socialist icon in the Soviet Union and an example of the successful incorporation of a broad public into the discourse of internationalism.

The inspiration the Cuban Revolution gave to Soviet writers and artists was not subject to these political ambiguities. Besides the relatively well known authors presented so far, many other, lesser known people from the provinces of the Soviet Union and also Eastern Europe wrote about their fascination for Cuba in novels, short stories, poems, performances and music. Soviet technicians sent abroad wrote travelogues, as did a group of Komsomol members from Stavropol. The Bashkir journalist and novelist Anver Bikčentaev wrote adventurous short stories around the Cuban Revolution, *Trudno čeloveku bez borody* (“it is difficult for a man without a beard”) in 1960 and *Ad’jutanti ne umirajut* (“adjutants don’t die”) in 1963. The Uzbek Hamid Guljam travelled to Cuba and wrote a book about the Third World’s awakening. Ukrainian, Belorussian and even a Mordvinian poem by folk poet Nikul Erkaj were dedicated to the Cuban heroes, and in Tbilisi, a Georgian drama on the revolution was staged. Eulogies from China were translated into Russian, and there were even attempts made to encourage the Poles to join the anti-imperialist struggle with the poem *Kogda poliaki srazhalis’ za svobodu Kuby* (“when the Poles fought for Cuba’s liberty”).⁴¹⁵

Some of the Soviet writing on Cuba was plain propaganda. Some was commissioned work, other authors by themselves jumped on bandwagons, had a sense of what the authorities

⁴¹⁴ KIVA MAJDANIK: ‘Revoljucioner’. *Latinskaja Amerika* 6 (1977).

⁴¹⁵ ANVER BIKČENTAEV: ‘Ad’jutanti ne umirajut’. *Oktjabr’* 5 (1963), pp. 7–34; AMIRAN ŠERVAŠIDSE: *Devuška iz Sant’iago. Viva Kuba!* Moskva 1963; G. IVANOV: ‘Na pylajuščem ostrove. Pisma s Kuby’. *Stavropol’e* 3 (1962); DMYTRO PAVLYČKO: *Palmova vit’*. Kiev 1962; ANCIFEROV, POLIKARPOV, EDS. 1961; CHAMID GULJAM: *Kontinenty ne spjat*. Moskva, Sovetskij pisatel’ 1961; ANVER BIKČENTAEV: ‘Trudno čeloveku bez borody’. *Družba Narodov* 5 (1960), pp. 105–108; ‘Kogda poliaki srazhalis’ za svobodu Kuby’. *Inostrannaja Literatura* 12 (1960), p. 260.

wanted – and delivered it. Yet this cannot explain the extent and the appeal it had among the Soviet audience. Besides, many writers themselves, as members of the Soviet *nomenklatura*, were among those who gave the orders. Their enthusiasm was real and it was political: the events in Cuba generated a revolutionary romanticism among the Soviet elite. In their famous account of the *šestidesiatniki*, the young Soviet generation of the 1960s, Petr Vail’ and Aleksandr Genis dedicated a long chapter to Cuba as their “metaphor of revolution” within the Soviet Union. “The Cuban Revolution”, they recalled from their 1980s United States exile, “was a striking event for the Soviet person of the 1960s, a powerful, creative social revolution combined with an exotic distant sea. ... The 1960ers took Cuba as a weapon against their enemies within. ... The bureaucrats and apparatchiks were against modern art – Fidel made abstract painting accessible to his people. They gave boring monologues at sight – Fidel held rousing free speeches. ... At home, *Krokodil* [the Soviet satire magazine] made fun of longhaired and bearded men and Komsomol brigades persecuted them – here even the head of state himself wore a beard [as did both Vail’ and Genis themselves...].”⁴¹⁶

More than others, the Cuban craze encompassed a relatively young generation of future leaders in politics, media, arts and architecture (Moscow’s *Kalinin Prospekt* was modelled after a modern quarter of Havana). Yet in the early 1960s, Cuba and its revolution were, for once, a case where indeed the entire political, intellectual and artistic elite took the same line and all embraced this ostensible feat of Soviet internationalism; for very many ordinary Soviets, Cuba was a welcome enrichment and expansion of their cultural horizon, which had an ineradicable political dimension. The case of Che Guevara made clear that this harmony was not to prevail long. But at least in the aftermath of the Revolution, also the older high ranking party members cherished Cuba, because it reminded them of their own revolutionary past. To quote Anastas Mikojan after his first visit to Cuba: “yes, this is a real revolution. Just like ours. It feels like I have returned to my youth!”⁴¹⁷ Or long-term Soviet ambassador to Mexico, Vladimir Vinogradov, after his first Cuban voyage: “I felt as if I was 20 again”.⁴¹⁸ Foreign minister Andrej Gromyko, the fierce “Mr. Nyet”, finds only the warmest words for the Cubans in his memoirs.⁴¹⁹ And Khrushchev himself told US reporters after his first meeting with Castro in his Harlem hotel: “if he is a Marxist, I do not know. But I can sure tell that I am a Fidelist!”

⁴¹⁶ VAJL’; GENIS 2001, pp. 52–64.

⁴¹⁷ LEONOV 1995, p. 55.

⁴¹⁸ VLADIMIR VINOGRADOV: *Diplomatičeskie memuary*. Moskva, Rossijskaja Političeskaja Enciklopedija 1998, p. 144.

⁴¹⁹ ANDREJ GROMYKO; HERMANN KUSTERER: *Erinnerungen*. Düsseldorf, Econ 1989, pp. 256–259.

Exoticism and internationalism. Latin America in Soviet arts and its reception

In contrast to the extreme isolationism of late Stalinism, Soviet cultural life in the mid 1950s opened up to the world. After years of destructive inbreeding, Soviet artists and intellectuals re-joined global discourses, and ordinary people could develop a sense of the world abroad that had ceased to be irrevocably hostile. Texts, photographs and films provided elements to create a notion of parts of the world, of which the Soviet population only had the vaguest ideas before. This was true for the entire emerging Third World, and had the most remarkable repercussions in the case of Latin America.

Selected members of the intellectual elite were allowed to travel to all parts of Latin America from the mid 1950s. In their political world view, the Global South was a place full of poverty, backwardness, social injustice, oppression and exploitation; what they saw on the spot during their trips – and the regular news of US interventions – only confirmed their already existing textbook knowledge. Yet all travellers sensed a spirit of optimism and a revolutionary spirit among the Latin American peoples, who would soon burst their imperialist chains. In opposition to US materialism and individualism, Soviet intellectuals stylised themselves as the same humanist idealists as their Latin American colleagues. In their travelogues, they conveyed this world view to a broad readership back home. All of them contrast the enhancement of Soviet living standards, infrastructure and technological development compared to the countries visited – and at least in the case of the poorer Andean and Central American states not entirely wrongly.

The enthusiasm about the prospects of a worldwide de-Stalinized socialism had seized not only the members of a rather political intelligentsia, but also many Soviet artists and writers. They shared the fascination with a Latin America, which they, too, saw as a half underdeveloped, half revolutionary, and added to that as an excitingly exotic place. In a large array of fiction literature, feature and documentary films and songs, in form and content pleasing to both cultural officials and the mass audience, they spread this image all over the Soviet Union. This politicised view, with its imperialist villains and admiration for the Soviets all around, could build on an originally apolitical fascination for exotic and adventurous outlands and thus found quick acceptance among many Soviet citizens. They quickly internalised Latin American revolutionary catchphrases, many of which derived from the Spanish Civil War: slogans such as *¡no pasarán!* (“they won’t get through”), *¡venceremos!* (“we shall prevail”) or *¡que viva...!* (“long live...”) soon no longer needed a translation for the Soviet audience; even today, everyone in Russia knows what *¡patria o muerte!* means and

refers to the Cuban revolutionaries as the *barbudos* (“the bearded ones”). It is characteristic of this post-Stalinist internationalism as a mindset of the Soviet population that it successfully incorporated non-communist, even apolitical elements into its discourse and gave them an ideological edge that a well-entertained audience readily and happily accepted. Selectively imported Latin American productions, Latino-folklore, sociocritical films and revolutionary-romanticising novels, again confirmed the Soviet internationalist view of the world – and were widely spread. Many reports by foreigners who visited the Soviet Union, letters by Soviet citizens to the authorities and the adaption of Latino-motifs also by quite unofficial artists endorse the fact that Latin American popular culture was not politically imposed, but indeed highly popular.

The Cuban Revolution catalysed the exoticist fancy for Latin America and gave very convincing evidence that the world was going the way Soviets perceived it. The political and intellectual elite, artists, writers and large parts of the Soviet public literally fell in love with the island. The set of revolutionary symbols it provided, images of charismatic leaders and martyrs, armed women, heroic children, catchy songs and slogans, were spread to the most distant nooks of the Soviet empire – and stood in a remarkable contrast to the harmonious and idyllic image of doves of peace and shaking hands in Soviet self-representation towards the world abroad (as presented in chapter one).

Soviet internationalism after Stalin was not only a political credo, but an ideal embraced by many intellectuals and artists. During de-Stalinization, most of them saw themselves as “vanguard of a fair and egalitarian society“, and many believed in the necessity of joining the CPSU to improve it from within. Demonising Stalin, they glorified the left culture of the 1920s and with it socialist internationalism. From the mid 1960s, their enthusiasm waned remarkably. Khrushchev’s boorish attitude towards the arts, new show trials against writers and, finally, the invasion of reforming Czechoslovakia destroyed much of the socialist and internationalist idealism of this generation’s artistic and literary intelligentsia.⁴²⁰ They retreated to private life, emigrated to Israel or became Russian nationalists. While the next two chapters will change perspectives and tell the story of Soviet internationalism from Latin American points of view, the fifth and last chapter of this thesis will show how academic intellectuals stuck much longer to the internationalist spirit the artistic intelligentsia had lost.

To some extent, Allende’s presidency in Chile from 1970 to 73 and the victory of the Sandinistas in the Nicaraguan Civil War rekindled the craze for Latin America; there was

⁴²⁰ ZUBOK 2009, pp. 34-36; 79-84.

little substantial political or financial Soviet help for the Popular Front, but at least a lot of public rhetorical support, revolutionary songs were sung again and a small martyr cult was celebrated around Allende and Victor Jara. Yet the political circumstances had changed during stagnation, and artists and the public did not display the same inexperienced optimism as around 1960, when internationalism had just been rekindled successfully.

This chapter has presented Soviet internationalism after Stalin as a functioning principle within Soviet society. As in the outward sense examined in chapter one, it was a combination of socialist internationalism of the 1920s and cultural internationalism of the 1950s and 60s. The perception of the Hispanic world by the early Soviet Union had been framed by a revolutionary romanticism for the Mexican Revolution and the Spanish Civil War and their songs, tales and heroes. After the end of Stalinist isolation, Soviet artists firstly bolted on these elements when describing Latin America, before some of them had the chance to go there themselves. The folklorisation of Latin Americans echoed similar attitudes towards “backward“ minorities within the USSR before.

But in many ways, the Soviet Union, after 1953, was also in tune again with many developments in the rest of the world and, in particular, the West. Soviet cinema reflected a longing for authenticity, as did Western *arthouse* cinema at the time; Latin American music – or local music with a dash of “Latin American” flair – was an important element of popular entertainment everywhere in the northern hemisphere in the 1950s. A decade later, both in the USSR and in the West, sociocritical Latin American folk music and the leftist literature of the Latin American *boom* fostered the enthusiasm for the romantic revolution; rebellious youngsters on both sides of the Iron Curtain cherished Cuba and the modern Jesus Che Guevara.

In the Soviet Union, popular culture, by Soviet and imported artists, spread a certain imagery of the world abroad in Soviet society and in doing so carried the ideal of internationalism over to ordinary Soviet citizens, too. Internationalism, for them, came in an appealing wrapping of exciting and exotic entertainment and, initially, in the form of the apparent global success of their home country as a new and widely respected world power. As the *New York Times*, always monitoring critically, put it in a caricature: the Russian bear had learned to dance the Mambo.⁴²¹

⁴²¹ ‘Moscow Mambo’. *New York Times*, 22-1-1956.

3.
Paradise Lost and Found.
Latin American intellectuals in and on the Soviet Union

Communist pilgrims and (fellow) travellers to Moscow

- Latin American intellectuals and the socialist revolution
- Committed and compromised. Latin American left intellectuals and de-Stalinization
- Making new friends. Indigenous authors, conservatives and Catholics
- The liberal flirtation with illiberalism

A complex disenchantment. Soviet internationalism, intellectuals and new socialist horizons

*“Quando se mira el Oriente desde el Occidente y viceversa,
ocurre, casi invariablemente, una distorsión similar a la que
produce un espejo concavo”*

Pedro Gómez
Valderrama⁴²²

*Pablo. Efraín.
Hay una hora cuando cae el día,
Una semilla de oro al pie de Gorki,
la primera advertencia de ceniza,
la adorada palabra a pie de Pushkin,
la luz sacude su cola de pez*

...

*Vallejo, Rivera, Gide, Bréton,
Rilke, Neruda, Siqueiros.
Moscú es una caja de emociones B caben
la luz + la luz + el hombre.*

Roberto López Moreno. *Poema a la Unión Soviética*⁴²³

Communist pilgrims and (fellow) travellers to Moscow

In the course of the 1950s, the Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez lived and worked in Paris as a newspaper correspondent. It was shortly before the first wave of

⁴²² If you look from the West to the East, and vice versa, there is, almost inevitably, a distortion like the one a concave mirror creates, after: PEDRO GÓMEZ VALDERRAMA: *Los ojos del burgués. Un año en la Unión Soviética*. Bogotá, Oveja Negra 1971, p. 197.

⁴²³ Part of a 25-page Dadaist poem about the Soviet Union by a Mexican poet: ROBERTO LÓPEZ MORENO: *Poema a la Unión Soviética. La tierra y la palabra*. Mexico, Claves Latinoamericanas 1986.

democratisations in Latin America; most states were still ruled by military dictatorships at the time. His Paris neighbourhood was dominated by the Latin American left intellectual diaspora, García Márquez recalled, who desperately waited for political change and reform in their home countries. One early morning, the Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén excitedly ran up and down the alley. “He is down, he is down! They toppled him!”, he hollered in Spanish. His shouting caused great turmoil in the drowsy street, which soon filled with curious Latin Americans. The exiled fellow Cubans thought, Guillén meant the Cuban strongman Fulgencio Batista. Paraguayan intellectuals hoped it might be their dictator Alfredo Stroessner, the Guatemalans crossed fingers it was Carlos Castillo Armas. The Peruvians thought of Manuel Odría, the Venezuelans of Marcos Perez Jiménez, and the Dominicans of Rafael Trujillo. García Márquez would have liked to hear the ousting of Colombia’s Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, while the Nicaraguans hoped it was the end of the Somoza dynasty. As it soon turned out, the toppled dictator was Juan Perón. The Argentineans celebrated, while the others – happy for Argentina, but disappointed about their own country – went back to have breakfast in a Paris café and discuss the future of Latin America.⁴²⁴

García Márquez’ story is most likely invented or at least lavishly filigreed. But even if Guillén did not run screaming through Paris streets that morning, the scenery nicely illustrates some characteristics of Latin American intellectuals at the time. The émigré situation enforced for many a sense of Latin American identity that would become characteristic of their generation. The common or at least similar language, Catholicism and a shared history had been basis for a sense of continental togetherness ever since independence from Europe in the early 19th century. Yet only the 1950’s alienation of much of the Latin American left intelligentsia from their respective governments made them all but forget their national identity in the European or inner-Latin American exile. Military rulers in their home countries wished them and their reformist or revolutionary ideals good riddance. Backed by local oligarchies and the wary Cold War United States, the dictators fostered strong anti-imperialist sentiments in the mostly oppositional intellectual milieu. While the Latin American men-of-letters thought about alternative paths for their homeland, be it over red wine in a Paris café or in a Guatemalan prison cell, they all agreed that the United States bore a great deal of guilt for their situation. During the high times of the Cold War, they, as a consequence, also considered what advantages the enemy of their enemy had to offer. Many curious Latin American intellectuals travelled to all parts of the Soviet Union and, being writers, they wrote travelogues and

⁴²⁴ HARALD IRNBERGER: *Gabriel García Márquez. Die Magie der Wirklichkeit. Biographie*. Frankfurt am Main, Fischer 2005, p. 171.

reports about their impressions from the motherland of socialism during the final years of Stalin's rule, during Khrushchev's reforms and in the years of stagnation under Brezhnev.

With their excursions to the Soviet Union, the Latin American intellectuals belonged to a tradition that had started with the October Revolution and had been interrupted with the outbreak of the Second World War. It was mostly European intellectuals, usually leftists without Communist party membership, who paid visits to the great political experiment happening to their East. The so-called 'fellow travellers' from Germany, France or Great Britain have been the subject of some scholarly research. David Caute saw them as "true sons and daughters of the Enlightenment, of the doctrine of Progress. They heartily welcomed the torments and upheavals inflicted on the Russian peasantry during collectivization, arguing that only by such drastic social engineering could these backward illiterates be herded, feet first, into the modern world. ... The dramatic underdevelopment provided a *tabula rasa* for planned construction and rational experimentation." Unlike proper Communists though, the fellow travellers committed themselves at an emotional and intellectual distance. They were early proponents of socialism in one country – *id est* not in their own. Unhappy about the world they lived in, their disillusionment with Western society was still less radical than their Communist contemporaries'. The fellow travellers retained their faith in the possibilities of progress under the parliamentary system and they appreciated the prevailing liberties for themselves. Nonetheless, Soviet achievements fascinated the visitors from the West, who cultivated what Caute has called a "myopic romanticism" towards the Soviet state and its large scale reform programmes. Many of its celebrated feats were actually not specifically Communist: the education of the illiterate masses, progressive family laws concerning gender roles, abortion and child care, the industrialisation and the urbanisation of a "backward" predominantly peasant country, all these endeavours were part of a gigantic state-led modernisation of Russia. This Soviet experiment reaffirmed many Western visitors of man's capacity to master his environment and his own nature. Caute thus interprets the fellow travellers as heirs to the pre-Marx Enlightenment, or – not without palpable disdain – as a "postscript to the Enlightenment".⁴²⁵

The scorn for Communist sympathisers, "useful idiots" according to an unsubstantiated Lenin quote, left an even bigger mark on another assessment. Paul Hollander's study of *political pilgrims* culminates in a bashing of the US left and conscientious objectors.⁴²⁶ Its awkward

⁴²⁵ DAVID CAUTE: *The Fellow Travellers. Intellectual Friends of Communism*. New Haven, Yale University Press 1988, pp. 3-5; 8; 16; 265f.

⁴²⁶ PAUL HOLLANDER: *Political Pilgrims. Western Intellectuals in Search for the Good Society*. Piscataway 1997.

political deductions notwithstanding, Hollander's book introduced some useful conceptual categories that will also frame the analysis of Latin American intellectuals in this chapter: unlike Cate, he does not separate strictly between fellow travellers and intellectual members of the Communist parties. For both groups were unhappy with their own societies and saw inspiration in the Soviet model to overcome their own problems – hardly anyone, as Cate suggests for the Western visitors, admired Soviet achievements only for what they provided to the Soviets themselves. Beyond that, Hollander concedes that antifascism was an important factor in the mid 1930s. Many hailed the Soviet Union during the worst phase of the Stalinist purges, because they were under the impression that Europe was falling under fascist rule – and saw the Soviet Union as a bastion against this trend. Similarly, Latin American left intellectuals were more likely to see something positive about the USSR, if the alternative was military dictatorship in their home country. Hollander's narrative structure in time segments helps us to understand the Western leftists' view of the Soviet Union as a chronology of a loss of ideals. Communist unanimity, chipped away at already by several Trotskyist and other anti-Stalinist leftists from the 1930s, finally ended with Stalin's death in 1953 and the revelations of some of his crimes by Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956. The invasion of Hungary the same year dealt a blow to those leftists who nourished hopes in a de-Stalinized socialism. The Cuban Crisis put other apologists off. With the invasion of Czechoslovakia to end the alternative socialist path of Dubček, the USSR finally forfeited any serious support from Western European leftists even in the Communist strongholds of France and Italy. The Soviet Union was increasingly regarded as just another European industrial, highly bureaucratized and repressive state that happened to have had a failed socialist revolution.

Both Cate and Hollander confined themselves to Western intellectual tourism to the Soviet Union. The mid 1950s, however, saw not only the gradual loss of Western leftists' hopes in the USSR. It was also the time of enhanced Soviet attempts to court the Third World. Intellectuals from Asia, Africa and Latin America were now a major target group of Soviet advances, too. The case of Latin America is particularly interesting in this context: many of its most renowned intellectuals were actually part of a Western discourse community. Those especially who came from white upper class backgrounds and had lived for a while in Western Europe, could be considered "Western" intellectuals themselves. But at the same time, many other writers from humbler, usually indigenous, family backgrounds identified themselves more with the Third World. They were brought up not in European style urban

environments, but with the experience of essential needs: many did not see running water, higher education or a visit to a doctor as a matter of course. Some of them were the first in their families who could actually read and write. Representatives of both groups came to Moscow.

These visits of Latin American intellectuals to the Cold War Soviet Union have hardly been studied so far. Accounts of the intellectual history of post-war Latin America have put the Soviet Union aside a bit too readily. Claudia Gilman is wrong to state that “Latin American intellectuals had lost all interest in the Soviet Union by the early 1960s”⁴²⁷. And while Carlos Castañeda is correct to say that “much of the Latin American left of the sixties and seventies was rabidly pro-Cuba, though sharply critical of and disenchanted with the Soviet Union”⁴²⁸, he only speaks of the *left*, not of the entire intelligentsia and he does not look at the decade of the 1950s. The only book that deals with Latin American travellers to the Soviet Union after the Second World War, Sylvia Saítta’s *Hacia la revolución. Viajeros argentinos de izquierda* (“Towards revolution. Argentinean travellers of the left”), is only a briefly commented collection of original travelogues from the Soviet Union, China and Cuba.⁴²⁹

Ego-massages for Latin American writers

The attempts of the Soviets to create a sympathetic stance towards themselves in the Global South have already been described in chapter one. Intellectuals were a major target group of this self-representation campaign, which, as Cauter and Hollander show, drew on the similar endeavours of socialist internationalism of the 1920s and 30s. Already during the last years of late Stalinism, the USSR aimed again at not necessarily Communist, but reform-minded Latin American university professors, journalists, novelists and poets. This programme was intensified after Stalin’s death, and increasingly with a Third World spin: now also writers from fairly underdeveloped and “exotic” countries of the Americas were invited to the Soviet Union. Some got their travel expenses paid, some came out of their own interest and on their own budget; they met with Soviet writers and artists and they went on tour programmes that often led them through the entire USSR, to cities, schools, universities, ministries, sanatoriums, hydrological power plants, or whatever they asked to be shown and did not fall

⁴²⁷ CLAUDIA GILMAN: *Entre la pluma y el fusil. Debates y dilemas del escritor revolucionario en América Latina*. Buenos Aires, Siglo Veintiuno 2003, p. 68.

⁴²⁸ CASTAÑEDA 1994, p. 177.

⁴²⁹ SYLVIA SAÍTTA: *Hacia la revolución. Viajeros argentinos de izquierda*. Buenos Aires, Fondo de Cultura Económica 2007.

under Soviet access restrictions for foreigners. Professional guides of VOKS, GKKS and SSOD took care of them. Some 3000 Spaniards, refugees of the Spanish Civil War, still lived in Moscow alone in the 1950s and provided a great source of native speakers. But also many Soviets in the internationalist organisations spoke fluent Castilian, Portuguese and some even Quechua. One of them was the young Vera Kutejščikova, who recalled how much she loved her work with the foreigners – still a rare sight in the USSR of the 1950s. Only much later did she become aware of the suspicion, sometimes with lethal consequences, aroused against Soviet officials who came into closer contact with foreigners during (late) Stalinism.⁴³⁰

From 1954, several Soviet intellectuals went to countries all over the Americas to reconnect to their colleagues across the Atlantic (see chapter two) – and to bring them to the USSR. When Ehrenburg, Dmiterko or Simonov came back from their trips, they always brought recommendations to Moscow on whom to invite next.⁴³¹ The more famous or influential writers were usually received at least once by Ehrenburg himself for discussions in his cottage in Peredelkino or dinners in his apartment on Gorky-Prospekt. The visiting intellectuals were often asked to give recommendations on who to invite next – and who better not.⁴³² Meetings of the Soviet controlled World Peace Council, which took place all over the world with many left-leaning authors, were used to find new potential guests, too. The 1957 World Youth Festival, as well, was an occasion to tie contacts with Third World intellectuals. The *haute volée* of Latin American leftist intelligentsia met for this event in Moscow – even though for many of them, like the Peruvians and the Brazilians, travel to the Soviet Union was still explicitly marked as illegal in their passports. Gabriel García Márquez was not yet well known at the time and had to sneak in as an accordion player. But Nicolás Guillén, the novelist Carlos Augusto León and the poet Pedro Dona from Venezuela were invited officially, as were the playwright Saulo Benavente, the composer Gilardo Gilardi and the authors Javier Villafañe, Juan Gelman and María Rosa Oliver from Argentina. The Brazilian novelist Jorge Amado was there and so was his Guatemalan friend Miguel Angel Asturias. From Mexico came the playwright Emilio Carballido, from Chile the poet Praxedes Urrutia, from Bolivia Jorge Calvimontes.⁴³³

⁴³⁰ KUTEJŠČIKOVA 2000, pp. 260–264.

⁴³¹ Konstantin Simonov: Nekotorye soobshčenja k otčetu o poezdke v Urugvaj, Čili i Argentinu, 29-12-1957, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.320 l.160-167.

⁴³² E.g.: Zapis' besedy s zam.general'nogo sekretarija ZK KP Ekvadora, ekvadorskim pisatelem Enrike Chilem Chil'bertom [Gil Gilberto] v Inokomissii SP SSSR, 30-1-1967, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.1018 l.105-109; Gilberto brought a long list of recommendable and not recommendable Ecuadorian writers.

⁴³³ Memorandum o kul'turnych svjazjach, undated, GARF f.9518 op.1. d.339 l.7-19; 'Prekrasnaja vosmožnost'. Beseda s kubinskim poetom Gil'enom'. Molodež' mira 4 (1957), p. 15; RGASPI f.3M op.15 d.263 l.395

This enormous influx of dozens of Latin American intellectuals to the Soviet Union at the same time remained an exception, but many more came, officially invited or upon their own initiative throughout the 1950s, 60s and 70s. In addition, 23 Latin Americans received the Stalin/Lenin Peace Prize between 1950 and 1985 and usually received it during a ceremony in Moscow.⁴³⁴ The Latin American intelligentsia had not yet lost all contact with, and interest in the Soviet Union.

A very important part of all these guided tours through the Soviet Union was a technique of hospitality that Paul Hollander has called 'Ego-Massage'. Visitors in official tours were always and everywhere in the centre of the attention: "I felt like the most important man of the entire Caucasus", remembered a Brazilian visitor after his trip.⁴³⁵ The guides were instructed to avoid controversial political topics and focus on achievements of the Soviet Union instead – and to butter the guests up: "lavish banquets are addressed both to the stomach and the ego", Hollander put it.⁴³⁶ For the stomach, cheerful – and often boozy – gala dinners were organised. "They even paid my cigarettes", Graciliano Ramos remembered, who ironically died of lung cancer immediately after his return.⁴³⁷ For the ego, many foreign writers were published in large numbers of copies and they were paid commission (albeit in non-convertible roubles only) for smaller publications in Soviet journals and interviews on Soviet radio (which were first recorded, then broadcast).⁴³⁸ Konstantin Simonov, after all a writer himself, had recommended using this feature more often in foreign propaganda especially in order to win the favour of non-communist authors.⁴³⁹ And it worked well: even rather critical visitors recalled how flattered they felt during the trip: "the kindness was excessive, the expenses enormous, the attention constant", remembered one, "I made many roubles writing for journals and magazines about Brazilian literature", another, and a third

⁴³⁴ Heriberto Jara Corona (1950), Jorge Amado (1951), Eliza Branco (1952), Pablo Neruda (1953), Baldomero Sanin Cano (1954), Nicolás Guillén (1954), Lázaro Cárdenas (1955), Maria Rosa Oliver (1957), Fidel Castro (1961), Olga Poblete de Espinosa (1962), Oscar Niemeyer (1963), Miguel Ángel Asturias (1965), David Alfaro Siqueiros (1966), Jorge Zalamea (1967), Alfredo Varela (1970-71), Salvador Allende (1972), Enrique Pastorino (1972), Luis Corvalán (1973-74), Hortensia Bussi de Allende (1975-76), Vilma Espín Guillois (1977-78), Miguel Otero Silva (1979-80), Líber Seregni (1980-82), Luis Vidales (1983-84), Miguel d'Escoto (1985-86).

⁴³⁵ de HOLANDA 1962, p. 123.

⁴³⁶ HOLLANDER 1997, p. 355.

⁴³⁷ GRACILIANO RAMOS: *Viagem. Tcheco-Eslovàquia - URSS*. Sao Paulo, Martins 1970, p. 62.

⁴³⁸ GENIVAL RABELO: *No outro lado do mundo. A vida na URSS*. Rio de Janeiro, Editora Civilização Brasileira 1967, p. 31; ASTURIAS 1958.

⁴³⁹ Konstantin Simonov: Nekotorye soobshchenja k otčetu o poezdke v Urugvaj, Čili i Argentinu, 29-12-1957, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.320 l.160-167.

one “had the immense satisfaction to receive some copies of the Russian edition of [his] book.”⁴⁴⁰

One central, and to foreign intellectuals particularly appealing, feature of these guided tours was to present the positive awareness and appreciation of literature and the status of intellectuals in the Soviet Union. Countless libraries and publishing houses, as well as museums, ballets and conservatories existed all over the USSR and needed no presentation in the style of Potemkin villages. The privileged treatment of intellectuals was not an invention of Soviet officials either: when the Portuguese Communist Francisco Ferreira first came to the Soviet Union as political refugee, he worked in a Kharkov factory. He managed to get a job at the Moscow radio station that produced programmes for Brazil – and noted that the directors earned 10 times as much as the skilled workers back in the Ukraine and even got free vacation houses. He himself earned 400 roubles as a worker and 1200 as a radio speaker. Some of his Spanish colleagues even made up to 5000 roubles.⁴⁴¹ As many other visitors, a Brazilian noted the enormous privileges Ehrenburg enjoyed, including his private cook, a car with a driver and a *dacha*.⁴⁴² Another mentioned that intellectuals had the same status in this society as politicians: “Has the work of a writer seen that much appreciation in any capitalist country?”⁴⁴³ When the Chilean poet Nicanor Parra, the life long poetic antipode to Neruda, saw a huge crowd of Soviet women lining up on a square in downtown Moscow during his visit, he first thought they might be selling fresh pastry. It was, however, a stall with books by Chilean authors. Parra, who unlike Neruda had no communist leanings at all, was deeply touched and dedicated a poem called *Pan caliente* (“hot bread”) to the Soviet Union.⁴⁴⁴

The privileges of intellectual work also met with the disapproval of some visitors, who found it unjust that writers received “twice the salary and twice the vacation days of an ordinary worker”.⁴⁴⁵ What found unconditional approval, however, was the status of literature and the arts. One visitor came to unfavourable conclusions about his native Brazil comparing the illiteracy rates and the publication of hundreds of thousands of copies per book – in Brazil, in

⁴⁴⁰ PEDRO JORGE VERA: *Gracias a la Vida. Memorias*. Quito, Editorial Voluntad 1993; RAMOS 1970, p. 18; ALDUNATE, p. 104; MORAIS 1959, p. 34.

⁴⁴¹ FRANCISCO FERREIRA: *26 Años na União Soviética. Notas de exilio do Chico da U.C.F.* Lisboa 1975, pp. 105f.

⁴⁴² MENDES 1956, p. 64.

⁴⁴³ SAÍTTA 2007, p. 20.

⁴⁴⁴ NICANOR PARRA: *Canciones rusas*. Santiago de Chile, Editorial Universitaria 1967.

⁴⁴⁵ MENDES 1956, pp. 58f.

the 1950s still with the majority of the population illiterate, the average novel came out in some 1000 copies.⁴⁴⁶

The VOKS and later the GKKS and the SSOD knew very well the impression the erudition of the average Soviet had on intellectual visitors, even more so if they came from underdeveloped countries with illiterate masses. Sometimes, they may have ‘helped’ this effect to happen: when the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw, back in the 1930s, boarded a train at the Soviet border, the first thing the very young and very pretty female conductors told him was how much they liked his writings. Shaw, a naive fellow traveller if ever there was one, may have been hoodwinked by the VOKS on this occasion, too. But also much more critical visitors recall similar occurrences: some 20 years later, García Márquez ran into a young Russian on Gorky-Prospekt. They went for a beer and it turned out that the youngster knew several poems by the Colombian Rafael Combo. García Márquez was awestruck.⁴⁴⁷ Considering that García Márquez was not on an official visit, it is not very likely that this meeting was staged. Latin American literature was very popular in the USSR (see chapter two), and the young man really had just happened to have read a lot of Latin American poetry indeed.

The Latin American discourse on the Soviet Union

Whether and to what extent realities in the Soviet Union were staged is, by and large, an otiose question. This chapter, in line with the stated shift in perspective here from the East to the South, will not so much look at Soviet self-representation (see chapter one), but at expectations, experiences and subjective interpretations of the Soviet Union by its Latin American visitors. Combining a history of ideas with the history of transnational contacts across the Iron Curtain, individual actors are given a voice, individuals who travelled between the two camps of the Cold War and reported about the ‘other side’ back home. Some two dozen travelogues will be analysed, by writers from all over the Americas, from Mexico to Argentina and from Chile to Nicaragua, who came to see the Soviet Union with their own eyes between 1949 and 1973.

As a matter of course, every writer’s judgments depended on the political-historical contexts in his or her specific home country. They depended – even more, I would argue – on the authors’ regional, social and indeed ethnic origin. The influence of these factors will be

⁴⁴⁶ RAMOS 1970, p. 180.

⁴⁴⁷ GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ 1982, pp. 179f.

considered in every example. However, all Latin American authors referred in their writing to other travellers from all over the subcontinent; they agreed or disagreed with or even insulted those who went before them and gave their opinion on issues that concerned the whole of Latin America – regardless of their nationality. Beyond their national, regional and social idiosyncrasies, all travellers felt also part of a pan-Latin American community of travellers, based in no small measure on the anti-imperialist sense of a common revolutionary heritage, formerly against the Spanish and now against the United States. The Dominican Ramón Alberto based his book on a criticism of the travelogue by the Colombian Gabriel García Márquez. The Bolivian Fausto Reinaga travelled with other Latinos through the Soviet Union and was excited about the pan-Latin American spirit. The Cuban Nicolás Guillén often came together with the Brazilian Jorge Amado, who in turn inspired the Paraguayan poet Elviro Romero to travel; the Argentinean Alfredo Varela was a close friend and discussion partner of the Chilean Pablo Neruda ... *et cetera* ...⁴⁴⁸ This interwovenness allows to speak of a shared Latin American discourse on the Soviet Union.

Based on their travelogues, this chapter will reconstruct this discourse. What did the writers expect to see in the Soviet Union? Which aspects were they interested in particularly? Why did they think this country had relevance for them? Did the experience *in loco* change or confirm their views? And how did they report about the USSR to their compatriots back home and to other readers in Latin America? The travelogues give illuminating – and uncensored – insights into life in the Soviet Union and on the fascination this state radiated to foreign intellectuals. As a source of the Latin American discourse on the Soviet Union, the travelogues are fundamental, yet not entirely sufficient: those who travelled to Moscow, as a rule, did not come to see the negative sides of the USSR and their judgments tended to be not overly critical accordingly. And the decision to further support the USSR or the loss of a sense of utopia not always was to do with a trip to Moscow, and it was not necessarily reflected in the travelogues. To counter these imbalances, I will occasionally refer to the voices of Latin American intellectuals who criticised the Soviet Union without actually going there or writing about it at length; and I include autobiographies and fictional writings by the travelling writers, whenever these dealt with trips or general stance towards the Soviet Union. Communist and leftists were the most obvious group of travellers to the Soviet Union, and they were the most notorious votaries of Stalin. In Latin America, party Communism was

⁴⁴⁸ AMADO 1992, p. 229; FAUSTO REINAGA: *El sentimiento mesiánico del pueblo ruso*. La Paz, Ediciones SER 1960, p. 60; Pis'mo Žorži Amadu o poezdke v SSSR paragvajskogo poeta El'vio Romero, 27-10-1957, RGALI f.631 op.26 d.4466 l.1.

usually less a workers' mass movement than an ideology for alienated urban intellectuals, mostly from upper middle class families, mostly white and mostly with a European-style upbringing. As many European leftists after the war, many of them took up or continued an admiration for the Stalinist Soviet Union, which had defeated imperialist fascism and catapulted a backward peasant country to become one of the world two superpowers. A first section of this chapter explores their metaphysical concept of a redeeming Soviet Union and how this utopia was shattered by Khrushchev's revelations of Stalin's crimes at the 20th Party Congress in 1956. While some leftists and Communists harboured hopes for the Thaw and its reformed socialism, a younger generation no longer shared their great unconditional admiration for the Soviet Union and turned to other revolutionary lodestars, most notably Cuba. This story of a paradise lost had its parallels within the Western European left. Yet another group of Latin American writers still found their paradise in Khrushchev's Soviet Union: some authors from strongly underdeveloped countries and with indigenous backgrounds continued, for a while, the chiliastic-metaphysical admiration of the USSR. Parallel to this story of a paradise lost and found, increasingly more pragmatic and distanced reports from the Soviet Union were written by authors outside the box of the usual leftist suspects: later sections of this chapter will examine the perception of the USSR by Latin American intellectuals from different political backgrounds, conservatives, Catholics and liberals, and will reveal surprising assessments of the motherland of socialism by non-communist and not even leftist visitors. In a different way from any study of Europeanised leftists, the assessments of these other groups confirm one of the principal arguments of this thesis: the Soviet Union looked fundamentally different from the South than from the West. Before turning to the travelogues, however, a first section will outline some specificities of Latin American intellectuals that influenced their judgments of the USSR.

Latin American intellectuals and the socialist revolution

The modern, secular idea of an intellectual had its origins precisely where the Latin American émigrés settled down in the 1950s: the Paris based *philosophes* of the Enlightenment were the archetype for a strata of men and women of letters, which came into being throughout the Americas in the late 19th century. This chapter looks not so much at an *intelligentsia* in the rather broad Russian/Soviet definition, which usually included the technocratic elite and all

academic civil servants – a concept that is sometimes shared in the Anglo-Saxon world.⁴⁴⁹ The group of Latin Americans in this chapter were public writers in a narrower, ‘continental European’ sense, as the French *homme-de-lettre* or the German *Intellektueller*. They were novelists, poets, playwrights, academics in humanities or visual artists, who – through their intellectual and artistic work or simply based on their popularity – participated in public political and societal debates, also beyond their professional competence. Just as in Europe, this Latin American milieu of intellectuals had been radicalised through the Mexican and Russian revolutions between 1910 and 1920. The Argentinean philosopher José Ingenieros wrote the key text *Los tiempos nuevos* (“New times”) that heralded the Bolshevik revolution in Russia as “the spirit of renewal”. Manuel Maples Arce, founder of the Mexican Avant-Garde movement *Estridentismo*, praised the apparent workers’ paradise in his *Urbe. Superpoema bolchevique en cinco cantos* (“Bolshevik super-poem in five cantos”). Lenin’s revolutionary concept caught on with many writers and poets as it provided not only a possible solution to their societies’ problems, but gave an important role in overcoming these problems to intellectuals. For their position towards the state had changed to their disadvantage in Latin America. The 19th century tradition of the poet/president or the *caudillo*/thinker that Simón Bolívar represented was – with some notable exceptions – interrupted; intellectuals were downgraded to “ideologues, either as co-opted supporters or as ritual opponents” of the state.⁴⁵⁰ They were systematically excluded from participating in high-level politics and demoted into the lower levels of state bureaucracy. That so many internationally renowned Latin American intellectuals served as diplomats only masked this exclusion. Sending Pablo Neruda, Carlos Fuentes, Alfonso Reyes or Miguel Angel Asturias abroad was always an elegant way of getting rid of an unwanted critic. Unlike in Europe, however, the main source of status for intellectuals in Latin America had always been the state, not a particular class or social sector, simply because, until the 1960s, there was no mass reading public on much of the subcontinent.⁴⁵¹ Carlos Fuentes described the role of the Latin American intellectual thus as one of “a tribune, a member of parliament, a labour leader, a journalist and a redeemer of his society” all at the same time, and thus a substitute of hardly existing civil society.

⁴⁴⁹ DIETRICH BEYRAU: *Intelligenz und Dissens. Die russischen Bildungsschichten in der Sowjetunion 1917-1985*. Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1993.

⁴⁵⁰ MILLER 1999, p. 95; the most important exception was the novelist Rómulo Gallegos, president of Venezuela in 1948 – and also a widely read author in the Soviet Union from the 1950s.

⁴⁵¹ MILLER 1999, p. 95.

Due to this feeling of alienation, many of those intellectuals who stayed in their countries became members of Communist parties and made their living in universities. In these exclusive and excluded areas, the *intelectual comprometido*, the Latin American *littérateur engagé*, developed. Under the influence of Leninist Marxism, they were “more preoccupied with power than with knowledge”, as Nicola Miller reproached them, and they never restructured “their own role towards independent critical communities that could have provided leadership to a civil society capable of challenging the legitimacy of the state.”⁴⁵²

Instead, some put down the pen and took up a gun in the 1930s. Several Latin American intellectuals fought in the Republican Brigades of the Spanish Civil War, which was to become a key experience for the worldwide left. Miguel Angel Asturias, David Siqueiros, César Vallejo, Eudocio Ravines and many more not only organised and struggled in the *Comité Iberoamericano para la Defensa de la República Española* (“Ibero-American committee for the defence of the Spanish Republic”). They also came into contact with the European left as well as with Soviet fighters and intellectuals. The civil war laid the foundation for contacts with Moscow, and it was in Spain that Ilya Ehrenburg, who knew some Spanish, deepened his friendship with Diego Rivera, Pablo Neruda and other Latin Americans.

It was also in Spain that the first leftist Latin American intellectual was cured of socialist dogmatism: Octavio Paz, an early admirer of the USSR, came to Valencia for the anti-fascist second International Congress of Writers in Defence of Culture in 1937 – and was appalled by Soviet-inspired and sometimes Soviet-led purges and killings within the ranks of the republicans. After the Hitler-Stalin-pact, and even more so after he learned of Stalin’s crimes in Paris around 1950, Paz turned into an ardent critic of the Soviet Union, an attitude that met with the hostility of many of his Latin American colleagues.⁴⁵³ Similarly, Victor Haya de la Torre, founder of the, back then socialist, American Popular Revolutionary Alliance APRA, had shown an early fascination with the USSR which faded after a 1931 visit to Moscow. He denied a role model character to the Soviet Union and advocated an independently socialist “Indio-America” instead, *¡ni con Moscú, ni con Washington!* (“neither with Moscow, nor with Washington!”). Few other Latin Americans went to see the Soviet Union with their own eyes during this time. Rivera and Siqueiros had made a quick visit in 1927, as did the Brazilian historian Caio Prado Junior. Some more, mostly Mexicans, came in the course of

⁴⁵² MILLER 1999, p. 93.

⁴⁵³ KUTEJŠČIKOVA 2000, pp. 359–363; MILLER 1989.

the 1930s. Communists who, like the Colombian Ignacio Torres Giraldo, settled down in Moscow remained an exception.

The international image of the Soviet Union increased tremendously through the victory in the Second World War, in which (at least on paper) most Latin American states fought alongside the Red Army against Germany. But except for a short period of relative popularity between 1943 and 1947, Latin American Communism did not profit much from the good reputation of the socialist motherland. With the exception of the Cuban and Chilean parties, it remained a salon phenomenon that attracted urban intellectuals and artists but still only few factory workers. More than for toilers, Soviet style Marxism was attractive for intellectuals in the Americas. As has been pointed out already, it gave reputation, status and an important task to their profession; it claimed to have a solution to the prevailing social injustice in an area of the world with the highest income inequalities; and it offered an example of progress and modernity that did not refer directly to the United States or Western Europe, Latin America's unattainable role models for a century. Marxism also provided an anti-imperialist theory that shifted the blame for this underdevelopment onto others.⁴⁵⁴ Latin America was much more Europeanised than Asia or Africa. Nonetheless, there was a gulf between their living conditions and those of the West. On the one hand, reformers and intellectuals suffered from this gap, which they had tried to overcome since independence in the early 19th century. On the other hand, many of the world's angry and alienated intellectuals blamed poverty and underdevelopment on exactly that apparently all-powerful, but deeply resented West. Soviet Russia was one symbol of resistance to Western civilisation itself.⁴⁵⁵ But in the 1950s it was no longer the only one.

Already for quite some time, Latin American left-revolutionary intellectuals could choose from several socialist trajectories besides Soviet-style Communism: there were Trotskyist splinter groups, there was homemade socialism with its focus on indigenous togetherness, and there were populist mass movements. From the mid 1950s, the market of alternative social and political models became even more abundant. The proponents of Dependency Theory did use the Leninist model of centre-periphery relations to explain Latin American "backwardness", yet they never referred to the Stalinist or contemporary Soviet Union. In

⁴⁵⁴ ANDREAS BOECKH: 'La modernización importada. Experiencias históricas con importaciones de conceptos de desarrollo en América Latina'. *Diálogo Científico* 14 1/2 (2005), pp. 37–55, p. 51.

⁴⁵⁵ MARKS 2003, p. 2.

Moscow, they were long ignored completely, and only in the 1970s did Soviet expert journals review their work – often very critically (see chapter five).⁴⁵⁶

The Third World movement in the wake of the 1955 Bandung Conference aroused interest, too, among the many Latin Americans who denounced the West as imperialistic – several of the books that are the source basis of this chapter were actually edited by a Bogotá publishing house that called itself *Ediciones Tercer Mundo* (“Third World editions”). The era of Third World solidarity was also the last heyday of *latinoamericanidad*, the common Latin American identity among left intellectuals. Confronted with colleagues from Vietnam or the Congo, writers often no longer felt Bolivian or Mexican, but identified as Latin American victims of Western imperialism. The Chinese Revolution, finally, offered a model of reform of agrarian societies, and, most importantly, the Cuban example proved that revolution was actually viable in Latin America, too. While the Soviets, during de-Stalinization, proposed peaceful coexistence with the West and a peaceful path to socialism for Latin America, the model of violent struggle sounded more appealing to many impatient intellectuals.

As for left political inspiration, there were now several options on the table. A central topic of literary controversy during the 1950s and 60s was now the question of *engagement*. With a book market and a grand-scale readership coming into being, authors could now link their experimental writing with a social and political activism that actually found an audience.⁴⁵⁷

With the exception of Jorge Borges, all notable Latin American writers were now political. It is probably fair to say that, in the 1950s and 60s, every public intellectual in Latin America still had an opinion on the Soviet Union, but with many other inspirations for the left around, it was more important for some than for others.

For those who travelled to Moscow after the war, not only had the number of alternative social and political models increased, there was also considerably more information on the Soviet Union available in Latin America. A lot of Spanish exiles had written about their experiences in the USSR – generally very critically – and published them in Mexico. Western European debates about Stalinism were in theory accessible. Most Latin American intellectuals at the time read French, English and German, and the standard volumes of the genre had been translated. The classic travelogues by Klaus Mehnert, Arthur Miller, André Gide, Bertrand Russel or John Steinbeck were available in Spanish translations in Latin American libraries, as was much of the contemporary expert literature on the USSR by Merle Fainsod, Boris Meissner or Wolfgang Leonhard. In the 1960s, literature on Soviet

⁴⁵⁶ I. BEKOPITOV: ‘Raul’ Prebiš. V poiskach al'ternativ’. *Latinskaja Amerika* 5 (1976), pp. 200–205.

⁴⁵⁷ BERG; RÖSSNER 2007, p. 366.

Communism by New Left-authors from Herbert Marcuse to the Cohn-Bendit brothers was immediately translated. Debates within the Soviet Union, from de-Stalinization and the treatment of Pasternak, Brodski and Solzhenitsyn, to the trial against Sinjavskij and Daniel' were also followed by Latin American scholars.⁴⁵⁸ If travellers from Latin America still got duped by the Soviet feelgood-programme, it was not due to a lack of information on the Soviet Union in the late 1950s or even 60s.

The travelogues usually reveal the author's stance on their first pages, when they describe the border controls. The times when Clara Zetkin demanded that visitors take off their shoes upon entering the holy ground of Soviet territory were over.⁴⁵⁹ Anyone who has ever crossed a border in Eastern Europe is bound to become suspicious if some visitors portray their first encounter with Soviet officials as a pleasant experience. Such travelogues always turn out to be eulogies. The same goes for the whitewashing of negative first impressions: there were no seat belts on the airplane, one visitor noted, but "Soviet planes are so safe, they do not need them". When the plane arrived in Moscow after a long delay, he took that as a sign that the Soviets never risked a human life for commercial interests.⁴⁶⁰ On the other hand, negative comments were not necessarily a sign of a renegade view. García Márquez was sure that the GDR was "a hideous country" after his border procedure (the East-West border had been moved a lot to the West since Zetkin's days). Yet his description of the USSR was quite differentiating all the same.⁴⁶¹

Committed and compromised. Latin American left intellectuals and de-Stalinization

The Spanish term for the *littérateur engagé* has a double meaning that is telling for many left-wing Latin Americans and their relations with the Soviet Union before 1953: 'intelectual comprometido' translates both politically committed public intellectual – and 'compromised intellectual'. No small number of – mostly Mexican – writers had admired the Soviet Union during the worst time of Stalinist terror in the 1930s. The novelist José Revueltas had come, at

⁴⁵⁸ MAX HAYWARD: *Proceso a los escritores. El estado soviético contra Siniavski y Daniel*. Buenos Aires, Editorial Americana 1967; VICTOR FLORES OLEA: 'La crisis del stalinismo'. Cuadernos Americanos 5-6 (1962), pp. 80–108; DOUGLAS PRINCE: 'Los intelectuales soviéticos atacan el conformismo en la literatura impuesto por el estado'. Última Hora, 24-4-1961.

⁴⁵⁹ MICHAEL RYKLIN: *Kommunismus als Religion. Die Intellektuellen und die Oktoberrevolution*. Frankfurt am Main, Verlag der Weltreligionen 2008.

⁴⁶⁰ JESUALDO SOSA: *Mi viaje a la U.R.S.S.* Montevideo, Ediciones Pueblos Unidos 1952.

⁴⁶¹ GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ 1982, p. 9.

an early age, to Moscow for a 1935 Komintern congress and proclaimed “I adore Stalin more than anything else on earth.” His compatriots Vicente Toledano, Victor Manuel Villaseñor, José Muños Cota or José Mancisidor wrote about their pilgrimages to Stalinist Moscow as “travels to the future of the world“; Octavio Paz, later an ardent critic of totalitarianism, wrote letters still full of admiration for the Soviet project as late as 1937; and Siqueiros was even involved in the murder of Stalin’s arch enemy Leon Trotsky in Mexico City in 1940.⁴⁶²

During late Stalinism and the early Cold War, many Latin American left intellectuals continued this admiration for the dictator and his realm. Those who acquired their political socialisation in the 1920s and 30s revelled even more in Stalin after the victory in the Second World War, as he seemed to have freed the world from fascism. Others now made their first pilgrimages to the socialist Mecca: one of the first Latin Americans to visit the USSR after the war was the Argentinean novelist and journalist Alfredo Varela (1914-1984). From late 1948 to March 1949, VOKS-officials showed him around Moscow, Leningrad, Odessa and Kiev. Varela was completely taken in by the programme and indeed so enthralled that, upon return, he wrote a 400 page eulogy on the Soviet Union. *Un periodista argentino en la Unión Soviética* (“An Argentinean journalist in the Soviet Union“) paralleled the liberation struggle of the Latin Americans and the Soviets against constant attacks from the West.⁴⁶³ But his enthusiasm was not limited to Soviet fighting spirit. He described, or more accurately glorified the USSR as an earthly paradise, where all people were happy, healthy and positive, where workers were always sober and masters of their fate, and where health care and education were free. Varela perceived Soviet politics as deeply democratic and the USSR as the well-spring of mankind – for these accomplishments, he hailed Stalin as “the greatest man of our epoch”.⁴⁶⁴

Varela’s good friend Pablo Neruda (1904-1973) would have certainly agreed. The poet had become politicised by the Spanish Civil War, had been a member of the Chilean Communist Party since 1945 and made his first trip to the Soviet Union in 1949. Neruda, ‘the greatest poet of the 20th century in any language’ according to his admirer Gabriel García Márquez, did not draft a prose travelogue. He was, however, inspired to many poems during his trip (“Pushkin, you were the angel. Of the Central Committee.”⁴⁶⁵) and in his 1973 memoirs, he

⁴⁶² KUTEJŠČIKOVA 2000, pp. 89f.; 115; 134; DAVID SIQUEIROS: *Me llamaban el Coronelazo. Memorias*. Mexico, Grijalbo 1977, p. 369; JOSÉ MANCISIDOR: *Ciento veinte días*. México, Editorial México Nuevo 1937; VICENTE LOMBARDO TOLEDANO; VICTOR MANUEL VILLASEÑOR: *Un viaje al mundo del porvenir*. México, Publicaciones de la Universidad obrera de México 1936.

⁴⁶³ ALFREDO VARELA: *Un periodista argentino en la Unión Soviética*. Buenos Aires, Ediciones Viento 1950.

⁴⁶⁴ VARELA 1950, p. 167.

⁴⁶⁵ PABLO NERUDA: ‘En la Unión Soviética’. Cuadernos de la Fundación Pablo Neruda 37 (1999), pp. 29–37.

still recalled in very poetic language the startling impressions he got during his stay: "I loved the Soviet earth at first sight, and I understood that not only did it exude a moral lesson to all corners of the human existence, an equalisation of the possibilities and a growing progress in creating and distributing. But I also inferred that from this steppe continent, with all its natural purity, was going to be produced something with great meaning for the world. All mankind knows that the gigantic truth was manufactured here, and there is, in our world, an intense and stunned waiting for what is going to happen." When the VOKS organised a reading of Pushkin's poems to peasants in their traditional garb, Neruda had his final awakening experience: "nature seemed to finally form a victorious unity with the human being."⁴⁶⁶

The Uruguayan Jesualdo Sosa (1905-1982), a writer of children's books, widely read pedagogue and head of the Uruguayan-Soviet Friendship Association, joined the cheering crowd of Latin American admirers of Stalin. His detailed travel account *Mi viaje a la U.R.S.S.* ("My voyage to the USSR") celebrated in depth the completely new world he had encountered during his trip in 1951.⁴⁶⁷ Shown around by VOKS-guides on self-chosen itineraries, he was overwhelmed by the programme: the Metro, the university, the Volga canal, the libraries, the theatres and especially the production of children's books left him awestruck. The workers to him seemed to work self-determinedly, good-humouredly and effectively; their salary was fair, the jobs secure, the unions strong.⁴⁶⁸ There was state insurance, a fantastic health care system and free education. Museums, theatres, cultural palaces were all around. A strong sense of responsibility that all Soviet citizens shared prevented problems with discipline, Sosa believed to have found out.⁴⁶⁹ During the obligatory excursion to the Caucasus, he admired Kolkhozes, universities and sanatoriums.

After his Soviet trip, Sosa met up with a large group of Latin American intellectuals in Czechoslovakia. The Ecuadorian author Enrique Gil Gilbert, the Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén, the Brazilian Jorge Amado, the Puerto Rican-Mexican novelist José Luis Gonzales and the Uruguayan Jesualdo Sosa sat in a restaurant in downtown Prague and, in pan-Latin American solidarity, agreed on the higher significance of what was happening in the Soviet Union. The new Soviet man, they concluded, was ascetic and creative, brave, educated and immune to the

⁴⁶⁶ "Amé a primera vista la tierra soviética y comprendí que de ella salía no sólo una lección moral para todos los rincones de la existencia humana, una equiparación de las posibilidades y un avance creciente en el hacer y el repartir, sino que también interpreté que desde aquel continente estepario, con tanta pureza natural, iba a producirse un gran vuelo. La humanidad entera sabe que allí está elaborando la gigantesca verdad y hay en el mundo una intesidad atónita esperando lo que va a suceder." NERUDA 2001, p. 237.

⁴⁶⁷ SOSA 1952.

⁴⁶⁸ SOSA 1952, p. 91.

⁴⁶⁹ SOSA 1952, p. 111.

cheap temptations of life. Perhaps after several rounds of smooth Czech beer, Sosa emphatically contrasted free life in the Soviet Union to the sad serfdom in their home countries: “all America was for a moment with us, with its dreams and its realities ..., imprisoned by tyrants and their lackeys and scum.”⁴⁷⁰

Two of the other guests in the Prague restaurant that night completed the gang of the most notorious Latin American admirers of Stalin: before he became Brazil’s most famous and cherished author of the 20th century, the Brazilian novelist Jorge Amado (1912-2001) was already a staunch believer in Soviet Communism. After years of commitment to the Brazilian Communist Party, he finally went to the USSR for the first time in 1951, where he was awarded the Stalin Peace Prize. His extensive travelogue *O mundo do paz* (“The world of peace”) was yet another eulogy on every aspect of the Soviet system and even justified the Eastern European show trials.⁴⁷¹ Many years later, in his memoirs, Amado showed deep regret and remembered with shame how they actually knew of the persecutions and the anti-Semitism of late Stalinism – but accepted it tacitly.⁴⁷² Amado had been so convinced by the world he was presented that only a year later he came again, and this time, he brought some friends: the writers Graciliano Ramos (1892-1953) and Dalcídio Jurandir (1909-1979), like Amado, were Communist party militants. Ramos, a renowned novelist and head of the Brazilian authors association, collected his impressions in a long travelogue called *Viagem* (“Voyage”). Very benevolently and in poetic language he praised the Soviet Union to the skies and mocked Western panic-mongering: “yes, they have a cruel dictatorship there, one that steals the workers’ sleep and excessively educates him.” After the, for him overwhelming, trip to Moscow, Leningrad and Georgia, Ramos developed doubts as to whether his pessimistic literature about poverty, misery and disease in North-Eastern Brazil was still appropriate for this fantastic and happy new world. Ramos did notice the excesses of Stalin’s personality cult, but believed that “Westerners were simply not able to comprehend this, this unconditional devotion to the leading politician.” And after all, this was certainly just a passing phase, necessary to involve all these Siberians and Kirgiz people into the grand project of building the new society.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷⁰ “Con nosotros estuvo así al instante, presente, toda la América, con sus sueños y sus realidades; con su desgraciada manquera. Estuvo bien presente allí, en el acuerdo de cada uno, y en el amor por lo que de más puro tiene esta geografía nuestra; esta geografía amada y generosa encarcelada por tiranos, lacayos y miserables.” SOSA 1952, pp. 285–287.

⁴⁷¹ JORGE AMADO: *O mundo da paz. União soviética e democracias populares*. Rio de Janeiro, Editorial Vitória 1951.

⁴⁷² AMADO 1992, pp. 31; 67.

⁴⁷³ RAMOS 1970, pp. 53; 58; the first edition came out in 1954, a good dozen more appeared until the late 1980s.

The Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén (1902-1989), finally, had come to the USSR in 1952. He had already met his intimate friend Jorge Amado in Moscow before they went together to the Prague dinner. Shortly after this trip, his second time in the Soviet Union after a first stay in 1948, Guillén summed up his impressions in a short prose text that he later added as a chapter to his memoirs. He recalled being amazed by Moscow, by the architecture, by the large selection in grocery shops (!) and by the advances in technology he saw at a 3D-screening in a Moscow cinema. His summary: the Soviets are full of childlike elation as one apparently often finds it often with young peoples, just like the US Americans.⁴⁷⁴ In 1954, Guillén was awarded the Stalin Peace Prize and, from that point, was going to be the most faithful and loyal Latin American visitor to the Soviet Union – he came back at least ten more times.

Until the mid 1950s, Latin American travellers to the Soviet Union came to see the utopia they expected to find. Their ideas and expectations were very similar to those of their Western-European and Mexican colleagues in the 1930s: they took the world that was staged for them as real, but even though they all hailed the Soviet Union as a utopian place, hardly any of them went as far as the Honduran writer Ramón Amaya-Amador and actually stayed to live in the Eastern Bloc. Even Guillén, who at the time was not allowed to return to his native Cuba, preferred Paris exile between his many short visits to Moscow. Yet in their writing, they all hailed Stalin's dictatorship and his apparent achievements for the Soviet Union and the world.

The Stalinists' crossroads: Khrushchev's secret speech

It was not until the death of the dictator in 1953 and the cautious condemnation of his crimes by Khrushchev during the 20th Party Congress in 1956 that a serious rethinking about the Soviet Union happened among most of these Latin American leftists. Neruda recalled that he learned about the extent of Stalin's crimes only through Khrushchev's speech: "it was a harrowing occurrence which brought us to new discernments." Yet Neruda did not lose faith in the Soviet Union, and instead harboured "a feeling that we were new born ... and we continued with the truth in our hands!"⁴⁷⁵ In consequence, he did not question his own blind faith or even the Soviet project as such, but made a break with 'maoestalinismo' and vowed complete dedication to the "new" Soviet Union under Khrushchev's leadership. Instead of the

⁴⁷⁴ NICOLÁS GUILLÉN: *Páginas vueltas. Memorias*. La Habana, Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba 1982, pp. 348ff.

⁴⁷⁵ NERUDA 2001, p. 250.

abstract utopia, he now turned to the more concrete achievements of the post-Stalinist Soviet Union: he poetically celebrated hydroelectric power plants as “temples by the lake”⁴⁷⁶ and became an ardent supporter of the space programme. During his subsequent visits, he met the cosmonauts Yuri Gagarin and German Titov and praised the Sputnik in poems. Until the end of his life, Neruda remained a faithful friend of the Soviet Union, whatever new directions its leaders would take. Even in 1968, he refused to comment on the invasion of Czechoslovakia and did not stand up for the threatened Alexander Solzhenitsyn. He excused himself explaining he did not want to make anti-Soviet propaganda and pointed at the allegedly even worse situation for intellectuals in the West.⁴⁷⁷

Jorge Amado remembered learning of Stalin’s death at a CP meeting in Rio de Janeiro: “I was paralysed, desolate, lost. My eyes were dry, my heart convulsed.” He rushed to meet Neruda and the Chilean communist Volodia Teitelbojm in Buenos Aires to cope with the grief. Unlike his comrades, however, Amado soon developed a critical stance to Khrushchev’s USSR, after the revelations of the Party Congress made him reconsider his political stance. On the one hand, he still felt “linked to the Soviet Union like through an umbilical cord”. He struggled, tried not to lose faith: “days of fear, damned, unholy, which become dark weeks and months. The doubts mount up, we may not doubt, we want no doubts, we want to continue in unscathed faith, in certitude, want to follow the ideal. In sleepless nights we look at each other, with lumps in our throats and a wish to cry.” Still in the same year, Amado left the Brazilian Communist party. He protested against the treatment of Pasternak in 1960 (“...even though I did not like the novel”) and, later in his memoirs, showed deep regret for his *O mundo do paz*. Nevertheless, Amado came back many times to the Soviet Union, “cured of Stalinism, immune against the virus of radicalism”.⁴⁷⁸ No longer attracted to Soviet style Communism, he was a loyal friend and pen-pal of many Soviet intellectuals including Ilya Ehrenburg, Oleg Ign’atev and Vera Kutejščikova, his “Soviet family”.⁴⁷⁹ Politically, Amado looked for new horizons: he critically supported Fidel Castro’s Cuba and campaigned for Third World interests.

José Revueltas (1914-1976) passed through a similar gradual, complex and painful process of apostasy. A member of the Mexican CP since 1928 (when he was 14 years old!), he had been expelled in 1943 for a lack of party discipline. Yet, while Amado abandoned the party after the revelations about Stalin’s crimes, Revueltas initially was inspired by the opportunity of a

⁴⁷⁶ NERUDA 2001, pp. 282; 291.

⁴⁷⁷ HOLLANDER 1997, p. 72.

⁴⁷⁸ AMADO 1992, pp. 79; 145; 148; 156; 268.

⁴⁷⁹ AMADO 1992, p. 244; Korrespondencija Erenburg – Amado. RGALI f.1204 op.2 d.1206.

new and just socialism. "With the death of Stalin in 1953, socialism took on new dimensions of hope", he remembered, "there was a newly recaptured glamour of international communism as a political strategy." Revueltas was allowed back into the Mexican Communist party, dutifully backed the Soviet invasion of Hungary and made a second trip to the motherland of socialism in 1957. Revueltas' political careening was reflected nicely in his literary work: his 1949 novel *Los días terrenales* ("The terrestrial days") was a sharp repudiation of left dogmatism, heavily criticised by Pablo Neruda at a World Peace Council meeting in Mexico. In the year of Khrushchev's speech and readmitted to the party, Revueltas again wrote two rather conventional socialist realist criticisms of capitalism. *En algún valle de lagrimas* (translated to English as "Valley of tears") in 1956 and *Los motivos de Cain* ("Cain's motives") were completely conversant with Soviet aesthetics and morals. On his way to Moscow in spring 1957, he wrote his "letter from Budapest to the communist writers", blaming them for having been silent on Stalin's crimes – while being very silent himself about the recent Soviet violence during the Hungarian uprising.⁴⁸⁰ Yet Revueltas' pro-Khrushchev phase was short-lived. His 1958 *Ensayo sobre un proletariado sin cabeza* ("Essay about a headless proletarian") was consequently again a criticism of the entire left and, somewhat pharisaically, of reformism and opportunism. In 1960, he was expelled once more from the Mexican CP 'for revisionist tendencies'. With his 1964 novel *Los errores* ("The mistakes"), he, finally and for good, renounced Soviet style Communism. Dedicated to the memory of the executed Hungarian reform communist Imre Nagy, it contraposed idealistic militants to party dogmatists in 1930s and 40s Mexico and described the mirror images of the Moscow purges in the ranks of the Mexican party. The positive protagonist is an idealistic left professor who, in the 1950s, tries to trace his disappeared comrades. The party communists, depicted as a bunch of violent criminals, try to silence him.⁴⁸¹ Revueltas, now excluded for good from the circle of friends of the Soviet Union, repeatedly dealt with questions of loyalty and dogmatism in his work for the rest of his life. In 1966, he wrote a passionate defence of the Soviet writers Andrej Sinjavskij and Julij Daniel' called "A Soviet 'Freeze' on Free Expression of Thought".⁴⁸² Having lost his admiration for the USSR, Revueltas still remained an active advocate of socialism and travelled many times to Castro's Cuba. In 1968, he became one of the intellectual initiators of the student movement in Mexico, an activity for which he spent several years in prison.

⁴⁸⁰ KUTEJŠČIKOVA 2000, p. 123; SAM L. SLICK: *José Revueltas*. Boston Twayne 1983, p. 169.

⁴⁸¹ JOSÉ REVUELTAS: *Los errores*. Mexico, Fondo De Cultura Economica 1964.

⁴⁸² SLICK 1983, pp. 173ff.

Just like Revueltas, Diego Rivera (1886-1957) saw the revelations of the 20th Party Congress as a chance to be readmitted to the party, from which he had already been excluded in 1929 under the somewhat obscure reproach of being a ‘Trotskyite’. His memoirs, written shortly after his readmission in 1954, included accordingly an all-encompassing praise of the Soviet Union.⁴⁸³ From late 1955 to early 1956, Rivera came again to Moscow to get treatment for his cancer but died in Mexico the year after. His lifelong rival David Siqueiros (1896-1974), who had come for a visit to Rivera’s sickbed during a Soviet trip that year, had been a Stalinist from the very beginning and a lifelong member of the Mexican CP (albeit excluded and re-admitted three times); he only wrote his memoirs at a time when Stalin was already partially rehabilitated by the Kremlin. Siqueiros did not comment directly on the Party Congress, but, during de-Stalinization, criticised a certain drift towards formalism in Soviet arts and a "mechanical realism, another form of cosmopolitanism" in a speech to the Soviet Academy of Arts. This was such an obvious call for a return to Stalinist aesthetics that even Aleksandr Gerasimov, president of the Academy and notorious for both his Stalin portraits and his political conservatism, left the hall. Yet Siqueiros’ general depiction of the USSR remained very positive, both from this trip (“I saw a sea of luxury ... and the biggest optimism on earth”) and from another one in 1967. He was elected an honorary member of the Soviet academy of arts and won the Lenin Peace Prize (donating the 25,000 roubles to Ho Chi Minh). Like Neruda, he stayed a loyal friend of the Soviet Union until the end of his life: "I reiterate, for what remains of my life, my intention of fidelity to the party and to proletarian internationalism."⁴⁸⁴

More intellectuals of this generation remained loyal to the Soviet Union and simply avoided commenting on the revelations about Stalinism: the Argentinean feminist writer and political activist Maria Rosa Oliver (1898-1977) received the Lenin Peace Prize in 1958. “I love your land for what it is and for that it gives us hope for a better future”, she declared, “In Moscow, I felt something important was happening, something decisive for all mankind and that its citizens knew.” Stalin’s crimes and Khrushchev’s speech she did not mention at all. For events like the Hungarian uprising, some leftist intellectuals like Oliver reiterated the flimsy Soviet explanations of a fascist counterrevolution supported by the capitalists through Radio Free Europe.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸³ DIEGO RIVERA; GLADYS MARCH: *My Art, My Life. An Autobiography*. New York, Citadel (1960).

⁴⁸⁴ PHILIP STEIN: *Siqueiros. His Life and Works*. New York, International Publ 1994, pp. 322; 373; SIQUEIROS 1977, p. 458.

⁴⁸⁵ HEBE CLEMENTI: *María Rosa Oliver*. Buenos Aires, Planeta 1992; Korrespondencija M. R. Oliver – Boris Polevoj, 21-12-1958, RGALI f.631 op.26 d.4413 l.1.

For the writer Pedro Jorge Vera (1914-1999), Moscow was still “the symbol of our ideals of justice”⁴⁸⁶ when he came to the USSR in the early 1960s, where was received by Khrushchev personally: “to feel the reality of this new world strengthened our convictions.” He uttered a certain relief that Stalinism had been overcome, was very positive about the prospects for Soviet Communism and sent his son to study at Lumumba University. After these allegations and another journey to the USSR, Vera could not return to his native Ecuador and sought refuge in Chile. His close friend Joaquín Gutiérrez (1918-2001), the best known novelist from Costa Rica, opted for a four year exile in Moscow. Both Vera and Gutiérrez had the same take on the USSR during de-Stalinization: not completely uncritical, but definitely benevolent. Gutiérrez summed up his experiences in a 1967 book called *La URSS tal cual* (“The USSR as such”).⁴⁸⁷ He tried to explain both extreme adulation and the damnation of the Soviet Union in terms of a lack of knowledge, and gave a lot of factual information in his book. He commended the rise in living standards, the successes in agriculture, the technological achievements and the development of a public opinion. Convinced of the abilities of Soviet medical care, he had his good friend Carlos Luis Fallas (under the pseudonym Calufa himself a renowned Costa Rican writer) come to Moscow for treatment in 1965. Gutiérrez was rather benign on Stalin (“30% bad, 70% good”⁴⁸⁸) and saw Brezhnev as the man to solve some of the problems that Khrushchev had been unable to. Gutiérrez’ depiction of Soviet society no longer emphasised its utopian character, but rather underlined its normality: people lived like everywhere else on earth, had families and worked for money. “The state [was] puritan, the population [was] not”, education was very important, religion tolerated but not encouraged.⁴⁸⁹ His bottom line, not just after only a superficial guided visit, but after four years living among Soviet citizens as one of them: “the best qualities of all peoples have condensed in the Soviet Union. A sense of solidarity, not only towards the family but the entire society. ... There is more honesty, less prejudice, more sensibility and less pride.”⁴⁹⁰

The official revelation and acknowledgment of Stalin’s crimes shocked a generation of Latin American leftists, but it did not altogether destroy their fascination for the Soviet Union. Thus in late 1956, Vera Kutejščikova, the official VOKS-guide for Latin American visitors, noted that “most of my Mexican friends (are) glowing with socialist ideas; in me, they saw the representative of a state that had implemented these ideas. Soviet society was in their eyes a

⁴⁸⁶ VERA 1993; 1-1961, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.339 l.62.

⁴⁸⁷ GUTIÉRREZ 1967.

⁴⁸⁸ GUTIÉRREZ 1967, p. 17.

⁴⁸⁹ GUTIÉRREZ 1967, pp. 71ff.

⁴⁹⁰ GUTIÉRREZ 1967, p. 144.

paradise, and I was their guide to this paradise.⁴⁹¹ But this utopian view of the USSR disappeared before long. The metaphysical dimension of the admiration, the rhapsodising of a political system that was to redeem the rest of the wretched world, gave way to a more sober assessment of concrete achievements and advantages of the Soviet state. Sooner than others, Jorge Amado rescinded his utopian idealising of Soviet realities altogether, but stayed in contact with many Soviet intellectuals. Alfredo Varela, the most enthusiastic of all fellow-travellers during late Stalinism, also lost his blind idealism during Khrushchev's de-Stalinization campaign. In the mid 1950s, he was even arrested and jailed for urinating against the Soviet embassy in Buenos Aires. No one in the Soviet Union seems to have registered either the incident or his change of mind: he remained a popular and officially supported author and film maker. Like Amado, Varela was now occasionally critical of the Soviet Union, but stayed in contact.⁴⁹² For other Latin American leftists, de-Stalinization temporarily rekindled their hopes for socialism: José Revueltas wrestled and wavered for a long time. Initially, he saw, just like Diego Rivera, his chance to be readmitted to a Communist world movement that seemed back on track again. Revueltas' friend, the poet Eduardo Lizalde (1929-) passed through a similar development: "after visiting the Soviet Union, you feel confident that a new world can be built", he said after his first trip. It was the anti-Stalinist socialist spirit in the Soviet Union that made him join the ranks of the Mexican Communist party in 1955. But like Revueltas, he was soon disappointed with Khrushchev's USSR, too; both were excluded from the ranks of the Mexican CP in 1960 and began their common quest for new socialist horizons.

¡Cuba Sí, Soviet No! A new generation of leftists

Some Latin American left intellectuals without a Stalinist past, and thus *intelectuales comprometidos* without the Spanish double meaning, saw the Soviet Union from the beginning with less empathy. The godfathers of Magic Realism, the Guatemalan Miguel Asturias (1899-1974) and the Franco-Cuban Alejo Carpentier (1904-1980) showed no particular interest in the Soviet utopia.⁴⁹³ Although both travelled several times to the USSR

⁴⁹¹ KUTEJŠČIKOVA 2000, pp. 29f.

⁴⁹² Korrespondencija Varela – Erenburg. Letter by Varela to Erenburg, 19.10.53, RGALI f.1204 op.2 d.1354 1.1-6.

⁴⁹³ 'Magic(al) Realism' was a term coined and excessively used in Western Europe and the United States. Latin American authors themselves actually sought for their own version of Socialist Realism. See: VOLPI 2009, p. 69; ARTURO TARACENA: 'El camino política de Miguel Angel Asturias'. Mesoamerica 38 (1999), pp. 86–101.

in the 1960s (Asturias even won the Lenin Peace Prize), they never wrote much about it. The Mexican novelist and essayist Carlos Fuentes (1928-) had great hopes in Khrushchev's Thaw as he perceived it during a 1963 visit. But he claimed to be more useful to the left cause as a writer than as an activist and did not bother much with inspirations the Soviet Union could possibly give to Latin America. He gave up his optimism anyway, when the USSR invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968. Fuentes travelled to Prague the same year, together with Julio Cortázar and Gabriel García Márquez, to show their support for the reform socialists.

A younger generation of rebellious intellectuals looked primarily to Cuban socialism and perceived the Soviet model as a rather distant and strange phenomenon. The Peruvian Mario Vargas Llosa (1936-) belonged to this group in his younger years. Better than anyone else, however, Gabriel García Márquez (1926-) represents this generation. Affiliated with the Colombian Communist Party from 1955, he nonetheless had a very critical stance towards the Soviet Union from the beginning of his political activism. In 1957, after some failed attempts to obtain a visa, he finally managed to get to Moscow under the pretext of being an accordion player in a Colombian folklore band. His collection of essays about his trip, *90 días en la 'Cortina de hierro'* ("90 days in [sic!] the Iron Curtain") was first published in the journal *Cromos*.⁴⁹⁴ The book edition came out only after a year-long struggle with the publishing house, but later became a best seller, making it to at least seven editions by the 1980s.⁴⁹⁵ Much debate accompanied the publication: while for conservative readers, García Márquez showed too much empathy with Soviet realities, many leftists reacted indignantly as he was very critical of many aspects of Soviet life.⁴⁹⁶ In terms of objectivity, García Márquez' account might be the most balanced and insightful account of Soviet life by a foreign intellectual in the 1950s. In the company of a French journalist and his Colombian friend Plinio Mendoza (referred to in the book as an Italian journalist, to save him from hassles), he travelled for three months through Communist Europe. One of the first aspects he noticed was how many people on his trip spoke his mother tongue: on the train to Moscow, he shared a compartment with Spaniards who came as refugee children from the Spanish Civil War. And in Moscow, he believed Spanish to be the "most widely spoken foreign language". García Márquez described the dangerous naïveté of the many Latinos he met in Moscow and tried to contrast their view with a blunt picture of the USSR ("Like women you have to get to know countries in the early morning, without the makeup..."). People looked very much alike to him

⁴⁹⁴ GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ 1982.

⁴⁹⁵ SALDÍVAR 2005, pp. 354–358.

⁴⁹⁶ IRNBERGER 2005, p. 179.

at first glance, and it always took him longer in conversation to actually note the differences. In an interesting contrast to the paternalistic stance many Soviets held towards the Third World, García Márquez felt that most Soviets suffered from an inferiority complex. He was struck by the megalomania of Moscow's architecture, which he felt was suffocating and gloomy, and described the capital as a huge, somewhat backward village, fettered by slow bureaucracy and completely dead at night. While he did note, like most travellers, an impressive knowledge and education in the world's languages and geography ("[my translator] knew more about South America than most South Americans"), García Márquez also described an ignorance about current world affairs: "no Soviet I talked to knew Marilyn Monroe!" Asking about the political change, García Márquez noted that most people knew the details of Khrushchev's secret speech from the year before, but hardly anyone spoke out against Stalin openly. Only one elderly lady, a decorator at the Gorky-Theatre who offered herself as guide and translator, ran Stalin down for hours and described him as the biggest criminal in Russian history.

García Márquez made no attempt to object to her view, but he did try to do justice to the Soviet system: "with the same belief with which we see the negative sides, we also have to discern that no one suffers from hunger and no one is unemployed." He liked the well-functioning infrastructure and the punctual trains. Most people in the street, including soldiers, he found very friendly, helpful, curious and generous – and very anxious to draw a positive picture of their state: "it is clear that they back their political system." He was also, half-ironically, happy not to see a Coca-Cola advert over 22,400,000 kilometres. Knowing of the dangers of short visits to the Soviet Union, García Márquez reflected on several occasions during his visit upon staged worlds and the realities behind. He noted the contrast between the impressive scientific and technological achievements and the relative poverty most people had to live in. Somewhat surprising is therefore his cautious assessment of the Hungarian revolt. He was allowed to Budapest as one of the first foreign observers. While he did criticise the brutal methods of the Soviet Army, he also stated that "without Soviet troops there would be no more Communist party and nothing similar to a democracy" and was rather positive about János Kádár.⁴⁹⁷

There were very different reactions and attitudes to Stalin's death and Khrushchev's de-Stalinizing Soviet Union within the Latin American left intelligentsia. The old Stalinist guard remained, by and large, faithful till death to the Soviet Union despite all revelations and

⁴⁹⁷ GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ 1982, pp. 25; 115-129; 133; 138; 152; 176.

changes, as did Neruda, Rivera, Siqueiros, Rosa Oliver, Guillén, Vera or Gutiérrez. Others, like Revueltas and Lizalde, initially hailed the spirit of the Thaw as a new chance for real socialism, while Varela and Amado were disenchanted with the Soviet Union and turned to Cuba instead. All of them however, including the most obedient friends of the Soviet Union, gave up the chiliastic view of the country as a red utopia. The metaphysical rhetoric of socialist paradise and communist redemption did not stand up to the realities and gave way to a more sober view of the – often still idealised – accomplishments of the Soviet state.

As the first generation of Latin American admirers of the Soviet Union, born between 1890 and 1920, gradually lost its influence, most of the younger leftists, born from the 1920s, no longer took much inspiration from the red empire. The Soviets did try to stay in contact with the Latin American left, but now their own conservatism stood in the way of the more revolutionarily spirited Latinos: when, in 1966, Luis Pedro Bonavita, head of the Uruguayan *Frente Izquierdo de Liberación* (“Left liberation front”) was, like so many Third World intellectuals before him, shown around the Caucasus, his translator and guide reported to his GKKS-bosses: “They are nice people, but their political education is weak. They really believe in a speedy continuation of the revolution in Uruguay.”⁴⁹⁸ The lack of support by the Soviets for Third World revolution disappointed many a Latin American leftist. Abraham Guillén, intellectual godfather of the Uruguayan city guerrilla *Tupamaros*, finally called the Soviet Union itself an imperialist state.⁴⁹⁹ A similarly radical renunciation of the Soviet model of development by a leftist came from Eduardo Galeano (1940-). The young literary hero of Dependency Theory made a clear statement on Western and Soviet reformism in his 1971 manifesto *Las venas abiertas de América Latina* (“The open veins of Latin America”): “I put them all in the same sack!”⁵⁰⁰

This seems like the final word about Latin American intellectual interest in the USSR. In the long run, most of the Latin American leftists were indeed completely disenchanted with the Soviet Union as socialist utopia. This section however, like many accounts of Latin American intellectual history, has only considered a certain type of writer: all of them were from their country’s upper or upper middle class, all of them felt linked to the intellectual tradition of the West, all of them had spent much time in Europe or the United States, all of them were leftists. With the exception of Nicolás Guillén they were all whites and with the exception of

⁴⁹⁸ Očet o pribyvanii v SSSR presidenta Levogo fronta osvoboždenija Urugvajja (FIDEL) Luisa Pedro Bonavity s suprugoj, 9-3-1966, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.1014 1.28-31.

⁴⁹⁹ ABRAHAM GUILLÉN: *El Capitalismo Soviético. Última etapa del Imperialismo*. Madrid, Queimada Ediciones 1979.

⁵⁰⁰ GALEANO 1971.

Maria Rosa Oliver they were all male. In the course of the 1950s and 60s, this classic type of the Latin American intellectual lost interest in the Soviet Union. Others did not.

Making new friends. Indigenous authors, conservatives and Catholics

It was midnight, when the Peruvian poet and novelist Gustavo Valcárcel (1921-1992) arrived in his Moscow hotel room in October 1963. Moved to tears, he listened to the *Internationale* played over the hotel intercom system, stepped on the balcony, overwhelmed by his feelings, and looked upon “the capital of world socialism, illuminated by lights and the future. ... I took one of the many hammer and sickles from the firmament and I engraved with them a letter: Violeta, we have not fought in vain! I have seen the accomplished reality of all our dreams!”⁵⁰¹ Back in his room, Valcárcel wrote – on paper – a series of emphatic poems about the Soviet Union and the future of a socialist America.

It was his second trip to Moscow. In 1960, he had already written a travelogue that unconditionally celebrated the new Soviet Union under Khrushchev. *Reportaje al futuro. Crónicas de un viaje a la U.R.S.S.* (“Report to the future. Chronicles of a trip to the USSR”) objected to a recent and rather balanced account by his liberal compatriot Francisco Miró Quesada (see next section).⁵⁰² Following contemporary Soviet party doctrine one hundred per cent, Valcárcel denounced the excesses of Stalin’s personality cult, but, beyond that, drew an over-optimistic picture of the Soviet model as the future of mankind. For almost 400 pages, Valcárcel extolled the superiority of the efficient Soviet industry, agriculture and education with a shellfire of statistics. Rents were low, income high, the women free, the children happy. Schools and universities and health care and sanatoriums were free. Soviet youth, even though free to dance Rock ‘n’ Roll as much as they liked, still patriotically loved their national cultures. Amazed by the spirit in Soviet art that still fought against decadent formalism, Valcárcel welcomed the treatment of Pasternak. He denounced the Hungarian insurgents as a bunch of fascists and celebrated the Soviet Third World solidarity he felt during a visit of Lumumba University. At a parade for the cosmonauts Yuri Gagarin and German Titov on the Red Square, Valcárcel got an honorary seat next to his Latin American colleagues Pablo Neruda, the Chilean feminist activist Olga Poblete de Espinosa, the Haitian

⁵⁰¹ <http://gustavoyvioletavalcarcel.blogspot.com/2009/02/biografia-y-obra-de-gustavo-valcarcel.html> (last access: 16-11-2010).

⁵⁰² VALCARCEL 1963.

writer René Depestre and Joaquín Gutiérrez. Valcárcel summed up this first Soviet trip as “one of the most intensive emotional experiences of my life”.

In 1965, Valcárcel came again to Moscow, in order to see his son, whom he had sent to study at Lumumba University. After his epiphany and all the eulogies to Khrushchev’s accomplishments during the first and second trip, Valcárcel, upon return, was initially a bit sceptical about Nikita’s ousting. But he quickly bought into the official explanation that Khrushchev had stepped back for health reasons. He sighed with relief and wrote yet another book, *Medio siglo de revolución invencible. Segunda parte de ‘Reportaje al futuro’* (“Half a century of invincible revolution. Second part of the ‘Report to the future’”). For another 320 pages, Valcárcel harped on about the usual feats of his socialist utopia, the architecture, the education and health care system, the women rights, the family values, the overall progress. One part of the book was hinted at already in chapter one: the section *Kasajstan: Un ejemplo para América Latina* (“Kazakhstan. A role model for Latin America”) drew parallels Valcárcel saw between the Soviet republic and his native Peru. Both had around eleven million inhabitants, among them “large masses of indigenous people” who had lived in misery. Thanks to the Soviet modernisation of the 1930s, Valcárcel continued, all the backwardness of the Kazakhs, their lack of industry and their illiteracy rate of 98% had been overcome, without the painful phase of capitalism. 10,000 schools and 38 universities now gave free education in several languages. The virgin land campaign, according to Valcárcel, was much more successful than the Western press pictured it. Agricultural output, the exploitation of minerals and industrial production had increased hundredfold. Art and culture allegedly blossomed in the modern cities. Unlike Peru, Kazakhstan had made huge progress from the same starting level. In this unfavourable comparison, Valcárcel saw the reason why Peruvians were actually prohibited from travelling to the Soviet Union.⁵⁰³

Gustavo Valcárcel came from a very humble family background and thought of himself as a *poeta del pueblo* (“poet of the folk”). Other writers who, like him, did not identify themselves so much with the European tradition of the, mostly white, urban intellectuals, but with their indigenous ancestry were invited to the USSR in the 1950s and 1960s. While García Márquez or Carlos Fuentes no longer maintained an idealised perception of the Soviet Union, some of these indigenous poets still continued – for a while – the metaphysical celebration of the Soviet Union as anti-Western socialist utopia.

⁵⁰³ VALCARCEL 1967, pp. 17; 50-64; 69ff.; 182-187; 217.

The Bolivian novelist, poet and indigenous activist Jesus Lara (1898-1980) belonged to this group of writers: considering himself an “Indio puro ... with only a few drops of Spanish blood”, he wrote most of his literary work in his native language Quechua – much of which was translated and spread also in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. A member of the Bolivian Communist Party from 1952, he travelled to the Soviet Union the year after and hailed the “earth of the new man” in his travelogue *La Tierra del Hombre Nuevo. Experiencias de Viaje a la Unión Soviética* (“Experiences from a trip to the Soviet Union”).⁵⁰⁴ Lara’s compatriot, the writer Fausto Reinaga (1906-1994) reported from the red utopia in similar vein. From a poor campesino family, he had learned to read and write only at the age of 16, but later became Bolivia’s most widely read and influential indigenous intellectual. On the brink of losing his faith in Marxism due to the boundless sectarianism of the Bolivian workers’ movement, he had long felt the need to see the Soviet Union in order to refresh his ideals. A desired trip to Moscow for the World Youth Festival failed in summer 1957, as he could not afford the travel costs. In autumn, he could not wait any longer: “and if I die on the way, I have to get to Russia!” Luckily for him, Bolivia was governed by the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement MNR at the time. No less a figure than the Bolivian president himself, Hernán Siles Zuazo, agreed to contribute to his trip. On his odyssey to Moscow, Reinaga experienced both the remnants of colonialism and the pan-Latin American and anti-imperialist sentiments prevailing at the time: in Brazil, he was appalled by the racist attitudes he felt against the black population. Stuck without money after his next leg in Buenos Aires, he was supported by Argentinean intellectuals for weeks, and they finally bought him a ticket to Europe. He crossed the Atlantic and on his way saw the French imperial system during a stop in Senegal and fascism in power in Spain. “It caused nausea and I was completely disillusioned with Europe”, Reinaga recalled.⁵⁰⁵ From Spain, he took a ship to Genoa, a train to Stuttgart, another one to Leipzig (from where he admired the *Sputnik*), and, after a weeklong journey, he finally arrived in Moscow. The title of his book on the Soviet Union, *El sentimiento mesiánico del pueblo ruso* (“The messianic demeanour of the Russian people), may sound like a condemnation of red imperialism. But in fact, Reinaga embraced every aspect of Soviet life. He was deeply impressed by the technological feats, the atomic energy, the factories, the health care and education system and the ubiquitous rhetoric of peace on earth. Like his hosts, Reinaga excoriated the United States on every occasion – and returned

⁵⁰⁴ MARIO LARA: ‘Jesús Lara (1898-1980). Homenaje’. *Marxismo Militante* 24 (1998), pp. 79–83.

⁵⁰⁵ REINAGA 1960, p. 38.

to Bolivia reassured of his Marxist ideals: “I came with some petit bourgeois doubts, but I left enthusiastically with an assignment and a clear worldview.”⁵⁰⁶

Around the same time as Reinaga, in 1957, a young Nicaraguan by the name of Carlos Fonseca (1936-1976) came to Moscow. Born and raised under the poorest conditions as an illegitimate child, he could only afford to study law thanks to financial benefits from his well-off father, and had become the head of a Marxist university group in Managua. In this function, he was – unlike Reinaga – awarded one of the few travel grants to the World Youth Festival in Moscow and to a meeting of the World Federation of the Democratic Youth in Kiev. Many years later, already as founder and leader of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), full of nostalgia, Fonseca remembered his first stay in the Soviet Union in a book called *Un Nicaragüense en Moscú* (“A Nicaraguan in Moscow”)⁵⁰⁷. He recalled his sentiments upon standing in the centre of Moscow, “I thought I was dreaming”. He contrasted the allegedly “massive counterpropaganda against the USSR in Nicaragua” with his positive impressions. During 40 years of communism, the Soviets had to spend 18 years in defensive warfare, Fonseca explained somewhat cryptically. Considering the destructive forces of war, the progress of this society seemed fantastic to him. All the Soviets he met were highly educated and well-dressed, students were paid, and no one was unemployed. Religion and the press were completely free, Fonseca claimed, and even in villages, libraries were better than the biggest one in Managua. Defending Stalin against international reproaches, the Nicaraguan explained the perception of Khrushchev’s speech with a false translation: *criticism*, he lectured his readers, actually meant critical acknowledgment in Russian. The events in Hungary he explained, just as in the official Soviet depiction, as attempts at a fascist putsch.⁵⁰⁸ Upon return to Nicaragua, Fonseca was arrested, interrogated for three days and went finally to Cuba, but remained an ardent supporter of the Soviet Union.

This lingering idealistic view of the USSR under Khrushchev as a flawless utopian society was typical for a group of intellectuals who shared certain features: they all came from poor backgrounds, mostly from the poorest countries of the Americas, such as the Bolivians Lara and Reinaga and the Nicaraguan Fonseca. They also identified strongly with the indigenous people of their home countries as, for example, the Peruvian Valcárcel or the socialist writer and journalist Fernando Benítez (1912-2000), who, from 1954, travelled many times to the Soviet Union where he shared his knowledge as a renowned expert on the indigenous tribes in

⁵⁰⁶ REINAGA 1960, pp. 137ff.

⁵⁰⁷ FONSECA 1980.

⁵⁰⁸ FONSECA 1980, pp. 20; 40; 48; 60.

his native Mexico.⁵⁰⁹ These indigenous writers were impressed longer by Soviet self-representation due to the circumstances they grew up in: Soviet living standards around 1960s were indeed higher than for the average person in their home countries. And the fact that Latin American critics of the Soviet system were usually white upper middle class men made their allegations unreliable to some of the *mestizo* authors, who explicitly wrote their eulogies of the Soviet Union against García Márquez' or Quesada's assessments of Soviet life.

This ethnic factor in the perception of the USSR could have offered an advantage to Soviet attempts at spreading a positive image of their country in the Third World. However, the documentation of the GKKS does not reveal a policy or an order to specifically target non-white intellectuals in their invitations. A reason for this self-restraint may have been that not all *indigenistas* shared this uncritical admiration for the Soviet Union. Rosario Castellanos or José María Arguedas, both from upper class white families but famous for their espousal of *indigenismo*, never showed particular interest in Russia. And the admiration of the Sovietophiles did not last for too long, either: like Haya de la Torre in the 1930s, many drifted away from Soviet style Communism with its focus on industrialisation and rational progress to a specific kind of Latin American indigenous socialism. Lara abandoned the Communist party in 1969 because it – upon orders from Moscow – propagated only a non-violent path to socialism and for that reason had deserted Che Guevara in his fights in the Bolivian jungle. Reinaga was arrested right after his return to Bolivia, where the local Communists made no move to help him. After his release, he made a pilgrimage to Machu Picchu, site of an ancient Inca town, and, as founder and mentor of *indianismo*, established the first indigenous party PIAK (Partido de Indios Aymaras y Keswas), later renamed PIB (Partido Indio de Bolivia). From the 1970s finally, Benítez and many other indigenous writers, just like many urban white leftists, included the Soviet Union in what they considered the camp of European imperialists. Manuel Scorza, *guerrilla* fighter in Chile and Peru and *indigenista* writer dedicated a chapter of his last novel, *La danza inmóvil* (“The immobile dance”, 1983), to the disillusion of Peruvian Communists with the Soviet Union; its title: *Moscú ya no es Moscú* (“Moscow is no longer Moscow”).

⁵⁰⁹ Očet o rabote s meksikanskim pisatelem Fernando Benitesom, 29-11-1966, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.1021 l.27-32.

Fausto Reinaga was not only a militant *indigenista* Marxist. He was also an anti-clerical, but pious Christian, who hailed Moscow as “the new Jerusalem” and felt “like Lazarus after Jesus’ healing” when he saw Lenin in his mausoleum.⁵¹⁰ The young Salvadoran poet Roque Dalton (1935-1975), too, was a devout Christian when he came to Moscow for the 1957 World Youth Festival (which did not keep him from writing kitschy poems about Lenin). Dalton later radicalised, participated in the guerrilla struggle in El Salvador and was finally shot by his own comrades, who wrongly suspected him of being a CIA-agent. During his stay in Moscow, however, the Catholic Dalton was still attracted to the Soviet Union for its redemptive promise of a just society. The messianic demeanour of the Soviet Union, as Reinaga put it in his book title, attracted indeed not only socialists. Most authors from the entire political spectrum dedicated parts of their travelogues from the Soviet Union to the question of religion. Almost all of them confirmed that freedom of faith prevailed at least on paper and that persecutions of believers were long over, yet still noted that few people went to church.

The GKKS tour guides adapted to the interest and concerns of their Christian visitors and had Soviet Orthodox priests confirm the freedom of religion in the Soviet Union. When the Brazilian journalist Nestor de Holanda and a Catholic travel companion came to the Georgian capital Tbilisi, they were presented an Orthodox priest, who confirmed to them: “the Communists and we Christians actually fight for the same goal: to humanise human life. The socialist regime is, above all, humanitarian. We Christians and Communists belong together.”⁵¹¹ Many Catholics were actually not so much interested in the Russian or Georgian Orthodox Church, but in the ideology of the state itself, an ideology in which many perceived Christian elements. In fact, André Gide, in the 1930s, had already believed many Catholic ideals had been realised in the USSR.⁵¹² Many Latin Americans continued this spiritual view of the Soviet Union during the Thaw.

The Colombian pedagogue Agustín Nieto (1889-1975) was member of best circles of his native Bogotá, founder of an alternative school system comparable to Maria Montessori’s in Europe – and he was a practising Catholic. Impressed like many by the successful *Sputnik*-flight, he travelled to the Soviet Union in 1959. His intention was to get to know the

⁵¹⁰ REINAGA 1960, p. 29.

⁵¹¹ de HOLANDA 1962, p. 26.

⁵¹² RYKLIN 2008, p. 134.

education system which could produce such knowledge as to lead to the “historic leap of the Russian people”.⁵¹³ His report *El secreto de Rusia* (“Russia’s secret”) was published as a series of articles in the newspaper *El Tiempo* and, in several editions, as a book.⁵¹⁴ The Soviet vice-minister of education and the general secretary of the Academy of Pedagogy explained to Nieto the educational system, showed him schools, universities, libraries and organised visits to research institutes. Nieto was deeply impressed. He considered the education in the Soviet Union “excellent” – and found interesting reasons for its success: Soviet students were so bright, Nieto claimed, because they were not confronted with sexual lures as everything vaguely erotic was prohibited. Taverns, bars and restaurants hardly existed, Nieto noted delightedly, and newspapers did not feature gossip and scandal. The Catholic Nieto believed he had found “a new religion [in the Soviet Union], the religion of work” and concluded: “the materialist ideology of the Soviet man is intimately impregnated by the bourgeois Christian morality.”⁵¹⁵

Nieto, the conservative Catholic, did not return a Communist, but he found plenty of parallels between his *ora et labora* attitude and Soviet policies: “Soviet ideals and goals are like our Christian ones, this is something capitalism is lacking”, he felt and agreed with certain limitations on freedom of expression in the USSR: “ugly degenerations of modern art should not be tolerated!”⁵¹⁶ Nieto’s résumé was accordingly positive: “this Russian people, which we find so distant from us physically and spiritually, is nevertheless, even if we would never have believed that this could happen, giving lessons to us, lessons of purity, of honesty, of love towards our studies, of tenaciousness in our most difficult endeavours, of humble conduct.”⁵¹⁷ The book edition of Nieto’s pro-Soviet account could only be published in Colombia with an afterword by the editors. They did not deny the Soviet feats and successes, but felt the need to comment: Nieto, an otherwise unblemished and renowned thinker, they said, unfortunately had gotten in with Western fellow travellers to the Soviet Union. The USSR, they warned, was very attractive at first glance, but a useless and possibly dangerous example for Colombia.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹³ NIETO 1960, p. 16.

⁵¹⁴ NIETO 1960.

⁵¹⁵ “La ideología materialista del soviét ... está íntimamente impregnada de la burguesa moralidad Cristiana”, NIETO 1960, p. 32.

⁵¹⁶ NIETO 1960, pp. 58–64.

⁵¹⁷ “Este pueblo ruso que tan distante de nosotros lo hallamos en lo físico como en la espiritual, y que sin embargo, aun cuando nunca creímos que llegara el caso, nos está dando lecciones de orden, de pulcritud, de honestidad, de amor al estudio, de tenacidad en los más duros empeños, de austera conducta”, NIETO 1960, pp. 64f.

⁵¹⁸ NIETO 1960, pp. 95ff.

Nieto was not the only conservative Latin American Catholic who developed particular sympathies for the Soviet Union. Ironically, while many leftists turned their back on the USSR in the 1960s, conservatives increasingly took an interest in what some of them perceived as a genuinely conservative state. Alberto Dangond (1933-) was a man of many vocations, a trained lawyer and a producer of television shows. He was also a practising Catholic and sat in the Colombian parliament for the *Partido Conservador* (“conservative party”) – and he liked travelling: In early 1967, he toured the Soviet Union and, being also a writer, wrote a book about his experience. *Mi diario en la Unión Soviética. Un conservador en la U.R.S.S.*⁵¹⁹ (“My diary in the Soviet Union. A conservative in the U.S.S.R.”) is perhaps the most surprising account of Soviet life ever written: a staunch Catholic conservative Latino praising the motherland of atheist socialism to the skies. The president of the *Partido Conservador*, Alvaro Hurtado, contributed one of the forewords. Not less surprisingly, he claimed that “we conservatives need the Revolution, the challenge. We have domesticated Marxism and we lack the intellectual incentive!” It was the late 1960s, and the conservatives agreed that the Western alternative with its youth in destructive rebellion was much worse than what was happening in the East: “you cannot live without ideals!”

Dangond got the standard tour programme through the Soviet Union and, like many others before him, was impressed by hydroelectric power plants, the electrification of Siberia and the result of the literacy campaigns. A true Latin American intellectual, he found the level and amount of cultural life in Leningrad fantastic (“I am ashamed of Bogotá compared to it”). What makes his report particular is how he paralleled Soviet Communism to his own political and moral ideals, and discovered more similarities than with his liberal compatriots. In Minsk, Dangond was invited to debate population policies and birth control – and found only like-minded persons: “I am radically anti-communist, this is the truth, but I, Catholic and patriotic Colombian, conservative, from a small underdeveloped and tropical nation, met here, in the capital of Communist Belorussia, a government official, who says exactly the same words and thinks the same ideas that I would have said, with the same human warmth!” He had always thought that Marxism wanted to destroy the family, Dangond explained, the basis of his conservative values and traditions, but now in the USSR he saw precisely the opposite: “the application of Marxism in this Soviet Union has produced, at least as I perceived it with my eyes and in good faith, a practice of morals, of a social life and of a development of the human being which are easily identifiable with our best and most valued Christian, Catholic

⁵¹⁹ DANGOND 1968.

ideals.” At first glance, this is a great conservative system, Dangond wrote, “there is no lack of order, no anarchy, no lack of discipline! ... Everyone respects the authorities, the discipline, the order!”; furthermore: “these hierarchies in the Soviet Union correspond perfectly with the nature of man, it is authoritarian and at the same time wonderfully dynamic and vital within a jurisdictional order and the consent of everyone.”⁵²⁰ The conservative Catholic Dangond saw all his own ideals realised, social stability and an apparently high standard of private morals of Soviet citizens, seemingly Christian elements in the Soviet constitution, family policy, sexual habits, the ubiquitous patriotic rhetoric of national unity and a messianic spirit: “the Soviet Union is the best example of how the impetus of revolution and conservative philosophy can be harmonised”⁵²¹

Dangond’s position was extreme, but not an exception. Many intellectuals from his political and religious background shared his views of the Soviet Union – in Brezhnev’s USSR, some Latin Americans saw a modern successful conservative state. The Argentinean traveller Joaquín Torres felt, while impressed with their accomplishments, that the socialist countries would become increasingly conservative and nationalistic.⁵²² The journalist Pedro Clavijo reasoned after his trip to Moscow: “there is not a more traditional society than the Soviet one!”⁵²³ Gonzalo Canal (1916-1994), a Colombian novelist, professor of sociology and a Christian politician, wrote a rather similar, if more differentiating account of a 1968 trip to Moscow, where he was received as a guest of the press agency APN. In *La Unión Soviética. Reto moral* (“The Soviet Union. A moral challenge”) Canal demanded a fair assessment of the USSR and communism as such. One has to understand the condition under which it developed, he claimed, and instead of rejecting it *per se*, one should have a close look at the positive values it contains. Canal conceded that religion was oppressed in the early days of the revolution, but defended these measures as an only somewhat overzealous anticipation of the Second Vatican Council! Now in the late 1960s, while religion was completely tolerated, the real faith of the people was the belief in the Soviet state and its ideology. Art was considered a religion now, and the Russians prayed in countless museums, orchestra halls, cinemas and on the radio. Canal saw close parallels between the Christian catechism and the values of Soviet society: a strong belief in an idea and a high esteem for work, collectivism, appreciation of the family and intolerance towards enemies of the faith and towards parasitical

⁵²⁰ DANGOND 1968, pp. 41; 139; 156; 179.

⁵²¹ DANGOND 1968, p. 161.

⁵²² JOAQUÍN TORRES: *Viaje a Rusia y a otros países socialistas*. Buenos Aires, Edición del Autor 1962, p. 281.

⁵²³ Carta de Moscú. *El Año Nuevo Socialista*. Clipping from an unknown newspaper, 27-12-1974. Archive of the Soviet-Colombian Friendship Institute.

conduct characterised both Soviet Communism and Latin American Catholicism. Lenin in this view appeared as another Redeemer, and Canal indeed compared each of his April Theses to the Evangelium! Thanks to this conception of the world, all Russians were cheerful and optimistic, and in addition to that highly educated and yet still modest. “What impressed me most”, Canal summed up, “were not the technological achievements, the hydropower, the spaceships, but the new man as Lenin created (!) him. ... This new man, his cultural and moral values, is the great strength of the Soviet Union”.⁵²⁴

Not all Latin American Catholics developed a crush on a spiritual and conservative USSR. The closer they were to the official church, the likelier people were first of all to condemn the atheist state and its deputies in the Americas. The Chilean Raúl Aldunate (see next section) was drastic in his criticism of the anti-religious stance of the Soviet government.⁵²⁵ Many religious visitors, among them the Peruvian philosopher Francisco Miró Quesada and the Venezuelan writer Miguel Otero Silva, were appalled by the museum of atheism in Leningrad’s Kazan Cathedral.⁵²⁶

Catholic guerrilleros like the Colombian priest Camilo Torres (1929-1966), by the same token, hardly cared about the old Soviet Union. Some of them, like Torres’ *compañero* priest Gustavo Pérez, had been to the USSR in the late 1950s, but eventually found the Chinese model of armed struggle much more useful for their aims. Similarly, the more pacific arm of liberation theology was not inspired or even supported directly by the Soviets. The Nicaraguan poet and socialist excommunicated priest Ernesto Cardenal (1925-) did pay a visit to Moscow at some point in the late 1970s. But also for him the role models now lay elsewhere.

Complaints about the loss of spiritualism in an increasingly materialist world dominated by economic interests gained weight.⁵²⁷ The uncritical celebration of the USSR in the style of Nieto, Dangond and Canal was not representative of Colombian or even Latin American Christians. Mystical Catholicism and the widespread hope of redemption, however, led some conservative Catholics to believe that the Soviet Union was maybe not a perfect place, but at least better than the materialist, soulless West. In all the travelogues presented in this section resonated a deep contempt for the decadent and immoral Western Europe and North America,

⁵²⁴ GONZALO CANAL: *La Unión Soviética. Reto Moral*. Bogotá, Imprenta y Rotograbado 1969, pp. 11; 38; 69; 76f.; 140; 175.

⁵²⁵ ALDUNATE, p. 90.

⁵²⁶ MIRÓ QUESADA 1989, p. 60; MIGUEL OTERO SILVA: *México y la revolución Mexicana. Un escritor venezolano en la Unión Soviética*. Caracas, Universidad Central de Venezuela 1966, p. 33.

⁵²⁷ E.g.: ANGEL RAMA: *Los poetas modernistas en el mercado económico*. Montevideo, Universidad de la República 1967.

its incomprehensible modern art and music, its increasing sexual libertarianism and even tolerance towards homosexuality, drugs, its confused and disoriented youth and their excesses and superficial amusements.⁵²⁸ That Canal usually refers to *Russia* rather than to *the Soviet Union* points already at a new, or rather very old, mystifying perception of Eastern Europe that resurfaced in the course of the 1970s.

The liberal flirtation with illiberalism

Some conservatives and Catholics, who deplored the loss of tradition and spirituality through Western influence on their own societies, displayed sympathy for the traditional elements of Soviet society. Another group of Latin American intellectuals, more in line with worldwide progressive-optimistic sentiments of the 1950s and 60s, still hailed modernisation; they, too, found that the Soviet Union offered something they were missing at home. Left liberal thinkers, writers and politicians sought national progress and reform of their political systems, their constitutions and their societies. Liberal more in the US American than the European sense, they came mostly from the rather developed and comparatively rich countries of the hemisphere, they had no particular interest in communism, but were impatiently reform-oriented with rather social-democratic ideals. Dictatorships had ended all over the Americas, which led to a general optimism among many of the countries' intellectual elites and a widespread sense of *raised expectations*, as I have called it in the introduction. The communication revolution spread information on the higher living standards in the West, and a demographical boom and the introduction of universal suffrage brought masses of peasants to the big cities of Mexico, Colombia, Brazil or Argentina, where they sought better lives and demanded political participation. Latin American cities thus had to cope with an influx of mostly illiterate new citizens and their immediate need for modernised infrastructure.

Many Latin American liberals were, like the leftist usually white male long-established upper middle class, and recognised that the Soviet Union had made tremendous progress in fields they wanted to see improved within their own countries, most notably the expansion of the education system and state health care. Some of these liberals came to the USSR to see for themselves and wrote about their impressions for an audience back home. José Guilherme Mendes was a young journalist for several Brazilian newspapers when he came to Moscow in

⁵²⁸ CANAL 1969.

1955. The populist dictator Getúlio Vargas had just committed suicide and Brazil had started its decade of developmentalism with huge state-led campaigns for the modernisation of the country. Mendes wrote a series of essays on all aspects of life in the USSR and Eastern Europe, which were published as *Moscov, Varsóvia, Berlim. O povo nas ruas* (“Moscow, Warsaw, Berlin. The people in the streets”) back in Brazil.⁵²⁹

The industrial and agricultural development in the USSR palpably impressed the Brazilian visitor. After a tour through Stalingrad, Mendes commended the quick and effective reconstruction after the Second World War. In Armenia and Azerbaijan, he marvelled at the electrification programme and the education- and health care systems. Illiteracy – in 1920 still at the same low level as in contemporary Brazil – had been erased here, he was told, and people flocked to museums and libraries that had been built in every little town of the formerly agrarian and “backward” Transcaucasian republics. Like many other visitors, Mendes had never come across such deep knowledge about his native country abroad, and every single person he met knew at least Jorge Amado and the Brazilian CP-boss Luis Carlos Prestes.

During his two and a half month trip, Mendes analysed not only the political system and the administration. With a great deal of empathy, he also described people’s habits, lifestyles and opinions of their country as he, knowing some Russian, perceived them in numerous personal contacts and conversations. The Soviets were “indeed a new type of man” for Mendes, all obvious shortcomings notwithstanding, they – while in great fear of a new war – appeared proud and patriotic: “no power in this world will be able to topple this Soviet system. It has become inherent to this country as parliamentarism has to the West. People seemed very friendly and open whenever he talked to them. Yet they tended to avoid a second meeting out of fear of being seen regularly with a potentially hostile foreigner – a phenomenon many other travellers to Soviet Union, described throughout its existence. Mendes did note several negative aspects of life in the USSR. He found the controlled media terrible, the television boring and the much praised Soviet cinema mediocre at best. In contrast to Soviet perceptions of the Third World as entirely underdeveloped, the Brazilian considered many aspects in the Soviet Union – the average living standards or the way people dressed – as “backwards” or even “uncivilised”. Debating with Ilya Ehrenburg they agreed that much of Soviet architecture was plain ugly. Compared to many leftist – or even Catholic – visitors, he neither expected nor described a metaphysically superior society, but criticised many other repressive

⁵²⁹ MENDES 1956.

or appalling aspects of the Soviet state. Yet the quick state-led modernisation of the country and its recuperation after the devastating war, the expansion of the health care system and an education system that erased illiteracy not only among the urban masses but also in formerly underdeveloped regions of the country's periphery impressed the liberal journalist, whose home country was confronted with rather similar challenges. Mendes concluded after his trip accordingly: the Soviet Union "is neither hell nor paradise".⁵³⁰

His compatriot, the journalist Nestor de Holanda (1921-1970), visited Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Tashkent and Tbilisi in 1959. Aleksandr Alekseev, official GKKS-guide and later ambassador to Cuba, was initially very sceptical about his protégée. "He has very vague ideas about the Soviet Union... and asks a lot of provocative questions that I refused to answer." he wrote in the obligatory rapport to his superiors.⁵³¹ But Alekseev's concerns were unfounded. More than any other liberal Latin American visitor to the USSR, Nestor de Holanda was taken in by the official programme staged for him. His suspicious, critical stance in the beginning gave way to one of the most enthusiastic reports on the USSR ever written by a non-communist. Holanda's travelogue *O mundo vermelho. Notas de um Repórter na URSS* ("The red world. Notes of a reporter in the USSR") became a multi-edition best seller that uncritically celebrated the USSR for its readers in developmentalist Brazil, shortly before the left populist presidents Quadros and Goulart established diplomatic relations with countries of the Eastern bloc and sought to modernise their country with state-led campaigns. Holanda's descriptions of life in the Soviet Union were still rather objective and distant in the first half of the book, as they repeated only standard facts on the history, geography, climate and infrastructure of the Soviet Union. Holanda, too, was palpably pleased at how well-informed Soviet citizens were about the rest of the world and Brazil in particular; everyone in the Soviet Union appeared to love Brazilian football and Jorge Amado, and everyone knew the current Brazilian president Kubitschek and his project to build a new capital in the highlands of inner Brazil. A poignant moment for Holanda was an occurrence in an Uzbek library: he found, in the midst of Central Asia, all volumes of his beloved Brazilian author Antônio Frederico de Castro Alves on the book shelf. All these references to his home country plus several well-paid offers to publish in Soviet newspapers were very flattering, and his guide Alekseev seems to have done good job, too: more and more, Holanda took over many clichés of Soviet self-representation. Prostitution had been erased, he claimed, alcoholism and crime were well on the way to becoming extinct. Women were free, productive and still chaste,

⁵³⁰ MENDES 1956, pp. 9; 18; 20; 40ff.; 51; 80.

⁵³¹ 7-1959, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.322 l.143.

truthful and kind. Soviet cultural life was colourful and as international as in the West. Transport and hotels were cheap, and Soviet citizens travelled a lot. This progress of the Soviet Union, compared in a flood of statistics with the predominantly agrarian tsarist Russia of 50 years before, truly left an impression on the Brazilian visitor.⁵³²

In order to share his experience with even more Brazilian readers, Holanda wrote another book, *Diálogo Brasil – URSS* (“Dialogue Brazil – USSR”).⁵³³ He had collected questions by anti-communists and politically indifferent Brazilians before his departure to Moscow and forwarded them to Soviet citizens he met during his trip – “without any interference of the state”, Holanda claimed, but of course always with an official translator present. 100 of these questions and answers were collected in the book. Soviet housewives explained to Brazilian housewives how they did their shopping and how they raised their children. A Catholic priest in Moscow assured his Brazilian colleague that he was absolutely free to practise his religion. Factory workers responded likewise to factory workers, politicians to politicians, judges to judges and children to children in the best Soviet speech. Soviet journalists assured their Brazilian counterparts that complete freedom of the press prevailed and they themselves decided what to print and what not (“I have never seen a censor in my life!”). Artists defended the Soviet state’s hostile position towards abstractionism. One of the most obvious untruths Holanda believed and forwarded was an answer to the question as to why Soviet people could not travel abroad: “I am very surprised indeed at this question”, a random man in the street allegedly had responded to Holanda, “We all are free to travel anywhere we want to. Who does not acknowledge that has no idea about the Soviet Union.”

Holanda managed to remain a respected journalist in Brazil for all his blind following of the Soviet Union. While other benevolent observers also pointed at repressive or ineffective elements of the Soviet model, Holanda, in 1963, wrote yet another book, *Como seria o Brasil socialista?* (“What would a socialist Brazil look like?”), which suggested reforms for all parts of Brazilian society and politics along Soviet lines. Holanda took over not only political ideas but even Soviet language in his work, and he, still claiming not to be a Communist, worked with the Brazilian CP on several book projects for Soviet publishing houses.⁵³⁴

The Brazilian fascination with Soviet modernisation programmes lasted even when, in 1964, a putsch ended Goulart’s presidency and the subsequent military government persecuted Communists and leftists throughout the country. Genival Rabelo, originally a left liberal

⁵³² de HOLANDA 1962, pp. 80f.; 118; 135; 207f.

⁵³³ NESTOR DE HOLANDA: *Diálogo Brasil - URSS*. Rio de Janeiro, Editôra Civilização Brasileira 1962.

⁵³⁴ NESTOR DE HOLANDA: *Como seria o Brasil socialista?* Rio de Janeiro, Editôra Civilização Brasileira 1963.

journalist, now collaborated with the new regime in the field of development politics, and travelled to the Soviet Union in 1967. In his travelogue *No outro lado do mundo. A vida na URSS* ("In the other part of the world. Life in the Soviet Union"), he boasted: "I have visited seventeen towns, big and small, starting with Moscow which has a population of about seven million and ending with Neftyanе Kamny, an oil town of only 5000. ... I have been to different republics, seen factories and mills, schools, dwellings, homes for the aged, sanatoriums and health resorts, power stations, sports clubs, research institutes, and churches. I have spoken freely to people holding responsible posts in that country, and with workers, peasants, students and clergymen." Visiting construction sites, oil derricks in Baku, airports and giant dams in Siberia he revelled in the progress in gender roles, health and child care and the highest student ratio on earth. He stressed the tempestuous growth of culture in Transcaucasia, noting that Azerbaijan had more than twenty higher educational institutions, an Academy of Sciences, and over 100 newspapers. Due his origins in the huge country of Brazil, Rabelo was enthusiastic about the civilisation that came with Soviet power to the former backwoods and unexplored areas of Siberia: "as late as the thirties, Siberia was a neglected land, a predominantly agrarian area, like Brazil. Now it is being electrified, its heavy industry is growing rapidly. It is producing steel. Many labour processes are being mechanised. It will not be long before Siberia really becomes one of the richest places in the world. Even today it provides 90 per cent of the Soviet Union's hydropower resources and 80 per cent of its timber wealth." Soviet people seemed very hospitable to Rabelo: "they are very much interested in the Brazilian people," and they appeared eager to learn about life in other countries and displayed a feeling of internationalism and fraternal concern for the working people of the world.

Rabelo's account, like Holanda's, was very benevolent, too, but it was not overly ideologised. He did see and describe the mediocre living standards, the small number of private cars and the prevalence of prostitution. But he welcomed the ostensible irreversibility of socialist development, "not only due to the strength of the state, but because Soviet citizens want it." Rabelo perceived the Soviet people as happy and free to love, work, travel and enjoy the amenities of life. Rabelo's take on the Soviet Union was a mix of a Western revisionism and a typical Third World view. He believed the Soviet Union to be a generic industrial state with impressive achievements that were much better recognisable from a Southern than a Western perspective. His overall take is remarkable: "20 more years, and the Soviet Union will be the

most progressive and happy country on earth.”⁵³⁵ With this conclusion, Rabelo’s colleague and Sovietophile Nestor de Holanda could easily agree, and he wrote the introduction to the book. The Iron Curtain does exist, Holanda believed, but the bar was on the Western side.

While Holanda’s uncritical embrace of the Soviet Union remained an exception among Latin American liberal intellectuals, several other observers from the liberal political consensus wrote accounts of their trips to the Soviet Union. Like Mendes or Rabelo, they were usually critical of many aspects, but made no secret of their fascination for successes in the modernisation of the infrastructure of a formerly predominantly underdeveloped country. Raúl Aldunate (1906-1979) was a member of the Chilean authors’ association and a parliamentarian for the liberal party in the National Congress in Santiago. A former career in the military had taken him all around the world; in 1959, he spent some time in the Soviet Union and wrote his travelogue *En Moscú* (“In Moscow”) about it.⁵³⁶ Explicitly distancing himself from both communist eulogies and demonisations of the USSR, he described in extensive detail his impressions and experiences. He came as a private man to the Soviet Union, which made obtaining a visa a difficult and protracted procedure – very different from the invited friends of the Soviet Union, who were supplied and supported from the very beginning. Once in Moscow, Aldunate claimed, he was free to go wherever he wanted, albeit only in the company of his guide and translator. He noted the enormous efforts the Soviets kept expending to portray themselves as positively as possible towards foreigners. This pride was not limited to officials. Ordinary people also reacted very sensitively when he questioned – always in the presence of the official translator – some of the Soviet feats he was presented. Aldunate, however, was not overly critical anyhow. People to him seemed to live better lives than 50 years before. At least in part due to their biased opinion about the outside world, Soviet citizens appeared to him proud and content. Walking through the poorer Moscow neighbourhoods, Aldunate was pleased not to see any beggars and the misery he knew from Latin America’s big cities. His negative impressions included the masculinised appearance of Soviet women and the precocious lectures by Soviet students he met at the Latin American department of the Moscow State University. And in a conversation where no translator was necessary, he learned more of the downsides of life in the Soviet Union: he met Argentinean and Chilean communists, who had given up their citizenship in order to live in the socialist utopia with a Soviet passport. They had long lost their revolutionary idealism, but now were stuck for good in the USSR.

⁵³⁵ RABELO 1967, pp. 2; 5; 91; 193; 238.

⁵³⁶ ALDUNATE

Aldunate had never shared their utopian idealist view of the Soviet Union and thus summed up his impressions from Moscow in a very positive light anyway: the Chilean liberal was very enthusiastic about the progress the Soviets had made in their educational and scientific systems. He described Soviet political decision makers as intelligent, well-meaning and capable. The Soviet Union, according to Aldunate, contributed positively to peace on earth and suffered only from a biased and ignorant perception by the rest of the world.⁵³⁷

The Peruvian Francisco Miró Quesada (1918-), who also came to the Soviet Union in 1959, was more critical of Soviet realities in his bestselling travelogue *La otra mitad del mundo. La Unión Soviética* (“The other half of the world. The Soviet Union”), whose title already made clear to which part of the planet he felt he belonged. Life especially in the Soviet countryside, Miró Quesada felt, was very monotonous and over-regimented. In a conversation with *Izvestija*-editor Aleksej Adžubej (“...actually a very smart guy”) he criticised heavily the lack of freedom in Soviet media (“the press was the worst thing I saw in Russia”). Adžubej tried to defend and explain the Soviet idea of freedom of the press as something genuinely different from what it meant in the West, something that meant true freedom. In front of the entire chief editorship of *Izvestija*, Miró Quesada asked why, in this case, the Soviet press, even though allegedly always representing the interest of the people, had never criticised Stalin. There was palpable turmoil in the office, he recalled, and no one dared to answer his question. While the Peruvian Communists in Miró Quesada’s group, (“actually intelligent and affable people”) found everything they saw in the USSR *maravilloso*, Miró Quesada also insistently criticised also the treatment of Pasternak and the occupation of Eastern Europe.

Yet in several editions of his book up until the 1980s (“The other half of the world. Thirty years later”⁵³⁸), Miró Quesada explained why he, as many other Latin American liberal intellectuals, found the Soviet Union an interesting place anyway: “the enormous technical achievements of the Soviet Union found great interest in the Latin American public. We should not believe that this has to do with Communist leanings. On the contrary, most of us are not communists, but people who are fed up being swathed in the confusing fog of systematic campaigns of distortion, campaigns that are run in order to leave our country in its miserable situation.” The at least decent living standards of even the poorest and the apparent gender equality was to Miró Quesada’s liking, as was the “existence of a collective spirit that leads the masses to a defined goal.” His hopes for Peru lay in an organisation that would end the exploitation of men by men in a similar way. All his detailed criticism of Soviet realities

⁵³⁷ ALDUNATE, pp. 41; 50; 98; 110.

⁵³⁸ MIRÓ QUESADA 1989.

notwithstanding, Miró Quesada drew a surprisingly positive conclusion about the achievements of the Soviet state.⁵³⁹

In his *Viaje a Rusia y a otros países socialistas* (“Voyage to Russia and other socialist countries”), the Spanish-born Argentinean liberal Joaquín Torres, too, reported initially rather critically about his Soviet experience.⁵⁴⁰ The first parts of the book are a constant moaning and groaning about bad food, terrible service in shops and restaurants, the climate, the way people dressed, the boring media, the lack of entertainment and the absurdity of different classes in trains and airplanes in an ostensibly classless society. Just like Miró Quesada, however, his description showed ever more sympathy as he proceeded. After some days in the Soviet Union – and probably after having overcome a serious cultural shock –, he increasingly acquired a liking of many aspects of life in the USSR. Illiteracy had been erased, he noted, and the mostly very well educated Soviet citizens spoke many languages, often including Spanish. His guides explained without hesitation that this had been the result of a Soviet education policy in which free training in more than 100 languages was given to over 1.8 million students in schools and at universities. The Soviet Union, Torres learnt, printed more than 278 million books a year and edited 7246 journals. More numbers hailed down on him, on agriculture, industrial output, ethnicities, so-and-so-many more doctors and engineers than in the United States – and Torres conveyed them to his readers. As many other non-communist liberal observers, Torres was impressed by the education system, the free health care and the well-functioning public transport system in the Soviet Union.

Another traveller in this spirit was Miguel Otero Silva (1908-1985), an author, journalist, editor and humorist, whose work was translated and distributed in the Soviet Union. He had been a member of the Venezuelan Communist Party, but had left its ranks in 1949, appalled by its dogmatism during late Stalinism. As the left liberal he developed into, he kept an interest in the Soviet Union and travelled there shortly after Khrushchev’s dismissal. Like many other writers, Otero Silva began his *Un escritor venezolano en la Unión Soviética* (“A Venezuelan writer in the Soviet Union”)⁵⁴¹ by dissociating himself from all other travellers before him: “observers usually to go to the Soviet Union in two different ways, both prejudiced. Some come to find everything despicable, discover starving masses and gagged people. ... The others are like Muslim pilgrims to Mecca, prostrating before each and every smokestack that rises in front of their steps, poor sinners returned to the terrestrial paradise.”

⁵³⁹ MIRÓ QUESADA 1989, pp. 10; 45; 49; 68; 86; 108.

⁵⁴⁰ TORRES 1962.

⁵⁴¹ OTERO SILVA 1966.

Otero Siva himself claimed to give a completely objective account instead. He declined the offer of special treatment by the Soviet association of authors and instead travelled on the usual tourist routes through the USSR. He found Moscow a terribly ugly city and believed he felt the legacies of Stalinism in many aspects of Soviet life, from art policies to people's behaviour in public. While some Latin American Catholics had found the messianic spirit in Russia attractive, the ex-communist Otero Silva found fault with the quasi religious worship of Lenin. "People actually venerate him with a devotion comparable to the Christians who go to Jerusalem ... like the enlightened apostle of universal communism." But in this prevailing spirit, he also saw parallels to the United States. Compared to the latter, Otero Silva pointed out, the general living standard was much lower, but there were no slums and "ghettos as those of the negroes in Los Angeles". There was no hunger, no misery, and, considering where this country had stood 50 years before, this was great progress. The experience of the Civil War and the Second World War, an observation many other travellers to the Soviet Union made around that time, had resulted in a great desire for peace in the population.⁵⁴² This cautious praise of the USSR, far from the eulogies of Holanda or even some Catholics, was enough to win Otero Silva the Lenin Peace Prize in 1979.

The Colombian Mario Laserna (1923-), finally, combined many characteristics of a Latin American *intellectual*: he was a widely-travelled writer and a university professor, founder of Bogotá's *Universidad de los Andes*, the first independent private university in Latin America – and he was also a politician and a diplomat. In 1966, he embarked on a trip to Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and Tbilisi. In a verbose essay before his trip, Laserna had explored his and the world's interest in the Soviet Union and put it in the context of other exemplary theories or utopian societies in the European history of ideas from Christianity to the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. "We are interested in the USSR", was one of his philosophical conclusions, "because it is an experiment, a particular example of a general theory that men with political power must implement, ... be they Marxist-Leninist communists or not, under threat of disappearing from the course of history, or even from mankind." Initially concerned at how he would be treated in the USSR, a friend soothed him: "no need to worry, as soon as they learn that you are South American, they will associate you with Cuba, and you will be very popular!"⁵⁴³ Laserna seems to have been treated very hospitably during his trip, since he returned to Colombia "with a huge sense of admiration for the positive moral and human qualities of the inhabitants of the Soviet Union. ... Independently of my political opinion, I

⁵⁴² OTERO SILVA 1966, pp. 37; 54.

⁵⁴³ MARIO LASERNA: 'Formas de viajar a la Unión Soviética'. *Razón y Fábula* 4 (1967), pp. 57–66.

have to say: it was impressive what the government has done for the benefit of their people. What I saw there is meaningful for the problems of today's Colombia.”⁵⁴⁴

Laserna's judgement focuses on an important factor that shaped the perception of the Soviet Union by Latin American liberal intellectuals. None of them, not even Holanda – whose uncritical embrace remained an exception anyway – cared much about the Communist character of the Soviet regime. They were interested in Moscow's success in the modernisation of the country, because they sought inspiration on how to cope with concrete problems in their own states. The Brazilians, with large scale urbanisation and industrialisation programmes at home, looked at the Soviet Union not as a Communist paradise or hell, but as a state that had only just – within not more than a few decades – crossed the threshold to become a modern society. Laserna was only one of many liberal Colombians who were deeply impressed by the progress of the Soviet state against the dominance of the church in politics and society. And with a long tradition of classical European education, first of all in Bogotá, the ‘Athens of South America’, the Colombians were deeply impressed especially by the education of the masses in the Soviet Union, a fascination that last until the 1970s and crossed all political boundaries. Most Latin American liberals at that time had a highly differential view of the Soviet Union. They did not repudiate it nor did they uncritically embrace it; instead they displayed an interest in certain aspects they considered relevant for their own countries. In a similar way to his compatriot Aldunate and to many other visitors from all over Latin America, the Chilean Minister of Health told his guides during a 1966 visit to Moscow: “I have a special interest in the Soviet Union due to its continuous experience of almost half a century in maintaining functioning social systems.”⁵⁴⁵

Exoticism vice versa

Latin American liberals continued to travel to and write about the Soviet Union throughout the 1970s, yet, gradually, the fascination with certain achievements of the Soviet state faded in favour of a completely depoliticised view – a view that ironically mirrored the way the Soviets had looked upon Latin America a decade before: it exoticised a distant and strange area of the world. Pedro Gómez Valderrama, a novelist, later a liberal State Councillor and

⁵⁴⁴ MARIO LASERNA: ‘El Doctor Laserna en la URSS’. Boletín del Instituto Cultural Colombo Soviético 1 (1966), p. 9.

⁵⁴⁵ 3-5-1966, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.1017 l.141.

Colombian Minister of Education, was sent to represent his country as ambassador to Moscow in the late 1960s. After his return, he summed up his experiences in *Los ojos del Burgués. Un año en la Unión Soviética* (“The eyes of the bourgeois. One year in the Soviet Union”).⁵⁴⁶ Gómez considered his stay in the USSR “a fascinating experience from an intellectual and human point of view” and was in general quite positive about life in the Soviet Union and about its founding father Lenin, “the most important man of the 20th century”. Soviet citizens appeared to him content and proud of their country. On the one hand, Gómez compared, as many before him, Latin America’s problems and challenges to those of prerevolutionary Russia, namely social imbalance, poverty and illiteracy, and acknowledged the Soviet success in overcoming these problems: “I see this country, at this moment, not like a country of extreme revolution, but as the country of a very vigorous realisation of the propositions that initiated the socialist revolution. I see this happening with respect and admiration.”

Now in the early 1970s, however, the liberal flirtation with Soviet methods of state-led modernisation had given way to a cooler, more distant analysis. Instead of suggesting the implementation of some Soviet policies in the Americas, Gómez only came to the Soviets’ defence against exaggerated hostility from the West: “much of what is being criticised is simply incomprehensible from a bourgeois point of view. ... the Western world believes that, under Communist serfdom, 200 million starving people crave for the downfall of socialism and for Western lifestyle. The reality is different. We should not confuse de-Stalinization with Westernisation.” The Soviet model was no longer considered particularly inspiring for Latin American needs, but seen as a fascinating, yet completely different world: “this is one of the most stable countries on this globe”, Gómez explained, “with major economic, political and social possibilities. ... Next to a disoriented Western Europe, the giant Russian bear has simply, after 1000 years of sleep on the right side, turned around and will now continue to sleep unwaveringly on the left side.” In addition to the reference to the ‘Russian bear’, Gómez dedicated many more pages of his memoirs not to political issues or possible inspirations from the Soviet Union, but to topoi of Old Mother Russia, as he pondered Russian literature, described orthodox churches in the countryside or winter life in Moscow.⁵⁴⁷

To the geopolitical backdrop of *détente*, the perception of the Soviet Union lost some of its ideological edge. Most major Latin American states had built up diplomatic relations with the USSR and, in 1973, the Mexican president Luis Echeverría came for the first official visit of a

⁵⁴⁶ GÓMEZ VALDERRAMA 1971.

⁵⁴⁷ GÓMEZ VALDERRAMA 1971, pp. 10; 25; 52; 191; 195.

non-socialist Latin American head of state to the Soviet Union. He got the usual tour for friends of the Soviet Union which took him to Moscow, Leningrad, Irkutsk and the hydroelectric power plant near Bratsk, and he appeared live on Soviet TV and met with Brezhnev and Podgorny. Two Mexican journalists came in Echeverría's entourage and wrote books about their trip that, like Gómez with his Russian bear, showed much fascination for the exoticism of the country they were visiting. The journalist and novelist Luis Spota (1925-1985) described, in his travelogue *El viaje* ("The voyage"), his long lasting dream of finally seeing the USSR. With some sympathy, he noted reasonable living standards, especially the absence of slums and *favelas*. There was freedom of religion, he believed, and a very anti-*machismo* attitude towards women. Some years after the 1968 student protests in Mexico (Echeverría as former minister of the interior had actually been responsible for the massacre of Tlatelolco), Spota noted that students in the Soviet Union were very quiet and unsuspecting. Ordinary Soviet citizens he saw as no different from those anywhere else in the world. On the negative side, Spota felt confronted by very offensive prostitution and constant surveillance by secret agents.⁵⁴⁸ An episode with his guide and translator Sergej illustrates, how little the Latin American visitors still saw the Soviet Union as a role model – and just how little the Soviets realised that: during a wine tasting, the young Russian explained that Soviet champagne was the best in the world. One of the Mexicans interposed ironically that in France they made a decent copy of it. "This is possible", answered Sergej, "the entire world imitates us. They make Vodka in Poland, they make caviar in Iran – and now socialism in Cuba and Chile."⁵⁴⁹

In the same entourage as Spota travelled another renowned Mexican left liberal journalist, María Luisa Mendoza (1930-). She, too, was very excited about her trip: *¡Dios mío, estoy en Rusia!*, "Oh my god, I am in Russia!", was her first awestruck thought at the airport. Better than any other book, her travelogue allows us to comprehend how much the perception of the USSR by most Latin American intellectuals had changed. Mendoza dropped reflections on socialism or Soviet modernisation altogether, and wrote a colourful booklet full of stereotypical depictions of Russia with matrioshka dolls and onion domed towers. The title alone speaks volumes: *Raaa reee riii rooo Rusia. La U.R.S.S. needs no translation* and went a long way from Holanda's fantasies about the Sovietisation of Brazil. Mendoza was now in line with old European exoticising assessments of Mother Russia: "trying to explain it is nonsense, it is made for novels." Like the Catholic visitor Ganzalo Canal, Mendoza hardly

⁵⁴⁸ LUIS SPOTA: *El viaje*. México, Joaquín Moritz 1973, pp. 121–210.

⁵⁴⁹ SPOTA 1973, p. 208.

used the term *Soviet Union* and described *Russia* as some fairy tale place without commercials, criminality, traffic jams, beggars and drugs. The population, including the youngsters in the streets, appeared to her like anywhere else on the planet. But what the West liked to criticise so much about Russia was, according to Mendoza, precisely what made it idiosyncratic.⁵⁵⁰ The novelist Sergio Pitol (1933-), who lived in Moscow in the 1970s as Mexico's cultural attaché, shared these apolitical sentiments towards the Soviet Union: he felt as if he were in a novel by Tolstoy and adored "this incredibly exotic atmosphere: snow, sleighs, the family life in Moscow and in the countryside, .. tea and pastry ..." Russian literature became "a very important part of his life", and he found inspiration for his own writing in this exotic environment.⁵⁵¹ By the end of the 1970s, the Soviet Union was no longer an inspiration for Latin American reformist liberals.

From the mid 1950s on, however, many visitors who belonged to Latin America's liberal political spectrum had come to the Soviet Union, some officially invited, some on self-paid trips, with a lot of curiosity about the developmentalist policies of the Soviet state. Most of them found a lot to criticise about life in real existing socialism; they noted the lack of freedom, a clichéd conception of the world abroad or a grey and sad atmosphere in the streets. Yet none of the reports is confrontational, and many observers throughout the 1950s and 60s were impressed by certain accomplishments of the Soviet Union, which they saw from the background of specific problems in their own countries. Literacy rates and the omnipresence of free education and affordable high culture was a feat all visitors estimated highly. A typical observation from Latin American visitors concerned the absence of *favelas*, of slums as they knew them from their home countries with their serious poverty and misery.

As a matter of course, the judgment of the Soviet Union depended always on the national and social (corresponding to: ethnic) background of the visitor. The liberal intellectuals presented in this section were all from relatively developed countries of the Americas, from Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Chile or Venezuela. Their conception of the Soviet Union differed clearly from reports by visitors from Bolivia or Nicaragua also presented above. There is hardly a trace in the liberals' reports of the utopian idealisation that *indigenista* leftists still displayed towards Khrushchev's Soviet Union. Also the metaphysical, spiritual, anti-Western, anti-pluralist, anti-materialist dimension that some conservatives and Catholics found appealing in the Soviet Union is absent in the writings of the liberals. They were interested, throughout the

⁵⁵⁰ MARÍA LUISA MENDOZA: *Raaa reee riii rooo Rusia. La U.R.S.S.* Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Económica 1974, p. 30.

⁵⁵¹ Quoted after: KUTEJŠČIKOVA 2000, pp. 336–337.

1960s, in concepts that might help them tackle concrete problems in their own countries. The most enthusiastic reports about the Soviet Union were written in Brazil with its many geographical and demographical commonalities – and with both left reformers and military dictators using Soviet methods of enforced development. The typical assessment of the Soviet Union by Latin American liberals commended the feats and the positive spirit of a peace loving population and the – at least in theory – human spirit of the state ideology, but even more the concrete accomplishments in the fields of education, health care and infrastructure. Towards the end of the 1960s, most of the visitors still drew rather positive conclusions about the present and future of the USSR, yet they also made it clear that they considered the Soviet model good for the Soviet Union, but not for Latin America.

Hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans read these travelogues and bought into this respectful view of the Soviet state. Moscow party and state archives are full of letters written by ordinary Latinos who felt the need to share their admiration of Sputnik and Gagarin, or of the free health and education systems. Many liberal newspapers all over the continent reported, not uncritically, but very favourably about Soviet endeavours and achievements. This respectful view last well into the 1970s, but, increasingly, a de-politicised view of Russia gained the upper hand, a view that stood in continuity with an old European tradition to exoticise the East as an irrational, non-Western realm of the anti-modern. Soviet leaders still praised their progressive state, but few cared to listen.

A complex disenchantment. Soviet internationalism, intellectuals and new socialist horizons

In the greater picture, the history of Latin American intellectuals and their perception of the Soviet Union after Stalin is a history of a loss of utopia. In detail, things are much more complicated, and Soviet efforts to win people over for their state were not all in vain. The almost metaphysical view of the USSR as a Communist Mecca or a redeeming utopia, however, came to an end during the Thaw. Many leftists, including some explicitly anti-Stalinist Marxists, still – temporarily – had great hopes in the future of de-Stalinized communism. Yet peaceful coexistence was, on the one hand, too conservative a concept for impatient Latin American intellectuals with socialist revolution on their mind. On the other

hand, the invasions of Hungary in 1956 and, more so, Czechoslovakia in 1968 ended the remaining idealist illusions of most Latin Americans about the character of the Soviet state.

The interest changed from socialist romanticism to a more pragmatic view: Latin American intellectuals during the Cold War were instead interested in certain achievements and features of the Soviet state. Three main lines of argument have crystallised out of the analysed travelogues and memoirs: firstly, an interest in the Soviet development concept that promised a path to industrial modernity that was not based on the unattainable model of Western Europe and the United States. Liberal middle class Latin Americans saw some inspiration in the Soviet Union until well into the 1970s: travellers were impressed by Soviet industrial output, by Soviet technology, by the modernisation of the “backward” periphery, electrification programmes and hydrological power plants. They also commended the ostensible gender equality and the progressive family laws – interestingly at the same time conservatives were glad to see traditional family values and laws intact in the same country. More than anything else, however, liberal observers were interested in the Soviet education system, its successful literacy campaigns, schools and universities. This fascination prevailed throughout the history of the USSR, though, from the 1970s, an exoticising view of the Soviet Union gained popularity among many travellers, who perceived the Soviet state in continuity with the irrational and mystic Mother Russia. The second line of interest was directed against the West as well, but was the very opposite of trust in modernisation: increasingly from the 1960s, Latin American Catholic, conservative and indigenous authors identified with what they perceived as an anti-materialist spirit in the Soviet Union. Thirdly, with their interpretations of the distant Soviet Union, Latin American intellectuals also debated their own role within their societies, as they all admired the high status of intellectual work in the USSR.

An important factor in the perception of the Soviet Union was the authors’ origin. Latin America with its position in between South and West demonstrates clearly the different perceptions of the USSR in the respective world areas. The absence of misery and starvation, or the provision of running water in all buildings hardly impressed any Western visitor in the 1960s. For Third World observers these achievements were of immediate relevance. More than Western visitors, who usually came to see the Soviet Union as an end in itself, the Latin Americans always drew parallels to their home countries: David Siqueiros thought Georgia looked like Mexico and the women like those from the Caribbean. Gabriel García Márquez thought rural Russia looked like Colombia; Fausto Reinaga drew parallels between the

Russian *mušik* and the Bolivian *campesino*. According to José Mendes, the Armenian capital Erevan and its inhabitants looked like a Brazilian city, the Argentinean Joaquín Torres felt that all Armenians are like Latinos, and Genival Rabelo saw Northern Brazilians in the Georgians!⁵⁵²

For Latin Americans with an indigenous background, the Soviet periphery with its own “indigenous” majorities was particularly interesting. Some paralleled the Caucasus with its ancient high cultures that fell victim to “imperialist aggression” to the history of Central American and Andean countries. Interestingly, no one ever said a critical word about Soviet modernisation of the periphery, after all an imperialism of its own. As David Caute noted, Western fellow travellers went to the Soviet Union to celebrate the modernisation of Russia, not for inspiration for their own societies. For Third World visitors after Stalinism, this is certainly not the case. They came to get inspiration for the improvement of the situation in the countries they came from. The Colombian traveller María Mercedes Carranza called this *El discreto encanto del socialismo* (“The secret appeal of socialism”).⁵⁵³ She knew very well of many downsides of life in the Soviet Union, but argued in a conversation with a French diplomat, who bitterly complained about the sad and grim country: “I see all this with very different eyes – the eyes of an underdeveloped country that gyrates in an orbit of influence which determines it economically. Ours is a very different case than the European one. ... I recommend you to write always two letters back to Paris, one from your perspective, and one that corresponds to our point of view. We do not care about the spies and the grain trade. Our problems are very far away from that and do not belong to this dimension. ... In the Soviet Union, at least, no one suffers from hunger, they have enough doctors and they have erased illiteracy and prostitution.”

The guides from Soviet internationalist organisations did a good job in creating a pro-Soviet stance among the visitors; the tenor of most travelogues is predominantly positive. As part of renewed Soviet internationalism after Stalin, the guided tours for Latin American intellectuals, like Soviet self-representation abroad and like the representation of the world abroad in the arts, drew on elements of socialist internationalism of the 1920s and 30s, when – mostly Western – visitors were invited by the VOKS for organised visits to the young Communist state. With their emphasis on technological and infrastructural achievements, however, both the Soviet organisers and the curious Latin American visitors (with the exception of the Catholics) operated in the context of a worldwide craze about progress and

⁵⁵² STEIN 1994, p. 350; RABELO 1967, p. 90; REINAGA 1960, p. 80; MENDES 1956, p. 213.

⁵⁵³ MARÍA MERCEDES CARRANZA: ‘El discreto encanto del socialismo’. Nueva Frontera 127 (1977), pp. 23f.

development in the 1950s and 60s. Travelling to the other side of the planet in order to learn about Soviet achievements, the Latin American intellectual travellers were part of the expanded cultural internationalism of the time.

Those visitors who lost their faith in the USSR usually did not do so during their trip but in reaction to Soviet higher politics or quarrels within their own CPs. Meanwhile, many who came with neutral views went back home with a rather positive stance towards the USSR. Conflicts and problems did occur of course during the guided visits. Translators reported arrogant and bumptious behaviour of their protégées as well as embarrassing situations when terrible service in restaurants and hotels threatened to destroy the positive impressions carefully built up before.⁵⁵⁴ But as a rule, the Soviet internationalist organisations were quite successful. It was not until the 1980s that really negative reports were written by Latin Americans about the Soviet Union. The only travelogue by a Latin American which actually describes a trip as a reason for apostasy was written by a young Mexican communist in 1980. Christopher Domínguez lost his faith bones and all, when his guides refused to respond to any conversation on Stalinism and the many flaws he saw during his trip: “Ford-style exploitation of the workers”, utterly unemancipated women, revolting anti-Semitism, alcoholism and finally “Latvian communists who looked and behaved like the SS in their black uniforms”.⁵⁵⁵ Domínguez became a social democrat after his Soviet trip.

Some Latin Americans kept their pro-Soviet stance until the very end. The Uruguayan communist writer Rodney Arismendi (1913-1989) even spent eight years in exile in the Soviet Union from the late 1970s to the early 80s. He died just soon enough not see his paradise fall apart. People like Pablo Neruda or David Siqueiros, too, maintained their enthusiasm for the Soviet Union until the day they died. Many other notable Latin American communists like Luis Corvalán (1916-2010) or Volodia Tejtelbojm (1916-2008, in Moscow during Pinochet’s reign, where he worked for the Spanish language radio) stayed faithful till death tore them apart from Moscow and they were buried to the sounds of the Internationale. But in the 1960s, many other leftists turned to Cuba as new socialist utopia. Unlike the grey Soviet Union, Cuba had many assets that made it a lot more appealing to a younger generation: it was much closer culturally, there was a romantic spirit, heroism in the mountains, young good-looking leaders, a cheering people to the backdrop of a tropical

⁵⁵⁴ E.g.: Očet o rabote s čilijskim pisatelem Manuelem Rochas v period s 5 do 27 maja 1966 goda, 7-7-1966, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.1018 l.2-14. O rabote s čilijskom poetom Chuvensio Val’e, 29-11-1966, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.1021 l.33-39.

⁵⁵⁵ CHRISTOPHER DOMÍNGUEZ MICHAEL: Recuerdos del Partido Comunista. 1999. <http://www.letraslibres.com/index.php?art=6086> (last access 3-11-2010).

paradise and sexy rhythms. Intellectuals all over continental Latin America were happy to see themselves celebrated and supported by Havana's *Casa de las Américas* publishing house. The enthusiasm was dampened palpably when Fidel Castro publically approved of the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. For many it came to an end in 1971: the Cuban revolutionary leaders had the poet Heberto Padilla (1932-2000, himself in the Soviet Union from 1962 to 64) arrested and forced him to an embarrassing Soviet style *autocrítica*. It was the culmination of an ever more repressive atmosphere against critical artists in Cuba and caused many left intellectuals on the continent, most notably Mario Vargas Llosa, to lose faith also in the ostensibly last socialist utopia. Staunch anti-Soviet communists turned to China (especially in Peru) or Albania – the Brazilian PCdoB was to be the last remaining international friend of an otherwise completely isolated Albania in the 1980s. Yet contacts were never particularly intense and involved only a tiny minority of the Latin American left. In the early 1960s, some indigenous intellectuals still idealised the Soviet Union in the utopian style of the “Westerners” before them. From the late 1960 they turned to an explicitly anti-modern “Indian exceptionalism”.

The fascination of conservatives and Catholics for the anti-modern, spiritual element they perceived in the Soviet Union went in two directions. Some conservatives, like the Brazilian military rulers from the mid 1960s, developed a rather unspiritual interest in enforced modernisation through the state and the repressive techniques of power developed in Moscow.⁵⁵⁶ Many Catholics on the other hand gave up conservatism and fought for not only spiritual, but also national and economic liberation. Catholic *guerrilleros*, however, hardly dealt with the stagnating old Soviet Union any more and found the Chinese model of armed struggle much more useful for their aims.

The Soviet Union gradually lost its role model character from the 1960s, if not as fast and directly as sometimes suggested. In the 1970s, hardly any Latin American intellectuals outside the Communist parties still cheered for the socialist paradise. The Soviet Union remained, however, an object of fascination for many. Throughout its existence it inspired Latin American writers not only as a political alternative, but also in a literary way. Spanish and Portuguese poems by Pablo Neruda, Jorge Amado, Eduardo Lizalde, Roberto Cruz, Roque Dalton, Nicanor Parra and many more celebrating Lenin, Stalin, the USSR, the cosmonauts and Soviet internationalism are legion and filled Soviet literary journals. As late as 1986, the Mexican poet Roberto López Moreno wrote his 25-page *Poema a la Unión*

⁵⁵⁶ RUPPRECHT 2011.

Soviética (“Poem to the Soviet Union”)⁵⁵⁷. No longer a eulogy to Soviet feats, this Dadaist text only juggled with names and motifs from 60 years of Soviet history. The short segment that introduces this chapter can be read as a mocking of the early fellow travellers and their adulation of Moscow, their *caja de emociones* (“box of emotions”). *Pablo, Efraín, Hay una hora cuando cae el día* (“Pablo [Neruda], Efraín [Morel], there is a time when the day draws to a close”), Moreno turned Neruda’s verses against their own author.

⁵⁵⁷ LÓPEZ MORENO 1986.

4.
From Russia with a diploma.
Latin American students in the Soviet Union

Education as a battlefield of the Cold War. Soviet higher education for foreigners, Western fears and global reactions

- Latin American students at Soviet universities, facts and figures
 - The flagship of Soviet internationalism. The Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow
 - The students' point of view: *Motivation, selection, arrival | Education | Spare time | Contacts with Soviet realities | Sex and the Cold War | Race and the Cold War | Frictions | Judgments of the Soviet Union | Returns, careers and memories*
- The successes and shortcomings of Soviet internationalism in the field of education
-

*To make a person a communist, send him to London or Paris;
to make him a capitalist, send him to Moscow!*
The US Sovietologist Alvin Rubinstein⁵⁵⁸

It was definitely the best time of my life
Luis Soto, Chilean student in Moscow, 1964-69⁵⁵⁹

Education as a battlefield of the Cold War. Soviet higher education for foreigners, Western fears and global reactions

In January 1965, the *New York Times* published a review of a book by Jan Carew, an Afro-Guyanese writer and *engagé* intellectual. Carew, who at the time worked with W.E.B. Du Bois and Malcolm X in the black civil rights movement, had combined his experience from studying in Czechoslovakia in the late 1940s with reports he had heard in London from foreign students returning from Moscow and had poured it into the semi-fictional novel “Green Winter”, which portrayed the life of Third World students in the Soviet Union. According to the *New York Times* review, this life must have been hell. Students were daily confronted with massive “racialism”, and the Russians were “just as prejudiced as the whites in Alabama”. The young Africans, Asians and Latin Americans were treated like “caricatures

⁵⁵⁸ RUBINSTEIN 1971, p. 68.

⁵⁵⁹ SOTO 2008, p. 4.

to illustrate communist slogans and not as human beings in their own right." At university, they were either ignored or spied upon, and they had tremendous problems with Soviet bureaucracy.⁵⁶⁰

The review quoted correctly, but still gave a plain wrong impression of Carew's book, which was in no way a "short and angry novel", as the reviewer called it, but rather nuanced and balanced. Third World students are represented, in the style of a collective biography, by a fictive South American called Josef. He struggles to make ends meet in early 1960's London, until he is awarded a grant to study and live in the admired Soviet Union. His somewhat naive enthusiasm and high expectations are dampened by a series of disappointments, the cold winter, the lack of entertainment and indeed Soviet bureaucracy and occasional apparently incidents. He discovered that "Moscow is not my Mecca" – the title of another edition of Carew's book. After a failed love story with a Russian girl, Josef decides to continue his studies back in London. At the same time, and this aspect the *New York Times* reviewer decided to ignore completely, it is also full of positive remarks about the Soviet Union, about great teachers and acquaintances and the hospitality and solidarity towards people from Third World countries he experienced. "The Russians," Josef observed, "because they have lived through the same experience, understand that this is an age in which people from the under-developed countries are in a hurry." Most Soviet people he met would of course not know Guyana, but whenever he explained that it was in South America, they were enthralled that he came from where Fidel Castro lived. Josef was overwhelmed with some aspects he saw in the Soviet Union, in particular in Central Asia, where he – like most visitors from Third World countries – was shown around. "The Revolution had brought fantastic benefits to Uzbekistan", he noted, "if the other colonial and ex-colonial powers had shown the same enlightened self-interest when they controlled such large areas of the world, the gap between the haves and the have-nots would not have been as wide as it is today."

Josef was disappointed because he, as a black guy, expected finally a place free of racism – which the Soviet Union was not, just as England was not – and Guyana was not. In fact, the worst ethnically motivated exclusion in Moscow, he experienced from his own white and *mestizo* compatriots. All in all, the book was just as critical about the West as it was about the Soviet Union. Before leaving Moscow, Josef summed up his experience: "I am grateful to the Soviet Union for the free scholarship, (...but...) I learned there is no Paradise on earth."⁵⁶¹

⁵⁶⁰ New York Times Book Review, 28-3-1965, p. BR42; JAN CAREW: *Moscow is not my Mecca*. London, Secker & Warburg 1964, pp. 56; 110.

⁵⁶¹ CAREW 1964, pp. 42; 95; 174; 194.

What the *New York Times* later wrote about the novel resembled more Cold War propaganda than an objective book review.

The episode is a telling example of the perceptions and realities of higher education for foreigners in the Soviet Union. From the mid 1950s, the Soviets increasingly invited young people from the emerging Third World for free education at universities all over their country. Between 1957 and 1970, their number rose by a factor of 100.⁵⁶² The Soviets made this lavish offer in order to present their country as a modern and rich idyll, free of racism and full of altruistic international solidarity. Thousands of young students came to the USSR and were confronted with a sometimes harsh reality that did not always comply with Soviet self-representation. Many still appreciated deeply the generous Soviet offer to get free higher education. Some Western observers, however, used any criticism by foreign students that was heard across the Iron Curtain in counterpropaganda that was about as scrupulous in details as that of their Soviet counterpart.

Western fears had their roots in historic experience: already from the 1920s, the Soviet Union was giving free education to foreigners. During the early days of the USSR and lingering through the Stalinist period, the intention was explicitly to spread worldwide communism. A *University of the Toilers of the East* was founded 1921 in Moscow and transferred to Tashkent in 1930. Throughout its existence until 1952, a large proportion of the communist leaders from Soviet Central Asia and South East Asia got at least part of their higher education there. The Tartar Bolshevik Mirza Sultan-Galiev, who propagated a specific Muslim national communism, and the founder of both the Indian and the Mexican Communist parties, Manabendra Nath Roy, were among the teaching staff; alumni included internationally known figures such as Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh or the Turkish communist poet Nazım Hikmet.⁵⁶³ From 1925, the *Sun Yat Sen University* in Moscow, headed by Karl Radek, instructed primarily Chinese students. Many of them later became influential party functionaries, most notably perhaps the later party leader Deng Xiaoping. Western communists studied primarily at the Comintern's *International Lenin School* and at a Komsomol university in Moscow, where East Germany's Erich Honecker, Yugoslavia's Josip Tito and thousands of other young communists got their ideological formation.⁵⁶⁴ And several other political leaders from the Cold War enemy camp, North Korea's Kim Il-Sung to name

⁵⁶² V. ILCHENCO: *A la URSS por los conocimientos*. Moscow, Progreso 1971, p. 70.

⁵⁶³ DIRNECKER 1961/62, p. 213.

⁵⁶⁴ JULIA KÖSTENBERGER: 'Die Internationale Leninschule 1926-1938', in: MICHAEL BUCKMILLER and KLAUS MESCHKAT (EDS.): *Biographisches Handbuch zur Geschichte der Kommunistischen Internationale. Ein deutsch-russisches Forschungsprojekt*. Berlin, Akademie-Verlag 2007, pp. 287–309.

but one more example, had attended Soviet military schools to get education and training in fields that stuck in the West's craw.⁵⁶⁵

When the Soviets restructured and expanded their offer of free education to students from all over the world from the mid 1950s, Western observers believed to be seeing a continuation of this Soviet tradition. While the official goal of Soviet education during the Cold War was now indeed to educate students, the West expected more communist indoctrination. In fact, the Soviets had taken over a very Western idea: already since the end of the First World War, the imperial metropolises, first and foremost London and Paris, had increasingly received young Third World Elites for higher studies. During their stays, many took over their colonial masters' idea of nationalism and progress. They returned home to have careers in governments and administrations – and often fought against colonialism on the basis of the Western ideas they had come in contact with. The post-Stalinist Soviets copied the idea of educating Third World elites in their own country. No longer should they be taught to be communists. In the times of great conflict with the West, the Soviets had humbler hopes. The returning youth should only convey a stance of sympathy towards the USSR as an advanced and altruistic friend of the Third World.

One of the most remarkable efforts in the field of education of foreigners was the foundation of Moscow's Patrice Lumumba University of the Friendship of the Peoples. This university, established exclusively for students from Africa, Asia and Latin America will be discussed in detail in the first section of this chapter. Its first rector, the former vice-minister of education Sergej Rumjancev, admitted the inspiration they took from the West in his opening speech: "our experience is based on the accomplishments of Soviet science, but we have also considered the experience of other national systems of education and the accomplishments of international science"⁵⁶⁶ – after years of Soviet international isolation and very russocentric interpretations of scientific history a quite remarkable statement. Yet not only were the Soviets inspired by the West, but also the other way round; the new Soviet advance towards the "developing countries" caused worldwide curiosity, debates and concrete reactions. Within the socialist world, ministries of education copied Soviet concepts. Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and China founded their own universities for foreigners, and all socialist

⁵⁶⁵ JOEL KOTEK: *Students and the Cold War*. Oxford, MacMillan 1996.

⁵⁶⁶ *Izvestija*, 27-6-1966.

states developed programmes that provided scholarships for international students at standard universities.⁵⁶⁷

The West felt challenged. The US Department of Education hired experts for an office of “Education in the Eastern Bloc”, which monitored closely what was happening at Soviet universities.⁵⁶⁸ The US embassy in Moscow tried time and again to contact foreign students. Probably precisely to that end, Norris Garnett, the only African US in the Foreign Service at the time, was redeployed to the Soviet Union as cultural attaché in 1964 – but was expelled by the Soviets shortly thereafter, because, allegedly, he repeatedly tried to recruit Third World students as informants, offering cigarettes, cognac and jazz records in exchange.⁵⁶⁹ In Western Europe, reactions focused more on internal reform and the expansion of scholarship programmes for foreigners. The Vatican decided to invite Africans to study at their own university, and even in the long debates on the creation of the European University Institute in Florence, there were – explicitly referring to the Lumumba University in Moscow – proposals to include students from the Third World.⁵⁷⁰

Gradually, Western observers became more relaxed in their view of Soviet education of foreigners. In 1971, the *New York Times* asked jovially “*What they do at Old Lumumba U*”. and discounted rumours about Soviet alumni in a recently failed coup d’état in Mexico (ironically, their participation was later actually confirmed).⁵⁷¹ The initial concerns and the more eased perception in later years went along with the experience of communist cadre training – and the later judgment that Soviet attitudes towards foreign students had actually changed. Another soothing factor was the number of students. By the mid 1960s, about 10,000 Third World students were attending universities in the USSR, along with roughly two million Soviet students.⁵⁷² Western Germany alone, even without West Berlin, boasted almost the same number with a total of only 150,000 students, the United States more than twice as

⁵⁶⁷ PAUL JOSTOCK: ‘Die Lumumba-Universität in Moskau’. *Die neue Ordnung in Kirche, Staat, Gesellschaft, Kultur* 16/1 (1962), pp. 62–65; DIRNECKER 1961/62, p. 221; ALVIN RUBINSTEIN: ‘Friendship University’. *Survey* 34 (1960), pp. 8–10.

⁵⁶⁸ SEYMOUR ROSEN: *The Development of the People's Friendship University in Moscow*. Washington D.C., US-Department of Health 1973.

⁵⁶⁹ HENRY TANNER: ‘Soviet Ousts U.S. Cultural Aide As Inciter of African Students’. *New York Times*, 12-5-1965.

⁵⁷⁰ JEAN-MARIE PALAYRET: *Un'università per l'Europa. Le origini dell'Istituto Universitario Europeo di Firenze (1948-1976)*. Roma, Presidenza del Consiglio dei ministri 1996, p. 155.

⁵⁷¹ THEODORE SHABAT: ‘What they Do At Old Lumumba U’. *New York Times*, 18-4-1971.

⁵⁷² UNESCO: *Statistics of Students Abroad, 1962-1968. Where they go. Where they come from. What they study.* = *Statistiques des étudiants à l'étranger 1962- 1968. Où vont-ils? D'où viennent-ils? Qu'étudient-ils?* Paris 1971; ‘21,000 Foreign Youth Attending Universities in Soviet Union’. *New York Times*, 13-1-1965; Soviet documents reveal about the same numbers: *Naučnyj i meždunarodnyj otdel CK KPSS – CK KPSS: Predloženija po ispravleniu Universiteta Družby Narodov im. Patriša Lumumby za lučego social'nogo sostava i za sniženii raschodov*, 10-12-1965. RGANI f.5 op.35 d.221 l.160-161.

many.⁵⁷³ The Soviets, especially after the end of the great optimistic phase around 1960, actually accepted only a fraction of students applying.

This chapter will take a close look at the life of Latin American students in the Soviet Union. Two sections analyse the official stance towards them; organisational and institutional aspects and a short history of the Patrice Lumumba University of the Friendship of the Peoples shed light on this particular branch of Soviet internationalism after Stalin. The second half of the chapter, however, is dedicated to the students themselves. The introductory episode of Carew's book made it clear: so far, their story has usually been told from either a distorted Soviet or a distorted Western perspective. Here they will have their own say. Their perspectives, subjective and often nostalgically glorifying as some of them are, are crucial to an understanding of the effectiveness of education as a means of Soviet cultural diplomacy towards Latin America. It will become obvious that Soviet efforts, as long as exclusively Western standards are not imposed, were actually quite successful.

Latin American students at Soviet universities, facts and figures

The first Latin American students came to the Soviet Union in the late 1950s. Moscow's State University gave scholarships to a very small number of Latinos, for the first time not for ideological, but proper academic training. From 25 students in 1959, their number rose to a more or less constant community of 3000 Latin American students during the 1960s (not including the high number of Cubans) in the entire Soviet Union, from Lvov to Novosibirsk.⁵⁷⁴ Statistical data for later periods includes the Cubans again: in 1980, there were 11,390 Latin American students enrolled at Soviet universities.⁵⁷⁵ Besides Cubans, the largest constant contingents came from Mexico and Colombia. Others varied over time and depended on the political situation in the countries of their origins: Chileans came increasingly during the Allende presidency. During the left-wing military rule from 1968, there was an enormous influx of Peruvians, who after some years represented the second largest group. And when the Sandinistas got into power in Nicaragua in 1979, the Eastern bloc welcomed them with 2000 scholarships for their students from 1979 to 1983 alone.

⁵⁷³ DIRNECKER 1961/62, p. 224.

⁵⁷⁴ SOFINSKIJ 1977, p. 128.

⁵⁷⁵ KONSTANTIN KATSAKIORIS: 'Soviet Lessons for Arab Modernization. Soviet Educational Aid to Arab Countries after 1956'. *Journal of Modern European History* 1 (2010), pp. 85–106, p. 96.

Like their fellow students from other foreign countries, the Latinos had to organise within structures that were established by the Soviet state; a *Seminario permanente de Estudiantes Latinoamericanos* (“permanent seminar of Latin American students”) supported students from its office on Moscow’s Gorky-Prospekt and was responsible for the collaboration with embassies and Soviet officials and academics. The *Seminario* also coordinated the work of the umbrella organisation of Latin American territorial associations of students in the USSR. Substructures existed at every university; usually all Latin American students were lumped together in one group. At Lumumba University additional groups existed for every single country.⁵⁷⁶ These territorial groups served different purposes: on the one hand, they were indeed forums of interaction among students, where they discussed problems that required the involvement of the university administration. They also organised the students’ spare time activities, sports, folklore concerts they were expected to give once in a while, seminars, travels and summer work. On the other hand, the heads of these student councils were always appointed by the university – which ensured they were reliable members of their respective Communist parties. The territorial associations hence existed to help students, but also to keep control of them.

While universities were more interested in their students’ academic results and their behaviour in private life, the Komsomol took care of their political leanings. Komsomol members regularly wrote reports on their foreign fellow students. With few exceptions, these reports were not on individual students, but on country contingents and assessed students according to their political allegiances and assertions. Documents reveal that Latin American students, due to a selection procedure that involved the relatively well established CP and Friendship Societies networks in America, tended to be more political and left-leaning (“progressive”) than their fellow students from Asia and Africa.

Student groups from the more developed countries Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Uruguay or Chile contained a good share, roughly one third, of party communists. The Komsomol reports sometimes also recommended certain groups for “propaganda activities” (like their participation in the Spanish language radio programme) – and usually referred to students from these countries as particularly reliable. Students from Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, the Caribbean and Central America, countries where higher education was a privilege for a tiny elite, were either less political and came only to study – or they boasted much feared Maoist tendencies. “Ultra leftist” views were found especially among youngsters from Peru,

⁵⁷⁶ Položenie v zemljačestvach studentov iz stran Latinskoj Ameriki i o sostojanii raboty s etim kontingentom inostrannyh učaščichsia v SSSR, 13-5-1969. RGASPI f.1M op.39 d.231 l.53-79; for 1971: d.232 l.7-10.

Guatemala and Nicaragua; their Komsomol fellow students disclosed that some even had contacts with the Chinese embassy.

The bulk of these reports, however, were rather benevolent. Besides political stances, moral behaviour was reported as well as academic performance and social commitment. Direct attempts to ideologically influence students happened only when they showed Maoist leanings. In these cases, and only in these cases, the Komsomol recommended talking the respective students out of their ideological stance. Beyond that there was no attempt to politically influence students besides the constant praise of Soviet greatness.⁵⁷⁷

The flagship of Soviet internationalism. The Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow

Until well into the 1960s, Latin Americans, unlike Africans and Asians, attended primarily the Patrice Lumumba University of the Friendship of the Peoples, established in Moscow in 1960 for Third World students. Its representative character distinguished it from all other Soviet institutions of higher learning: it was to convey a certain image of the post-Stalinist Soviet Union, not as an ideology exporting cradle of the world revolution, but as a modern European state that altruistically helped the developing countries along its own lines. These symbolic dimensions of Lumumba University have already been analysed in chapter one. This section will take a closer look at the history of the institution, at the selection of students, their daily life on and off campus and interactions and frictions with the Soviet state and population.

Students from Latin American countries, just like those from Asia and Africa, could apply for programmes in seven faculties. Most popular were practice-oriented careers such as engineering, agriculture, medicine and pharmaceuticals. Economics and law were offered, too, but due to the different socioeconomic systems and jurisdictional traditions in their home countries, fewer students signed up. A faculty of natural sciences offered chemistry, biology, physics and mathematics. Humanities were limited to history, and a philological department which trained translators. Lumumba University was the only institution of higher learning in the Soviet Union which, initially, in fact eschewed the usually obligatory ideological classes in Marxism-Leninism. The first year was spent in a preparatory faculty, which first and foremost tried to teach students the Russian language. The studies took four years, or five for

⁵⁷⁷ O situaciji studentov iz Latinskoj Ameriki v SSSR, 13-5-1969, RGASPI f.1M op.39 d.231 l.60-79; dto 13-5-1966, RGASPI f.1M op.39 d.30 l.1-14.

those in medical school. Classes were given in a former military academy in the neighbourhood of the Moscow State University, until a new campus was built from the late 1960s. The criteria for the selection of students were simple: they had to have attended a higher school, be no older than 35 and come from Asia, Africa or Latin America. Gender, ethnicity and also religion did not matter. Quotas for countries did not exist officially, but the number of students from the three continents was always roughly the same. Students could apply through different channels for Lumumba University. In countries the USSR had diplomatic relations with (those were not many in the early days of the university), the Soviet embassies accepted applications. The worldwide network of Soviet Friendship Societies also propagated studies and distributed scholarships at Lumumba. So did the Komsomol-controlled International Federation of Students, the local Communist Parties and some trade unions. And students could also apply directly to the university's selection committee in Moscow, an assembly of professors and official representatives of Komsomol and the World Federation of Democratic Youth. Criteria were performance in High School and recommendation letters; those who had no chance to get higher education elsewhere got preferred treatment.⁵⁷⁸

The foundation of the Lumumba University found a huge echo in the media worldwide. The number of applicants was accordingly huge. Out of 43,500, the admission committee invited 1200 to Moscow for selection talks, and half of them were sent back at Soviet cost. Finally 120 young Latin Americans, 142 Asians, 193 Africans and 46 from the Middle East began their classes in autumn 1960.⁵⁷⁹ In Moscow, students received full scholarships that covered travel expenses, their studies, medical care, warm winter clothes and a monthly allowance of 90 roubles.⁵⁸⁰ By Soviet standards, and also considering the living standard most students had been used to before they came to the Soviet Union, these were very lavish amounts. Soviet students got an average 30 roubles, and even the highly coveted Lenin-scholarship for talented young Soviets stood at only 80 roubles – reason for some envy towards the foreigners. Nonetheless, the numbers of applicants had dwindled already by the second year and remained at between 7000 and 8000 annually throughout the 1960s, of which 500 to 600 were accepted.

⁵⁷⁸ Ob organizacija Universiteta Družby Narodov, Rešenje Sovieta Ministrov, 5-2-1960, GARF f.5446 op.1 d.698 l.698; RUPPRECHT 2010; DIRNECKER 1961/62, p. 218; ALEXANDER USTANOV: 'The First Ball at the Friendship University'. *Moscow News* 79 (1960), p. 2.

⁵⁷⁹ S. RUMJANCEV: 'Pervyj god universiteta'. *Vestnik vyšej školy* 5 (1961), pp. 108–110; DIRNECKER 1961/62, p. 224.

⁵⁸⁰ *Pravda*, 27-6-1962.

Besides Third World youngsters, 225 Soviet students enrolled annually.⁵⁸¹ They were present for had several reasons: for one thing they were to help the foreigners with the hardships of the Russian language – a major problem for most students throughout the history of the university. Secondly, after years of international isolation during Stalinism, there was a blatant lack of knowledge and expertise on the world abroad. Chapter five will further examine how the Soviets tried to overcome this ignorance – a first step was to send future regional experts to Lumumba University, where they were to pick up linguistic and cultural knowledge from their fellow students from abroad. The ideological tolerance shown by the university towards foreign students did not extend to the Soviet students: they had to be either CP or Komsomol members and undergo a harsh test procedure, in which even the Soviet Army had a word to say.⁵⁸² After all, Soviet students at the Lumumba University had a third task, which was an open secret to everyone on campus: they were to report on the academic, political and private behaviour of their foreign fellow students.⁵⁸³ But again, there were no systematic attempts to ideologically influence the foreign students.

These reports to the Komsomol were in most cases not on individuals, but on national groups, which were classified along Cold War categories. Anti-Soviet sentiment was hardly ever encountered. To be sure, students were not all free to say and act as they pleased without getting into conflict with the ever-conspicuous Soviet authorities. Since the times of peaceful coexistence and the subsequent schism with China, however, the ideological frontlines had changed. The greatest concern now was Maoist sentiments among the students, which meant that they would have propagated a violent revolutionary path for their home countries. As a *Novosti*-reporter told the Mexican journalist Luis Spota during his visit in Moscow: “look, those Latinos that come to study ... they are very political, have subversive ideas. ‘You have to strike for this and that!’, they say, ‘you have to scream in the street against this and that!’ ... This is all they know. They do not know the value of discipline and criticise everything!”⁵⁸⁴ Soviet fears were actually often quite the same as those of Western observers.

Just as for the Soviet students, strict criteria were applied to the teaching staff of Lumumba University. Only renowned internationalists and communists were shortlisted for positions. The first professors included Ivan Potechin, president of the Africa-Institute of the Academy

⁵⁸¹ O situacii studentov iz Latinskoj Ameriki v SSSR, 13-5-1966, RGASPI f.1M op.39 d.30 l.1-14.

⁵⁸² O rabote Komsomola v Universitete Družby Narodov im. Patriša Lumumby, 17-6-1970, RGASPI f.1M op.39 d.286 l.15-22; 21-3-1967, RGASPI f.1M op.39 d.143 l.35-36.

⁵⁸³ O situacii studentov iz Latinskoj Ameriki v SSSR, 13-5-1966, RGASPI f.1M op.39 d.30 l.1-14; Položenie v zemljačestvach studentov iz stran Latinskoj Ameriki i o sostojanii raboty s etim kontingentom inostrannyh učaščichsia v SSSR, 13-5-1969, RGASPI f.1M op.39 d.231 l.53-79.

⁵⁸⁴ SPOTA 1973, p. 183.

of Science, and Anatolij Sofronov, chief editor of the weekly *Ogonek* with a reputation as a conservative hard-liner in cultural debates during the Thaw.⁵⁸⁵

In the run-up to the foundation of the University of the Friendship of the Peoples, Soviet officials had underlined that only societal groups had proposed and would run the university. During the implementation, however, the Soviet state and the CPSU did interfere on several levels. The Ministry of Education allocated professors and curricula, and the Council of Ministers defined the organisational structures of the university, including hierarchies and working hours. The financing ran initially on a state reserve fund, as the decision to build the university was most likely one of Khrushchev's headlong solo runs and no resources on that scale were actually to hand. Figures from the late 1970s indicate that the university had a budget of more than 16 million roubles yearly.⁵⁸⁶

The most urgent problems the university faced with its students were their lack of knowledge of Russian classroom language and their very low average level of education when they arrived in Moscow. Highly qualified students and those who could afford it still went to study in the West. The ones who came to Moscow had either a fascination for the Soviet Union, or had found it difficult to get education elsewhere. Their educational level was at times "catastrophic", as reported a member of the Colombian-Soviet Cultural Institute from his trip to Moscow. Students could not even recognise the Soviet Union or Moscow on a world map and had never heard of their compatriot writer Gabriel García Márquez.⁵⁸⁷ Already by 1963, 61 students had been exmatriculated due to weak academic performance or "inappropriate behaviour", and 109 more had given up voluntarily.⁵⁸⁸ Up to 1968, altogether 465 students dropped out and 225 were dismissed. Considering that the university had only 1236 graduates by that time, this was quite a large number.⁵⁸⁹

In order not to endanger the political task of the university, the general academic level had to be lowered. In the long run, however, this led to problems with the recognition of Lumumba diplomas in some countries and to a bad reputation among Soviet academics. People in charge of the Lumumba University were aware of these deficits. Already from 1962, special preparatory classes in Leningrad and Tashkent were introduced for those who still needed

⁵⁸⁵ DIRNECKER 1961/62, p. 220.

⁵⁸⁶ CRAIG WHITNEY: 'Lumumba U. Is it a Soviet Tool?'. New York Times, 6-1-1980; Rešenje Sovieta Ministrov, 14-6-1960, GARF f.5446 op.1 d.702 l.604; Ob organizacija Universiteta Družby Narodov, Rešenje Sovieta Ministrov, 5-2-1960, GARF f.5446 op.1 d.698 l.698.

⁵⁸⁷ Letter from Moscow to the Soviet-Colombian Friendship Association, 9-9-1970, Archive of the Instituto Cultural Colombo Soviético.

⁵⁸⁸ SHABAT 1971.

⁵⁸⁹ Komsomol – Ministerstvo Obrazovanija. O meropriatach dal'nejšego ispravlenija kačestva podgatovka kadrov v Universitete Družby Narodov, 4-6-1968, RGASPI f.1M op.39 d. 143 l.10.

very basic training.⁵⁹⁰ Where possible, students had to take Russian classes already in their home countries before they were conceded a grant.⁵⁹¹ The scientific and international departments of the Central Committee of the CPSU compiled an entire catalogue of suggestions to improve the situation in 1965. The number of foreign students per year was cut back to 500; instead, it was proposed that more Soviet students should be admitted and the length of study should be reduced. The Ministry of Education recommended curtailing 50 per cent of the scholarships to students with bad academic results, a measure that put more pressure on the students and saved money. Interviews in Moscow were abolished, and an increasing number of bilateral state contracts put the responsibility for the selection of the future students in the hand of their home countries.

On the inside, the university tightened strings with regards to its students, while at the same time scaling down expectations: “first and foremost this is an institution for young people who cannot get an education either in their home countries or in the West”, Rector Rumjancev now declared. And indeed, more than half of the students at Lumumba University in the late 1960s came from a peasant or working-class background. No longer did it consider itself a competitor with the West for the education of Third World elites.⁵⁹²

While the university administration increasingly sought to save money and avoid trouble, the influential Komsomol still had a much less pragmatic stance. In 1968, its own Central Committee handed over a list of claims to the Ministry of Education. They brought up the problem of low-quality classes, but insisted even more on a stronger ideological penetration of the university. Students of economy should be much more directed towards the advantages of a planned economy, there should be “anti-religious campaigns” on campus and obligatory classes in Marxism-Leninism should be introduced also at Lumumba. Soviet history, in fact the history of the CPSU, now indeed became a compulsory subject for all foreign students in the preparatory classes, but the standard classes in Marxism-Leninism were limited to Soviet students.⁵⁹³

The university sometimes put up some resistance against the brisk Komsomol activists. In a letter to the Central Committee of the Komsomol in a letter, the rector reminded the

⁵⁹⁰ Pravda, 10-9-1962.

⁵⁹¹ ‘Reglamento para la adjudicación de becas en la Universidad de la amistad de los pueblos "Patricio Lumumba" de Moscú en 1967’. Boletín del Instituto Cultural Colombo Soviético 1 (1966), pp. 4–5.

⁵⁹² Naučnyj i meždunarodnyj otdel CK KPSS – CK KPSS: Predloženiya po ispravleniu Universiteta Družby Narodov im. Patriša Lumumby za lučego social’nogo sostava i za sniženii raschodov, 10-12-1965, RGANI f.5 op.35 d.221 l.160-161; Ministerstvo Obrazovanija – CK KPSS, 3-12-1965, RGANI f.5 op.35 d.221 l.130.

⁵⁹³ V. KEROV: ‘30 let Universitet Družby Narodov im. Patriša Lumumby’. Novaja i Novejšaja Istorija 5 (1990), pp. 227–229; Komsomol – Ministerstvo Obrazovanija. O meropriatach dal’nejšego ispravlenija kačestva podgotovka kadrov v Universitete Družby Narodov, 4-6-1968, RGASPI f.1M op.39 d.143. l.1-21.

overzealous young communists that “the university’s task is not to teach these students to become communists, but to become friends of the Soviet Union!”⁵⁹⁴ And in the speech that Aleksei Kosygin gave to the first class of graduates in the Kremlin Palace in 1966, the new Soviet Prime Minister repeated the old ideal of ideological neutrality of the university. “The foreign students can observe, how the economy and the culture of our country develop, how Soviet society advances. (...) We do not impose our opinions on others. Also not on foreign students at our universities.” Both university administration and the highest political elite had a more moderate approach than the Communist Youth, still glowing with ideological fervour. Towards the West, however, Kosygin’s rhetoric remained as usual: “the Western imperialists present themselves as the only carrier of world civilisation. They suggest to the freed peoples that their spiritual renaissance and their development is possible only on the basis of Western thought.” Those graduates who gave speeches at the same occasion were in accord: “while imperialism slaughters in Vietnam, the Dominican Republic and in the Congo, the peace-loving Soviet Union sends excellently trained specialists back to their Third World home countries”, a Venezuelan commended. As one of only 187 graduates (out of 539 who had started their studies 6 years before) he now returned to his home country with a Lumumba degree.⁵⁹⁵ In all, 2375 graduates from 23 Latin American countries (without Cuba) followed his example until 1971 and returned to the Americas with a Soviet diploma; the most popular fields were engineering and medicine.⁵⁹⁶

In 1970, Vladimir Stanis, like his predecessor a former vice-minister of education, followed Rumjancev as rector and stayed there until the 1990s. During his accession to office, 4061 students were enrolled, 969 Soviets, 964 Latin Americans, 770 Middle Easterners, 834 Africans and 524 Asians.⁵⁹⁷ Cubans, now considered inhabitants of the Soviet hemisphere and not of the Third World, no longer studied at Lumumba; neither did any Chinese students, who, after the Sino-Soviet split, were not allowed to study in the USSR at all. Male students dominated with the impressive ratio of 8:1.⁵⁹⁸ In a stagnating Soviet Union, these numbers remained roughly the same.

Throughout the 1970s, Lumumba University remained a showpiece of Soviet internationalism. Just as in the more turbulent early 1960s, the programme for Third World

⁵⁹⁴ RGASPI f.1M op.46 d.356 l.98-102.

⁵⁹⁵ Pravda, 30-6-1966; <http://www.rudn.ru/index.php?pagec=2022> (last access 3-9-2009); figures do not include Soviet students and graduates.

⁵⁹⁶ STANIS 1972, p. 118.

⁵⁹⁷ Pravda, 7-2-1970.

⁵⁹⁸ ROSEN 1973, p. 8.

delegations in Moscow usually included a tour around the campus. The agitations and quarrels were over now; ever more non-communist countries collaborated with Soviet authorities in the selection process.⁵⁹⁹ The university simply allocated a certain number of scholarships to one country. National student grant distributing institutions, the ICETEX in Colombia or the INABEC in Peru to give two examples from Latin America, selected students and sent them to the Soviet Union, just as they sent others to the United States.

The students' point of view

A 1963 promotional film for Lumumba University neatly shows the idealised official Soviet perception of their foreign students. The film begins in an Indian village, where the postman delivers a letter from distant Moscow. An elderly man with turban proudly announces to the village community that his son has been accepted to the University of the Friendship of the Peoples. The camera then follows the young Indian and his new friends from all over the world through their everyday life in Moscow. It shows an idyllic and happy world full of stereotypical depictions, where black Africans frolic in snow, Asian girls attentively do their coursework and rakish Latinos never put down their guitars. With much emotion, several students confirm that they would never have had the chance to get education in their home countries, that classes were outstanding and how grateful they were to the Soviet Union.⁶⁰⁰

This enacted harmonious everyday life is in stark contrast to the picture given from contemporary Western observers. According to them, students had to endure repression, racism and dreariness in order to get a rather poor education. But how did the students themselves actually perceive their lives in Moscow? Contemporary sources only reveal the Soviet and Western perspectives. This section is thus based on information gained from memoirs, questionnaires and interviews with alumni from Soviet universities. A total of 15 of these former students are quoted here; they began their studies at the Lumumba University, Moscow State University, and the universities of Astrachan, Charkov and Odessa between 1964 and 1979. While some were members of trade unions or left parties, either before or after their studies in the USSR, none of them were enrolled in CPs or considered themselves communists. Two of them are female, which approximately corresponds with the average gender ratio of 1:8 for foreign students in the Soviet Union. Their countries of origin are

⁵⁹⁹ RUBINSTEIN 1971, p. 65.

⁶⁰⁰ Z. TUSOVA: *Universitet Družby* (1963), RGAKFD #19274.

Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Chile, Venezuela, Uruguay, Panama, Brazil, Ecuador and Colombia.

While interviewees have been selected representatively, the aim of this survey is not so much to give an elaborate quantitative analysis of foreign students in the USSR. It seeks much more to give a voice to Latin American alumni, their motivations, experiences and memories. That said, certain tendencies in the evaluation of their stays and studies depending on their social and national origins have become obvious and will be summarised.

Motivation, selection, arrival

Two factors motivated young Latin Americans to study in the USSR. A political fascination for the Soviet Union and a not necessarily communist, but vaguely leftist stance was a reason on the one hand. On the other hand, there was a pragmatic interest in the offered free higher education, which was expensive and difficult to obtain for many in their own countries. Both aspects played a role for most students, but with a clear tendency: the richer the country they came from and the higher the social background, the more important were the political reasons. Youngsters from Mexico, Chile, Brazil or Uruguay and those from academic families were in the main either affiliated with parties or youth organisations of the left. Many of them also came out of a mixture of curiosity and vague sympathies for the left. A Chilean student, who got his scholarship through the Komsomol-coordinated World Federation of Students, remembered: “for a youngster of 20 years, getting to know Moscow was something very exciting, it symbolised a lot and was very exotic. I could have gone to Prague, but chose Moscow.”⁶⁰¹ Another middle class alumnus put it like this: “I was no communist at all, but had sympathies for the left and I found it very exciting to meet Yasser Arafat, Schafik Jorge Handal, or these communist leaders like Luis Corvalán from Chile, Rodney Arismendi from Uruguay and Luis Carlos Prestes from Brazil.”⁶⁰² Others recalled their identification with the Third World and a global counter-movement of the 1960s that fought for more justice on earth, and with the anti-colonial struggle in Africa and the youth and civil rights movements in Europe and the United States.⁶⁰³

⁶⁰¹ Interview with a male Chilean alumnus, middle class background. Student at Lumumba University 1976-82, history. University professor, no political affiliation.

⁶⁰² Interview with a male Colombian alumnus, middle class background. Student at Lumumba University 1979-85, history. Journalist, no political affiliation.

⁶⁰³ SOTO 2008.

While many students from poorer areas and countries (at least in retrospective) considered themselves leftists, too, they remembered a different main motivation to study in the USSR: “I was invited by the authorities of my university”, a Bolivian explained, “scholarships for the Soviet Union were given to the best students. I had my first degree, but neither could my parents afford to pay for further studies, nor did they even exist in my country. I was offered a scholarship from the United States, too, but I needed to pay for the trip myself, which I could not afford at the time. So I went to Russia.”⁶⁰⁴ Quite similar were the memories of an alumnus from the Dominican Republic: “I wanted to study in the United States, but I did not get a grant.” He learned from a friend that the local Communist party, albeit illegal in the country, gave scholarships to study in the Soviet Union. Although he was apolitical at the time, he successfully applied and went to study engineering in the Ukraine.

“Many people in the Dominican Republic and entire Latin America at the time admired the Soviet Union”, the Dominican recalled. The victory in Second World War and Russian classical literature and music were the only two things he knew of the USSR before he went.⁶⁰⁵ The admiration for the Soviet state, which existed despite much fervent anti-communism all over Latin America, was based on very rudimentary knowledge: “I knew what a Chilean *campesino* would know about the Soviet Union, which was very little. Upon recommendation of my professors at the night school I attended, I applied to the Soviet-Chilean Friendship Society in Santiago – and was accepted. I could not have afforded to study in Chile.” A compatriot of this Chilean recalled similarly: “my friends either did not know anything about the USSR or had a vaguely positive opinion. There was this Sputnik we knew of, and more recently the Soviet team at the World Cup [the football world championships 1962 in Chile, where the hosts won 2:1 over the Soviets in the quarter final].”⁶⁰⁶

Some years later, students would already know what was written about them in international media concerning racism and ideological infiltration. One alumnus remembered a rude prank the older students at Lumumba would play on the newly arriving Latin American students. “Some of us borrowed uniforms from the campus police, they took the new ones to an empty room at the university and staged a fake interrogation with a lamp directed on their face and a deodorant stick placed on the desk as microphone. ‘What’s your political affiliation?’ they

⁶⁰⁴ Interview with a male Bolivian alumnus, working class background, Quechua. Student at Lumumba University 1965-70, mathematics. University professor, no political affiliation.

⁶⁰⁵ Interview with a male Dominican alumnus, peasant background. Student in Charkov and Odessa 1973-79, engineering. Engineer and civil servant, trade union activist.

⁶⁰⁶ Interview with a male Chilean alumnus, peasant background. Student at Lumumba University 1967-73, engineering. Engineer and civil servant, member of the Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela; SOTO 2008, p. 30.

would ask harshly, ‘those who are not communists we send to Siberia immediately to convert them. ... And if you dare to get bad grades, you’ll be sentenced to forced labour.’”, the alumnus recalls, “any child would have recognised how absurd the interrogations were, but these youngsters bought it because this was what they knew about the Soviet Union from Hollywood films. It was a joke that should have cleared the minds of the new students of Cold War thinking and show them the dimensions of their prejudices.”⁶⁰⁷

Education

Almost all alumni agreed that the level of education in the Soviet Union was very high compared to what they knew from back home. One former student recalled: “from the first day, everything was very different from what I was used to in Bolivia, but in a positive sense. Teachers took care of each of us personally, they were excellent academically, we got any help and assistance we needed. The academic level was very high, indeed difficult to follow for many. But it was okay for me, I studied hard and I had learnt some Russian already before coming to Moscow.”⁶⁰⁸ Most others considered the academic level “excellent”. However, many experienced problems or at least observed them with their fellow students due to insufficient preparation in their home countries: “I had serious difficulties in mathematics, back in Chile we never studied math at this level.” Teachers were perceived by all students as very good and extremely helpful. “They were always approachable and even ate with us in the canteen. This would never ever have happened where I come from”, is a representative memory.⁶⁰⁹ In the perception of the educational level, there is again a divide among alumni according to their origin. Students from peasant families and from Bolivia, Ecuador or the Dominican Republic unanimously described classes as very taxing. Several Colombian middle class students agreed that the quality of education was usually very good. Too good for many students, though. “The academic level was very good, but many students would not understand a word”, a philologist remembered from his classes in the mid 1960s.⁶¹⁰ Another Colombian, a student of history, described the same problem from the late 1970s: “some of our professors were really outstanding. For them it was sometimes frustrating, more than half

⁶⁰⁷ SOTO 2008, pp. 32–34.

⁶⁰⁸ Interview with a male Bolivian alumnus, working class background, Quechua. Student at Lumumba University 1965-70, mathematics. University professor, no political affiliation.

⁶⁰⁹ Interview with a male Chilean alumnus, peasant background. Student at Lumumba University 1967-73, engineering. Engineer and civil servant, member of the Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela.

⁶¹⁰ Interview with a male Colombian alumnus, petty bourgeois background. Student at Lumumba University 1966-73, philology. University professor, no political affiliation.

of the students would basically not participate at all in class. They simply did not understand what the man up front was talking about. ... Also there was excellent literature available in the Lumumba-library, also on recent debates in Western historiography, which was not used in class, but was freely accessible. ... In classical areas the teaching programme was still really excellent, in contemporary history, however, a catastrophe.”⁶¹¹ While in the early days Lumumba University completely forewent any ideological treatment of its students, they introduced obligatory classes about the history of the USSR and the CPSU from the late 1960s. In all other Soviet universities, foreigners would not attend the Marxism-Leninism lessons, as their Soviet fellow students had to, but were given the same classes in history of the USSR. These were quite unpopular. One of the Chilean alumni, from an intellectual middle-class background portrayed these classes: “we had very good professors, except those that taught history of the USSR. They were really doctrinaire, and indeed expected us to repeat their ideological views.”⁶¹² However, with the exception of economics, where capitalist economy was taught but questioned at the same time, ideology was limited to these classes in history. All students, including the most critical, reflective and nuanced ones agree on that in their memories. “Upon my honour, never, never, were there any attempts to influence me politically. The only influence was living in a socialist society without unemployment, everyone had their chance to study, medical assistance, and – if at times difficult and not with Western luxuries – housing”, the Bolivian answered emphatically.⁶¹³ In a letter to the Colombian newspaper *El Tiempo* in 1970, alumni complained about the negative depiction of studies in the USSR, underlining that they had never been under any ideological influence, as the paper had put it.⁶¹⁴

Spare time

One of the aspects of life in the Soviet Union that all students recalled wistfully was the range of opportunities they had in their spare time. Especially those from poorer backgrounds enjoyed many amenities they were not used to back home. For Westerners, or in general

⁶¹¹ Interview with a male Colombian alumnus, middle class background. Student at Lumumba University 1979-85, history. Journalist, no political affiliation.

⁶¹² Interview with a male Chilean alumnus, middle class background. Student at Lumumba University 1976-82, history. University professor, no political affiliation.

⁶¹³ Interview with a male Bolivian alumnus, working class background, Quechua. Student at Lumumba University 1965-70, mathematics. University professor, no political affiliation.

⁶¹⁴ Letter by Colombian alumni of Lumumba University to the newspaper *El Tiempo*, 20-1-1970. Archive of the Soviet-Colombian Friendship Association.

youngsters from middle class families anywhere, running hot water any time of the day or free sports facilities on campus were hardly spectacular. For many Third World students, however, the Soviet Union was not grey and boring, but a revelation of possibilities they never had before. With their scholarships, they could easily afford the inexpensive tickets for cinemas and sports stadiums. Theatres, operas, ballets and museums, affordable only for the upper class in their home countries, were on the cheap, too. Thanks to low-priced transport they could even travel all around the Soviet Union, one sixth of the earth as the Soviets kept telling them, and all across Eastern Europe. “The university did not care about what we did in our spare time” explained an ex-student, “I travelled to all parts of the Soviet Union.”⁶¹⁵ Officially, the students were given visas only for their city of residence. For travel, they needed the authorization of their university, but usually, these permits were given easily. However, leverage remained in the hands of university officials: in the case that someone did not behave according to the rules or got bad grades, the issue of visas could be denied as a “pedagogical measure”. At least from the late 1970s, this rule hardly seems to have been enforced: “I travelled from one end of the USSR to the other, I never asked for a visa and nobody cared”, a Colombian alumnus explained.⁶¹⁶ This freedom of movement in the strictly controlled Soviet Union may sound implausible and might indeed be exaggerated through the interviewee’s nostalgia. However, similar accounts by East Germans who travelled for long periods of time illegally through the USSR suggest that, with the right combination of courage, chutzpah and bribes and thanks to the hospitality of many Soviet citizens, free travel was possible indeed.⁶¹⁷

During their summer holidays, many students went to Western Europe, usually to Sweden and to a lesser extent to Finland and Northern Germany. Manual labour was still sought after and well paid in these countries. The students came, worked for some weeks and returned with a lot of hard currency and Western consumer goods to their Soviet cities, where their popularity increased accordingly. Especially on the campus of Lumumba University, a busy black market for Jeans and records blossomed. To break up a cartel of students who dealt on a grand scale, the university even called in the KGB in 1965.⁶¹⁸ As a reaction, the university council tried to forbid its students to go to capitalist states during summer holidays. As the bulk of

⁶¹⁵ Interview with a male Chilean alumnus, peasant background. Student at Lumumba University 1967-73, engineering. Engineer and civil servant, member of the Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela.

⁶¹⁶ Interview with a male Colombian alumnus, middle class background. Student at Lumumba University 1979-85, history. Journalist, no political affiliation.

⁶¹⁷ CORNELIA KLAUB; FRANK BÖTTCHER (EDS.): *Unerkannt durch Freundesland. Illegale Reisen durch das Sowjetreich*. Berlin, Lukas Verlag 2011.

⁶¹⁸ Undated and untitled KGB document, RGANI f.5 op.35 d.221 l.65.

students, throughout the 1960s and 70s, reported that they worked in Western Europe, it is safe to assume that this ban was lifted again shortly afterwards.

For students who did not spend the summer in their home countries or in Swedish factories, the universities organised large holiday programmes. On shorter trips, they could get to know the cities of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. On summer camps with agricultural internships in the Caucasus, with the grape harvest in Moldova or on Kolchozes at the Black Sea, students could earn some money in the mornings and enjoy a programme of sports, excursions and cultural events in the afternoon.⁶¹⁹

Upon request by leftist students, Lumumba University organised theoretical seminars during these summer camps. During the “Week of Latin America” for instance, held in Sochi in 1965, the Latin Americans, all voluntarily, met students from the GDR and Iraq to discuss the socio-economic situation in the Third World, and to debate these points with ambassadors from Latin American countries. At night, Latin American films were shown and folklore bands played.

While many Lumumba students contributed to the building of the new campus on the outskirts of Moscow, others even volunteered for work camps in Siberia. What may sound to many like *Crime and Punishment* or the Gulag was, for some students, indeed a convenient change from academic work and a chance to earn some money while returning their Soviet hosts’ hospitality. Luis Soto, a Chilean student at Lumumba, had come as a leftist without political affiliations to Moscow and spent “the best time of his life” in the 1960s Soviet Union. In 1967, he joined working brigades in Železnogorsk-Ilimskij. 1200km northeast of Irkutsk, he took part in the preliminary works for the Baikal-Amur-Mainline in a group of Third World students. In his memoirs, written 40 years later, he remembered, full of nostalgia, the idealism and the solidarity among the workers during his two months in the Siberian taiga. “We learnt human values that made us better citizens of the world, we learnt dignity, pride in our heritage and solidarity with our fellow have-nots, dedication to social justice and respect for the human being.”⁶²⁰ Explicitly distancing himself from empty official discourse (“the last day they gave a speech that no one listened to”), he portrayed the enthusiasm and the feeling of having accomplished something for the community, which he shared with all his fellow workers. While, as in most reminiscences of older men about their

⁶¹⁹ O meroprijatach po letnemu otdychu studentov Universiteta Družby Narodov im. Patriša Lumumby 1968g, RGASPI f.1M op.39 d.143 l.50-52; 17-5-1968, RGASPI f.1M op.39 d.138.

⁶²⁰ SOTO 2008, p. 210.

youth, there is certainly a nostalgic dash of idealisation, it is obvious that most students also considered this part of their stay in the USSR as positive and fulfilling.

Contacts with Soviet realities

Western observers sometimes called the Lumumba University “Apartheid-University”, as they believed it was built to keep foreigners away from Soviet students and the Soviet population. While most foreigners on the Lumumba-campus did indeed spend most of their day to day life within the university facilities on the outskirts of Moscow, contacts with Soviets outside of the campus were not under official restriction. Those interested, be they Lumumba-students or foreigners at other universities, could interact freely with whoever they wanted (at least as long as they were not Westerners). The alumni’s memories thus give a sense of what ordinary Soviet citizens thought of foreigners, about the world abroad – and of Soviet internationalism.

One aspect most students (like many other foreigners) noticed was how well-informed their Soviet acquaintances were concerning international issues and the cultural production of their home countries.⁶²¹ And there was a great curiosity among Russians about the foreigners – many of the students back then palpably enjoyed this chance to stand in the limelight, and the interest shown in them. “I was always and everywhere very welcome!” a Panamanian remembered, “soy Latino!”⁶²² – being a Latin American obviously was a brownie point in a society, where people loved Latin tunes and Fidel Castro. “I had many Soviet friends, and relations were excellent. My two Soviet roommates were like brothers for me, I was even best man for both at their weddings!” another alumnus answered in the same vein.⁶²³ Even the most critical students, in this case a Colombian from the late 1970s, confirmed that contacts with the Soviet population were no problem at all: “ah, this was very relaxed! I had many Russian friends, many of them children of higher functionaries. They were highly educated and knew very much about Latin America, especially about literature. ... And they were quite critical of the system they lived in. ... I also had contact with people from the embassies and to Western journalists.”⁶²⁴ Some remembered having cordial relations with Soviet fellow

⁶²¹ SOTO 2008, p. 87.

⁶²² Interview with a male Panamanian alumnus, petty bourgeois background. Student at Moscow State University 1970-77, engineering. Engineer and civil servant, member of a non-specified political party.

⁶²³ Interview with a male Bolivian alumnus, working class background, Quechua. Student at Lumumba University 1965-70, mathematics. University professor, no political affiliation.

⁶²⁴ Interview with a male Colombian alumnus, middle class background. Student at Lumumba University 1979-85, history. Journalist, no political affiliation.

students, but no friendships, while others complained about the surliness in public. Yet dominating in the alumni's memories is the great curiosity and high respect towards foreigners they experienced. "Actually, some of us students often exploited that", one of them conceded in hindsight.⁶²⁵

Also the fact that Soviet students at Lumumba University had to report on their international fellow students did not affect the relations among them much as they did not talk the foreigners into their own political views. "I had my Soviet friends and cordial relations with many locals. ... There was never any attempt to influence me; there were some Spanish communists we knew and they talked about politics to us, but I was a convinced socialist anyway. ... I heard of some guys snitching, but these were isolated cases, certain people were known for that and we simply avoided them, but these were exceptions", said an alumnus playing down the issue.⁶²⁶

Some students did come into very close contact with Soviet authorities: from the arrival of the first Third World students in the mid 1950s, several internationalist organs tried to recruit students as contributors. After the isolated years of Stalinism, there was a great lack of knowledge and simply of people who spoke the languages of those countries the Soviets aimed at with their grand charm offensive. Foreign students, usually after consultation with the Communist party in their home country, now assisted at the news agency TASS, on several journals, film productions and radio stations as translators, narrators, actors or writers. Radio Moscow even introduced a weekly broadcast: in "Letter to the Homeland", foreign students would tell their compatriots back home about their everyday life in the Soviet Union in their native languages.⁶²⁷

It is difficult to estimate whether students were involved with the secret services beyond that. The interviewees denied that this ever happened to them or anyone else they knew. The accessible archive material gives no hints at all in this direction – which does not exclude that it did happen. After all, the first vice-president of Lumumba University was Pavel Erzin, a major general of the KGB. But it is fair to conclude that it was certainly not a common practice.

⁶²⁵ Interview with a male Ecuadorian alumnus, petty bourgeois background. Student in Astrachan 1973-79, biology. Businessman, no political affiliation.

⁶²⁶ Interview with a male Chilean alumnus, peasant background. Student at Lumumba University 1967-73, engineering. Engineer and civil servant, member of the Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela.

⁶²⁷ O situaciji studentov iz Latinskoj Ameriki v SSSR, 13-5-1966, RGASPI f.1M op.39 d.30 l.1-14; Head Sergej Rumjancev to the Central Committee of the CPSU, 8-6-1965, RGANI f.5 op.35 d.221 l.51-55, l.56.

The Third World students did not live in apartheid in the Soviet Union. They were free to interact with their Soviet fellow students as well as with the Soviet population – if they chose to do so. In contrast to the stance towards some visitors and students from the West, there was no general suspicion against them. “I had contacts with people from everywhere. ... Relations with Soviet students were excellent, full of solidarity, I never had the impression they would spy on us, why should they? What danger did we represent?”, an alumnus summed it up.⁶²⁸ Western youngsters potentially brought officially despised Western customs, music or even subversive political ideas. The Latinos brought folklore music, and Mexican students introduced baseball to the Soviet Union – as long as they did not act politically, this was no problem for Soviet authorities.

Sex and the Cold War

An integral part of the general feeling of contentment can be ascribed to another phenomenon: “the majority of us had Soviet girlfriends!”⁶²⁹ Indeed most male interviewees got married to Russian or Ukrainian women at some point during their time in Moscow – or to women from the Latin American group. Most female students, outnumbered by 1:8, got pregnant while in Moscow, related one Lumumba-alumnus.⁶³⁰ “Then I got pregnant from this other Latin American guy”, a female Uruguayan ex-student at Lumumba confirmed.⁶³¹ Due to the quota, very few foreign women sought partners outside their compatriot community, while Latin American men usually found women not in other national communities on campus (with the same problematic quota), but outside the student community.

The stance of the university towards sexual relations is not quite clear. Some alumni claimed to know that relations with Soviets were technically prohibited, “but of course they happened anyway”⁶³², or that “they were not allowed on campus, but outside the university there was no problem at all.”⁶³³ Others explicitly denied that limitations ever existed; university regulations

⁶²⁸ Interview with a male Dominican alumnus, peasant background. Student in Charkov and Odessa 1973-79, engineering. Engineer and civil servant, trade union activist.

⁶²⁹ Interview with a male Dominican alumnus, peasant background. Student in Charkov and Odessa 1973-79, engineering. Engineer and civil servant, trade union activist.

⁶³⁰ Interview with a male Chilean alumnus, peasant background. Student at Lumumba University 1967-73, engineering. Engineer and civil servant, member of the Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela.

⁶³¹ Interview with a female Uruguayan alumnus, peasant background. Student at Lumumba University 1964-70, chemistry. University professor, member of a non-specified political party.

⁶³² Interview with a female Chilean alumnus, working class background. Student at Lumumba University 1971-77, economics. Unknown occupation, former member of Communist Party.

⁶³³ Interview with a male Colombian alumnus, petty bourgeois background. Student at Lumumba University 1966-73, philology. University professor, no political affiliation.

never mentioned the issue. Especially difficult was the situation for one Colombian student at Lumumba. His girlfriend lived in one of the many closed neighbourhoods in the Soviet Union. He, as all other friends of the girl's family could not enter – and she could officially not get into his place on the Lumumba campus. The couple still managed to have three children. Rules and difficulties aside, there were relationships galore and many Soviet-Latin American babies. About half the relationships broke up in the end when the student father returned to America. Other Soviet women made the effort of complicated bureaucratic applications, risked harassment and the denial of an exit-visa.⁶³⁴ But some finally managed to emigrate with their new families to all parts of Latin America, as did the girl from the closed city.⁶³⁵ Today associations of “Russian wives of alumni from Lumumba University” and similar groups exist all over the continent.

Race and the Cold War

In the review of Carew's book as in many other early Western accounts of student life in the Soviet Union, there is always reference to blatant xenophobia in the Soviet public and bureaucracy. As early as March 1960, African students wrote a public letter to Khrushchev in Western newspapers complaining about racist treatment. They felt constantly threatened and insulted. One of them was even beaten up for dancing with a Russian girl.⁶³⁶ The first dropouts returned to their home countries and readily gave accounts of their traumatic experience.⁶³⁷

No doubt, racism, or at least ignorance towards the “exotic” foreigners that some perceived as racist, certainly prevailed in the Russian-Soviet society. The great majority of students, however, never encountered any problems of the kind at all. Some even explicitly disavow that racism existed at all back in that day. “In the 1960s, during the high times of the Cold War, the absence of racist and class prejudice within the population was a success of this society”, believed a Chilean alumnus, who had an African girlfriend himself.⁶³⁸ “In fact, I was

⁶³⁴ Interview with the ex-wife of a Colombian student in Leningrad, who after a yearlong bureaucratic struggle with and many insults from the authorities was given an exit visa in the late 1970s.

⁶³⁵ Interview with a male Colombian alumnus, middle class background. Student at Lumumba University 1972-78, economy. Businessman, no political affiliation.

⁶³⁶ MAXIM MATUSEVICH: ‘Journeys of Hope. African Diaspora and the Soviet Society’. *African Diaspora* 1 (2008), pp. 53–85.

⁶³⁷ E.g.: ANDREW RICHARD AMAR: *Als Student in Moskau*. Stuttgart, Seewald 1961.

⁶³⁸ SOTO 2008, p. 106; the same tenor in interviews with other Chilean alumni, in: DANIELA DEROSTAS; MARIA JESUS POCH; CARMEN WINTER: *Un crisol de experiencias. Chilenos en la Universidad de Amistad de los Pueblos Patricia Lumumba*. Chile 2008.

treated just like another Soviet guy, just with a different colour and different accent”, the Bolivian alumnus, who came from a Quechua family, remembered.⁶³⁹ One of the Colombian alumni, while very critical of many aspects of Soviet reality, claimed: “no, never ever have I experienced nor heard of anything like that! On the contrary, we as foreigners were highly popular and there was great curiosity about us!”⁶⁴⁰

Not only in (possibly glorified) memories, did alumni by and large deny that racist prejudice was a common phenomenon for Third World students in the Soviet Union. Contemporary documents, too, confirm this view: in a 1968 interview with a group of Latin American students they all said that they “encountered no racial or political discrimination and that freedom of belief prevailed.”⁶⁴¹ Visitors from the West in the early 1970s also reported, perhaps too optimistically, that relationships between black Africans and Russians in public no longer caused great stir.⁶⁴² Many Africans, too, speak nostalgically about their youth in the USSR. To be sure, many accusations were certainly not unfounded. But racist incidents were the exception rather than the rule. They provided a welcome target for Western media though. In winter 1963 a medical student from Ghana was found dead in a Moscow suburb a day before getting married to his Russian fiancé. As a result, indignant African students demonstrated on Red Square, and Western newspapers made serious allegations about the treatment of foreigners in the Soviet Union. Later it turned out that the young Ghanaian had taken a glass too much at his stag party and had frozen to death tragically.⁶⁴³ That the foreign students immediately suspected a racist murder is not proof, but hints at bad experiences with Soviet citizens – or perhaps rather with whites in general, which made them perceive the rude and authoritarian Soviet public attitudes as racist. The one and only memory of an incident in interviews and memoirs in this direction came from a Colombian student: “I remember a scene lining up at a store. I heard negative comments by a drunk about African students, something like ‘This is a white country’. ... But immediately a woman came up and said something like ‘You know it’s forbidden to touch the foreigners’. They knew they would get into trouble if they harmed strangers.”⁶⁴⁴

⁶³⁹ Interview with a male Bolivian alumnus, working class background, Quechua. Student at Lumumba University 1965-70, mathematics. University professor, no political affiliation.

⁶⁴⁰ Interview with a male Colombian alumnus, middle class background. Student at Lumumba University 1979-85, history. Journalist, no political affiliation.

⁶⁴¹ RIZA; QUIRK 1968, p. 37.

⁶⁴² RUBINSTEIN 1971.

⁶⁴³ JULIE HESSLER: ‘Death of an African Student in Moscow. Race, Politics, and the Cold War’. *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 47 1/2 (2006), pp. 33–63.

⁶⁴⁴ Interview with a male Colombian alumnus, middle class background. Student at Lumumba University 1979-85, history. Journalist, no political affiliation.

Lumumba University reacted and published glossy brochures that addressed the constant reproaches of racism. What students related in these booklets sounds like stereotypical Soviet propaganda – but coincides astonishingly with the students’ memories.⁶⁴⁵ Quarrels kept on happening but, as two other alumni recalled, mainly between the different ethnic groups on campus. “There was a bit of trouble with some Africans and Arabs, there were some cases but not many.”⁶⁴⁶ “There were many reasons for these fights. ... Sometimes one guy just made a joke that someone took the wrong way. ... Or something about girls. ... Usually there was alcohol in the case.”⁶⁴⁷

While xenophobic violence did become a huge problem from the 1980s, it was not a day-to-day issue for foreign students in the 1960s and 70s. These memories, to be sure, cannot form the basis of an examination of racist thought in the Soviet Union. They only recite the experience of Third World students, who in their overwhelming majority encountered no problems of the kind. In the Cold War battle for the sympathies of the Third World, anti-racism was indeed an asset for Soviet self-representation: while blacks in the Southern United States were heavily discriminated against, the Soviet Union gave Africans free education. The Soviet state enforced this anti-racist stance also within its own population. As for the hardships of Soviet everyday life which some misunderstood as racism, a quote by a Caribbean Marxist is telling. He had come as the only black man in a group of US technicians in 1933 and decided to stay in that country that promised him an end of all discrimination. “I seldom had problems as a negro in this land,” he told to a Chilean student in Moscow in the 1960s, “but as an individual, the problems were plentiful. ... I enjoyed full equality as a Russian citizen during Stalin's regime” – just as many native Russians, he had to spend seven years in Siberian labour camps.⁶⁴⁸

Frictions

Almost all alumni remembered their studies in the USSR with great nostalgia. Asked explicitly about problems they encountered, most referred to very private issues. “Of course there were problems, unanswered love, unreached goals, problems you would have in any life

⁶⁴⁵ E.g.: FRADKINE, ED.

⁶⁴⁶ Interview with a male Dominican alumnus, peasant background. Student in Charkov and Odessa 1973-79, engineering. Engineer and civil servant, trade union activist.

⁶⁴⁷ Interview with a male Chilean alumnus, middle class background. Student at Lumumba University 1976-82, history. University professor, no political affiliation.

⁶⁴⁸ CAREW 1964, p. 142.

in any place.”⁶⁴⁹ Borscht and Solianka seem to have been the major concern for most Latinos. “In the beginning, we didn’t like the food, but I got used to it and eventually liked it. Other problems I can’t recall.”⁶⁵⁰ “The food was terrible! Besides that, well, some got homesick and the climate was harsh.”⁶⁵¹ The Panamanian concluded: “the only thing I could never accept in the Soviet Union was cold soups!”⁶⁵²

The story by another Colombian shows that life in the Soviet Union could potentially still offer much nastier aspects than an unwonted diet. While most of his compatriots came from poor families or out of a political conviction, he was an apolitical youngster from a Bogotá middle class family. It was the late 1960s and, as many of his contemporaries of the same social background in Europe and the United States, he rebelled against the boring philistine lifestyle of the older generation. He grew long hair, listened to rock music and sought to leave his bourgeois parental home. Paris was his first choice, but the Soviet offer of free transport, living and studies sounded tempting and adventurous at the same time. He became a student at Lumumba University. In Moscow, he befriended a young Bolivian of the same age and, although son of a high ranking communist, with the same interests in music, drugs and women. Both got into trouble constantly for a demeanour they considered normal and the university officials considered vile. It was enough to publically read the TIME-Magazine brought in from the US embassy or a book by Solzhenitsyn on campus to irritate their Soviet hosts. They also got something more than they bargained for when they invited two US girls to their dormitory. Their guests worked as secretaries and nannies for the US embassy; shortly after, they – as required from all visitors – handed in their (in this case: diplomatic) passports at the university guard, the military police showed up and they all were invited to the vice rector. The head of the Latin American territorial association confronted them as well some days later: “we cannot understand why you invite people who kill babies in Vietnam.”

The two youngsters thus already had a reputation at Lumumba, when they did something that could have brought them into some trouble also in the West, but had terrible consequences in the Soviet Union. “We had made quite a bit of money selling jeans and vinyl I had brought from my last Europe trip,” the Colombian remembers, “it was the day Allende visited

⁶⁴⁹ Interview with a male Bolivian alumnus, working class background, Quechua. Student at Lumumba University 1965-70, mathematics. University professor, no political affiliation.

⁶⁵⁰ Interview with a male Dominican alumnus, peasant background. Student in Charkov and Odessa 1973-79, engineering. Engineer and civil servant, trade union activist.

⁶⁵¹ Interview with a male Chilean alumnus, peasant background. Student at Lumumba University 1967-73, engineering. Engineer and civil servant, member of the Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela.

⁶⁵² Interview with a male Panamanian alumnus, petty bourgeois background. Student at Moscow State University 1970-77, engineering. Engineer and civil servant, member of a non-specified political party.

Moscow, the city was packed, traffic jams everywhere, when we got an offer from this Uzbek guy we met in the street. We bought from him a huge piece of Hashish.” When the university learned that the young Colombian and Bolivian smoked joints in their dormitory, the students got to know the uglier side of life in the Soviet Union: unsuspectingly they welcomed a new Russian roommate, who ostensibly became a good friend. Shortly after, their third roommate, also a Colombian, was stopped by the police while taking a taxi in Moscow. He was arrested and forced to undress while being interrogated. The police took his nude picture and blackmailed him into becoming an informant on campus. He agreed, but told his friends that he had to meet a KGB-agent every two weeks and give reports. The new Russian roommate, who was probably sent to spy on them, disappeared. Finally, the young Colombian was kicked out of the Soviet Union, but not before the rector of Lumumba University personally warned him that he was not to mention his story in the West, or he would give away details of his private life. When the university realised that he did not, as he was told to, leave directly to Colombia, but to Sweden, Komsomol activists spread the rumour on campus that he and his Bolivian friend were homosexuals.⁶⁵³

The story, while an exceptional case, exemplifies the limits of liberalisation and freedom in the late Soviet Union. Foreign students usually lived a happy and unbothered life. Should they violate the rules, and behaving like a normal Western youngster meant breaking the rules seriously, reactions were still terrible, for foreigners and Soviet citizens alike.

Judgments of the Soviet Union

Those students who did not yield to the temptations of Sex, Drugs and Rock’n Roll experienced their stays in the Soviet Union as very positive. The Soviet goal in offering free higher education was to create a positive stance towards their state. The alumni’s opinions about the USSR reveal to what extent these intentions were successful.

Most students were not completely uncritical of Soviet politics. Even those who mainly rave nostalgically of their stays did see negative aspects: “I was the only one of my friends who saw the invasion of Czechoslovakia as a mistake” a Chilean alumnus wrote in his memoirs, “I also did not agree with the argument that environmental problems came only as a result of the Western capitalist system. ... I saw that the living standards in the countryside were, while acceptable, still worse than in the cities.” “It was an undemocratic state” conceded a

⁶⁵³ Interview with a male Colombian alumnus, middle class background. Student at Lumumba University 1970-74, history. University professor, no political affiliation.

Colombian, “but on a personal level it was great!”⁶⁵⁴ – While higher politics often evoked their disapproval, students still considered many aspects of the Soviet way of life very appealing. “Socialism developed positively in the 1960s, there were more consumer goods and cultural products; it demanded much from people but gave a lot. ... There was no room for egoism and individualism. ... Necessities, not income, defined what a family could consume. ... Everyone in the Soviet Union lived the living standard of the middle class in my country [Chile]. There was a shortage of some products, but there was no poverty. ... They actually had the same ideals as Jesus; it does not make sense that the Catholics here are conservative and anti-socialist.” The Chilean’s conclusion was clear: for him, unlike for Jan Carew’s novel hero Josef, the USSR was still “the Mecca of leftist culture, ... a real and invigorating example for the values and principles we held.”⁶⁵⁵ “There were many problems, no doubt, but this system has in many respects many advantages compared to the capitalist system, from a humanist point of view!” the Venezuelan agreed.⁶⁵⁶

In contrast, students from Latin American middle class families recalled “in some cases parlous living conditions”⁶⁵⁷, and experiences “that cured me of left radicalism, more towards a stance of social democracy.”⁶⁵⁸ But the majority went home with a very positive image of Soviet realities and followed the disintegration of the USSR with a sense of regret: “it was very sad what happened in 1990, they kept the bad things and abolished everything positive.”⁶⁵⁹ “I saw with sadness what happened with the USSR. Today’s Russia is full of poverty, mafia and Western values like egoism and vanity instead of solidarity and wellbeing.”⁶⁶⁰

Returns, careers and memories

⁶⁵⁴ Interview with a male Colombian alumnus, petty bourgeois background. Student at Lumumba University 1966-73, philology. University professor, no political affiliation.

⁶⁵⁵ SOTO 2008, pp. 45-63; 93. literally: “Era la meca de la cultura de izquierda ... la realidad soviética representaba un ejemplo real y reconfortante de los valores y principios que sustentábamos.”

⁶⁵⁶ Interview with a male Chilean alumnus, peasant background. Student at Lumumba University 1967-73, engineering. Engineer and civil servant, member of the Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela.

⁶⁵⁷ Interview with a male Colombian alumnus, middle class background. Student at Lumumba University 1972-78, history. University professor, no political affiliation.

⁶⁵⁸ Interview with a male Chilean alumnus, middle class background. Student at Lumumba University 1976-82, history. University professor, no political affiliation.

⁶⁵⁹ Interview with a female Uruguayan alumnus, peasant background. Student at Lumumba University 1964-70, chemistry. University professor, member of a non-specified political party.

⁶⁶⁰ Interview with a male Colombian alumnus, petty bourgeois background. Student at Lumumba University 1966-73, philology. University professor, no political affiliation.

There is a convincing piece of evidence that most students perceived their studies in the Soviet Union as very positive: “I sent my son to study in Moscow, too”, the Bolivian said, after all: “those were the best years of my life and I miss them every day!” Just like him, many others recommended the studies to their friends and families. Until today a common reason for Latin Americans to come to study in Russia are their fathers’ nostalgic tales from the good old times. Associations of alumni have been founded all over Latin America where they commemorate their youth – often with a sense of gratitude to their Soviet hosts. The Colombian who married his girlfriend from the closed Soviet city, after a successful career as a merchant, felt nostalgic about his Soviet experience and later opened a Russian café in his native Bogotá. A Chilean alumnus, now a civil servant in the Venezuelan Oil Ministry under the Hugo Chavez administration emphatically summed up: “I remember my old man, a poor *campesino*, almost without education, working every day for a miserable salary, seeing sadly that his sons had to follow his steps, as there was no alternative. I remember my elder brothers who had to bury their dreams and struggled to survive. ... To me, the Soviet people, without knowing who I was, paid my long trip from Pudahuel to Carrasco to Sao Paulo to Rio de Janeiro to Madrid to Paris and finally Moscow. They paid my education and required nothing from me but to study. I met people from all over the world; I learned their languages and customs. This opened a path in my life, gave me the tools to live a better life. Many bad things were and are said about the socialist system, but the help they gave to us, who had no chances in our home country, is something no one can deny. ... I would be a very ungrateful person, if I said I was not very obliged to the Soviet Union.”⁶⁶¹ A Colombian female student wrote back to the Friendship Society in a letter of thanks: “I became a new human being in the Soviet Union, a ‘nastaichi chilaviek’ (broken Russian for: “real person”)!“⁶⁶²

Upon return to their home countries most students initially faced difficulties and aroused suspicion. “To go to the Soviet Union for whatever reason, meant a subversive and unacceptable act for many people from the political right.”⁶⁶³ A group of Bolivians had to be brought to Chile first and then crossed the green border – the Bolivian state had simply

⁶⁶¹ Interview with a male Dominican alumnus, peasant background. Student in Charkov and Odessa 1973-79, engineering. Engineer and civil servant, trade union activist.

⁶⁶² Letter from Moscow to the Soviet-Colombian Friendship Association, 23-3-1970, Archive of the Soviet-Colombian Friendship Association.

⁶⁶³ SOTO 2008, p. 25.

refused to let them back in.⁶⁶⁴ A Colombian remembered being harassed by customs officials and arrested at the airport when he came back in 1973.⁶⁶⁵

There were some reasons for suspicion: the Lumumba University – if involuntarily – did indeed bring forth a handful of wannabe revolutionaries. Ilich Ramírez Sanchez, later known as Carlos the Jackal, was the son of a Venezuelan Marxist lawyer, who baptised his three sons Vladimir, Ilich and Lenin. Ilich went to study at Lumumba at his father's request, but got dismissed after repeated drunken rampaging and molesting of female fellow students. In the years to come, he made a fortune as a contract terrorist among others for the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. The Soviets had nothing to do with that, but his first contacts with the Arabs he had made on the Lumumba-campus.⁶⁶⁶ The Mexican author Salvador Castañeda and some of his fellow students from Lumumba caused some stir in 1972: they had formed the *Movimiento de acción revolucionaria*, got in contact with North Koreans in Moscow and flew to Pyongyang to prepare a coup d'état in Mexico. The authorities arrested them all immediately at the airport in Mexico City. Finally, also a number of guerrilla fighters in the Colombian FARC had studied at Lumumba.

While these cases were exceptions, they kept a certain fear of returning alumni alive. Most of them, however, came home and did not have revolution on their mind, but careers as engineers, doctors, academics or civil servants. The group that experienced the least persecution were the engineers. The Brazilian student returned in 1979 and had "... no problem at all! To the contrary!"⁶⁶⁷ in his home country, at the time already under military rule for 15 years. The student from Panama worked on a hydroelectric power plant after his return, and later for a state institute for hydro-energy, as a professor and a journalist. Only in the very beginning did he sometimes have to justify his Soviet education in a country that was under the firm rule of anti-communist dictator Omar Torrijos.⁶⁶⁸

Also for the majority of other students, it was their professional skills that finally calmed the waves. "In the beginning it was a bit rocky; they saw us as Russian spies. But thanks to my good education I later never experienced any difficulties", the Dominican explained. He

⁶⁶⁴ Ministerstvo Obrazovannija – CK KPSS, 22-7-1965, RGANI f.5 op.35 d.221 l.30-31.

⁶⁶⁵ Interview with a male Colombian alumnus, petty bourgeois background. Student at Lumumba University 1966-73, philology. University professor, no political affiliation.

⁶⁶⁶ OLIVER SCHRÖM: *Im Schatten des Schakals. Carlos und die Wegbereiter des internationalen Terrorismus*. Berlin, Links 2002; COLIN SMITH: *Carlos. Portrait of a Terrorist*. New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1977.

⁶⁶⁷ Interview with a male Brazilian alumnus, middle class background. Student in Soviet Union 1973-79, economics. University professor, no political affiliation.

⁶⁶⁸ Interview with a male Panamanian alumnus, petty bourgeois background. Student at Moscow State University 1970-77, engineering. Engineer and civil servant, member of a non-specified political party.

finally worked in several state ministries and even as envoy to the United States.⁶⁶⁹ Others found work easily when they returned, but got into trouble again whenever the military took power, as happened regularly in many Latin American states. “I came back as a mathematician in 1970, a profession that did not exist in Bolivia at the time. I was the first mathematician in Bolivia. Those who taught mathematics were usually engineers and taught at an academic level of the 19th century. I had to start a revolution in the university where I began my work. ... But I again and again had problems with my Soviet diploma, they considered me a Marxist, a *guerrillero*. They persecuted me, they expelled me from work, every time there was a new right-wing coup. But in the end, I had a career and became head of department in several universities because I was the best mathematician in Bolivia.”⁶⁷⁰ Others faced similar problems and found similar solutions: “I had a very good education; it helped me achieve things that would have been impossible as a woman in Uruguay. But for having studied in the USSR I had to leave Uruguay in the 1970s. ... I easily found work in other Latin American countries though.”⁶⁷¹ The Chileans, after Pinochet’s putsch in 1973, seem to have had the severest difficulties. Several Lumumba alumni are among the *desaparecidos*, people who disappeared especially in the early days of the dictatorship and were most likely murdered by order of the regime. Many Chilean students who were in the Soviet Union during the putsch could not return back to their home country. Some went to other Latin American states, others went back to the country of their summer jobs: the largest and most active group of Lumumba-alumni operates today from Sweden. Many returning students who stayed in Latin America started to work in academia, a traditionally very liberal milieu all over Latin America. “People here would still associate ‘Moscow’ with Russian high culture rather than communist subversion”, a Colombian put it. As long as there was no political interference, they had their undisturbed careers, and many finally became professors. In Colombia, where, according to Russian embassy estimates, some 10,000 alumni from Soviet and Russian universities live, a large chunk of faculty staff in both private and public universities has a Soviet degree. As history had not been taught as a separate subject at Colombian universities until the 1960s, the Soviet alumni filled a gap and today represent up to half of the teaching staff in some faculties. The *Universidad Nacional* alone employs more

⁶⁶⁹ Interview with a male Dominican alumnus, peasant background. Student in Charkov and Odessa 1973-79, engineering. Engineer and civil servant, trade union activist.

⁶⁷⁰ Interview with a male Bolivian alumnus, working class background, Quechua. Student at Lumumba University 1965-70, mathematics. University professor, no political affiliation.

⁶⁷¹ Interview with a female Uruguayan alumnus, peasant background. Student at Lumumba University 1964-70, chemistry. University professor, member of a non-specified political party.

than 20 professors with a Soviet degree, at the *Facultad de Historia* of the *Universidad Autónoma* almost half of the teaching staff came from Lumumba University.⁶⁷² And being trained in Marxism helped some of them in their careers as social historians.⁶⁷³ Alumni from Soviet universities dominate the diplomatic service of all Latin American states in the CIS states today, while some even made their careers in high politics: Henry Ruiz joined the Sandinista movement after his studies in Moscow and in the 1990s became Nicaragua's Minister of Foreign Trade. His fellow student at Lumumba, Ernesto Tablada, acted as Minister of Health in the same cabinet.⁶⁷⁴

The author Jan Carew had described the mixed experiences of Third World students in Moscow in the 1960s; today, the president in office (as of 2011) in his home country Guyana is Bharrat Jagdeo, who studied at Lumumba during the final years of the Soviet Union.

The successes and shortcomings of Soviet internationalism in the field of education

Jan Carew's *Green Winter* was not the only literary account of the life of Third World students in the Soviet Union. While Carew showed both sides of the story and criticised some aspects, another author entirely and uncritically celebrated Soviet lavishness. The Dominican historian and novelist Ramón Alberto Ferreras is perhaps best known for having inspired Mario Vargas Llosa to his *The Feast of the Goat*, an accusatory novel about the dictator Rafael Trujillo. In 1981, Ferreras, who like Carew had never been to the Soviet Union, wrote a semi-fictional novel about the life of Latin American students in Moscow.⁶⁷⁵ As the title *¿Infierno?* ("Hell?") already suggests, he questioned the negative depiction of student life in Moscow and of the Soviet Union in general. Although not a communist, Ferreras, in a foreword to the novel, conceded his great admiration for the Soviets and deplored the impact of US propaganda on his fellow Latin Americans. Even the admired Gabriel García Márquez had fallen for it: the final inspiration to write the book, Ferreras revealed, came from García Márquez' critical travelogue from the Soviet Union (as discussed in chapter three). While the

⁶⁷² Interview with a male Colombian alumnus, middle class background. Student at Lumumba University 1979-85, history. Journalist, no political affiliation.

⁶⁷³ Interview with a male Chilean alumnus, middle class background. Student at Lumumba University 1976-82, history. University professor, no political affiliation.

⁶⁷⁴ Yo me diplomé en Rusia. 42. Aniversario de la Universidad de la Amistad de los Pueblos. Radio broadcast by Voice of Russia, 2002. <http://www.vor.ru/Spanish/Diplome/dipl-com1.html> (last access 3-9-2009).

⁶⁷⁵ ALBERTO FERRERAS 1981.

latter sounded to him like Reagan or McCarthy when describing the USSR, all his Dominican acquaintances had assured him how great life was in the socialist camp.

Based on interviews with returning students, the novel told the story of Josue and Samuel, two youngsters from the Dominican Republic, and a nameless Venezuelan girl during their studies at the Lumumba- and Moscow State Universities. The Dominican boys came from deprived backgrounds and, before they went to Moscow, had lived rough lives: hard physical labour in the morning paid for their studies in the afternoon. When a member of the Dominican Communist Party offered them Soviet scholarships, they initially declined out of fear of anti-communist persecution, but finally accepted them anyway and secretly left for Moscow. They both were given preparatory classes at MGU, struggled a bit with the Russian language, made friends from all over the world, played folklore music in a band and thoroughly enjoyed their time. They travelled around the country, marvelled at the modern cities of Azerbaijan and Central Asia and bathed in their popularity among their Soviet acquaintances, whom they usually told they were Cubans: “this way I avoid having to explain over and over what the Dominican Republic is – and I immediately have people’s sympathies, as they all love Fidel Castro”, Josue explained.

By way of contrast, Ferreras, after quoting these students, their friends and parents and after giving some rather superficial and even faulty information on Russian and Soviet history, related the sad story of another Dominican youngster who went to study in the United States. He had to work for a living during the day, studied at night, hardly slept and ate until he came back to the island, exhausted and without a diploma. Not only did US universities apparently not pay scholarships to their students, they also created blinkered specialists, Ferreras explained quoting Marcuse.

The Venezuelan girl in the next chapter, also from a humble family background, worked in the Caracas city administration and could not afford the desired postgraduate studies, but one day learnt of the Soviet offer from a newspaper article. Ferreras painted her life in the Soviet Union in a very rosy light, too; the only problem she ever encountered was some bureaucratic disorganisation in the Latin American territorial association. She studied the production of children’s television programmes and was impressed by the progressive gender roles, the free kindergartens and schools and the health care system in the Soviet Union.

Full of idealism, the Dominicans and the Venezuelan returned to their home countries, but all found themselves in a difficult situation.”Here we need personal contacts, elbows and servility. None of that we have learned at our socialist university.” Besides being paid very

low wages, they all heard reproaches from their superiors that they were *izquierdistas*, unwanted leftists. The happy tale of Josue and his friends in the Soviet Union thus ended with a sad outlook for their further lives back home in their underdeveloped home country.⁶⁷⁶

Like Carew, Ferreras wrote his book as a collective memoir, based on interviews he conducted in the Dominican Republic. What he believed to have found out about Latin American students in the Soviet Union seems lopsided, but is actually very much in line with the tenor of many of the interviews quoted in this chapter. While Carew still found fault with certain aspects of Soviet reality (without being as critical as it sounded in the *New York Times* review), the overwhelming majority of Latin American students perceived their stays in the Soviet Union very positively. A tendency has become clear: the poorer the country that students came from and the lower the social background, the more students were impressed by Soviet living standards, quality of education and their hosts' generosity. Interestingly, their memories are much closer to the Soviet official representation than to Western depictions. Some did complain about small nuisances, but many students spent, on their own admission, "the best time of their lives" in the Soviet Union of the 1960s or 70s.

From a Western point of view, the grey and dismal USSR was a backward place with a living standard well below the Western one. There were hardly any bars and restaurants, and a political system prevailed that sent critics to Siberia and banned modern art and international newspapers. For students from the Third World, however, things looked quite different. They usually came from a background with a living standard below the Soviet one. Moreover, higher education was often indeed not accessible for them where they came from. The Soviet Union, with the lavish scholarships it provided, offered stunning possibilities to them that were unreachable or unaffordable in their home countries. The students lived, ate and studied for free. For very little money, they could go to theatres, museums, operas and cinemas. They could do sports, travel and meet people from all over the world. Or they simply had the opportunity to take a hot shower anytime of the day – an asset many alumni remembered.⁶⁷⁷ Western students could hardly be impressed by that – for many Third World students, they were a revelation.

Admittedly, gathering information on the basis of interviews decades after the experience requires some constraint and vigilance as nostalgia tends to blur what people of an advanced age recall from their youths. Most interviewees, upon request, did mention hardships of their lives in the 1960s and 70s Soviet Union, but played them down. Rigid control, rude behaviour

⁶⁷⁶ ALBERTO FERRERAS 1981, pp. 110; 295f.; 479-522.

⁶⁷⁷ E.g.: DEROSTAS; POCH; WINTER 2008.

in public, paltry living conditions, an extremely harsh climate or the unwonted diet may have faded more into the background of the alumni's memories than what would have been their perception while they were there. However, the few contemporary sources used in this section, letters from students back home and reports from foreign travellers to the Soviet Union, completely coincide with the picture given in the interviews.

Another analytical limitation should be considered: the students' memories allow the reconstruction of a subjective perception of Soviet reality. They do not represent Soviet reality. That the students did not experience racism in the Soviet Union – and every single memoir, recollection and enquiry suggests they indeed did not – does not mean that racism was absent from Soviet society. It certainly existed, but it was not a regular experience for the majority of Latin American students.

The great enthusiasm and gratefulness not necessarily towards the entire Soviet state, but at least towards Soviet society as they encountered it, teachers, friends, acquaintances and internationalist institutions, was not only a stereotype of Soviet propaganda. Many students indeed felt this way, and their non-Western, internal view of the Soviet Union gives a sense of the fascination and the respect towards the USSR that prevailed in many parts of the Third World.

Students from Latin American middle class families, a milieu that lived a very European or Western life style, were less impressed with Soviet realities and it was usually they who got into conflict with Soviet authorities – for reading Western journals, smoking Hashish or having liberal views on sexual relations. The contingents from richer Latin American countries, Mexico, Brazil or Argentina, always had a larger group of political students. About one third of those students were members of communist youth organisations, many others were active in other leftist groups. Their views of the Soviet Union were of course very benevolent, too, but more for ideological reasons than due to their actual experience in the USSR.

An important corollary is what has been said already concerning Latin American intellectuals: the view of the Soviet Union depended not only on the political orientation of the beholder, but also on his geographical origin. The Soviet Union looked fundamentally different from the South than from the West.

There were, to be sure, many shortcomings of free higher education in the Soviet Union. In order to not endanger the political goals, students were also given degrees when their academic performance was poor. For that reason, and due to anti-communist fears, many

students had problems getting their diplomas acknowledged and finding work back home. Quantitatively, the Soviet Union could not keep pace with the numbers of Third World students in the West. Nevertheless, the opening of Soviet universities to foreigners was a success story of Soviet internationalism after Stalin. While it built on experience with the training of international Communist cadres in the 1920s and 30s, this programme set and met the different objective of creating a sympathetic stance towards the Soviet Union by giving complementary higher education to youngsters from the Third World who in their home countries would not have had the opportunity to study. For that matter, the Soviet offer operated more in the context of quite similar endeavours in Western European countries and the United States; the tremendously increased student exchange and scholarship programmes, on both sides of the Iron Curtain, were an integral part of cultural internationalism from the 1950s.

From a Soviet internationalist's perspective, the impact foreign students had on the Soviet population was quite a success, too. Foreigners, at least in the 1960s, were still an exotic rarity in the USSR. For Soviet citizens, the presence of thousands of foreign students was "one of the most tangible effects of the Cold War on daily life in the USSR".⁶⁷⁸ Research on the students' impact usually focused on their acts of resistance against Soviet bureaucracy, on racist discrimination and the undermining of Soviet values through their contacts with the West. However, the first reaction these exotic young men (and to a much smaller extent women) from the South aroused was often enormous curiosity and sympathy. The large effort and expense of the education programme, in the long run, evoked some criticism among Soviet citizens, but much more than that a sense of paternalistic superiority towards their guests. If all these people underwent all this hardship to come to the cold other side of the globe, leaving their families and friends for six years, how much better must life be in the Soviet Union than in these countries they came from. As an element of Soviet internationalism after Stalin, the offer of free education for Third-World foreigners proved to be a quite successful initiative not only towards the Third World, but also towards the Soviet population.

⁶⁷⁸ HESSLER 2006, p. 34.

5.
Desk revolutionaries.
Soviet Latin Americanists and the banner of internationalism

Area studies in the Cold War and the role of specialists in the post-Stalinist Soviet Union

- Old internationalists. The ‘father figures’ of Soviet Latin Americanistics
- New institutions and a new generation of professional internationalists
- Differentiation of regional expertise and the impact on Soviet politics
- The fall of Allende and the return of open academic debate to Soviet area studies

With the Gorillas or with the Guerrillas? The *meždunarodniki* as banner-bearers of Soviet internationalism after Stalin

"In Soviet times, we entered science like people used to enter convents: in order to get a maximum distance from the demands and vicissitudes of political and social life. It was not completely safe, but it was a sanctuary indeed"
Nikolaj Leonov⁶⁷⁹

"We wanted to do things completely differently."
Sergo Mikojan⁶⁸⁰

Area studies in the Cold War and the role of specialists in the post-Stalinist Soviet Union

The foregoing chapters three and four have looked at the Soviet Union after Stalin from a foreign point of view and approached the question of what Soviet internationalism meant for Latin American intellectuals and students. This last chapter returns to the Soviet perspective and introduces those people who designed the programmes and organised the initiatives and activities of renewed Soviet internationalism as they have been presented so far in this thesis. When the Third World loomed on the Soviet horizon from the mid 1950s, knowledge of the Global South was still very limited. At the time of Stalin's death, there was no Soviet correspondent in the entire Third World, and hardly any recent information on these vast

⁶⁷⁹ LEONOV 1995, p. 36.

⁶⁸⁰ SERGEJ MIKOJAN: 'Neuželi tridcat' piat' let?'. *Latinskaja Amerika* 7 (2004), pp. 25–39, p. 29.

areas of the world was available in libraries. What Edward Said revealed for Western Europeans of the colonial age describes just as well the Soviet conception of the world after years of Stalinist isolation: "a very unrigorous idea of what is 'out there', beyond one's own territory. All kinds of suppositions, associations, and fictions appear to crowd the unfamiliar space outside one's own."⁶⁸¹ The romanticising imagery and political conception of Latin America in the 1950s and early 60s, as described in chapter two, was still based on such a schematised perception of the world abroad. In order to interact with the Global South more successfully in its own interest, the Soviets urgently needed more expertise on the world abroad in the party and state organs. To that end, they established an ever-expanding network of 'area studies' from the late 1950s. These new research centres, organised around universities and branches of the Soviet Academy of Science, trained and employed an increasing number of specialists on all world regions.

The role of these specialists is crucial to an understanding of the second half of Soviet history. The Soviet Union 2.0. relaunched its political programme no longer based only on obedient party apparatchiks, but also relying the information of experts in many specialised fields.⁶⁸² Academic experts were called *institutniki*, according to their working place, and those who dealt with the world abroad *meždunarodniki*, a term that replaced the older *internationalist* but actually had the same meaning. The *meždunarodniki*, who worked in the new institutions of Soviet area studies, were academics with a political remit. Yet area studies specialists in the Soviet Union did not exclusively work for political analysis. In their daily work, they conducted research on all facets of life in their target areas, worked in internationalist organisations and only occasionally would be asked to contribute their expertise to the process of political decision-making.

During late Stalinism, the only source of experts had been the *Moskovskij gosudarstvennyj institut meždunarodnych otnošenij* ("Moscow institute for international relations", MGIMO). Founded as a branch of Moscow State University in 1943, it was attached as diplomatic school to the Foreign Ministry the year after. Unlike in traditional university curricula, students at the MGIMO were trained in history, political science, economy and law at the same time. They had to choose a geographical, linguistic and thematic major according to

⁶⁸¹ SAID 2007, p. 54.

⁶⁸² GERHARD DUDA: *Jenö Varga und die Geschichte des Instituts für Weltwirtschaft und Weltpolitik in Moskau 1921-1970. Zu den Möglichkeiten und Grenzen wissenschaftlicher Auslandsanalyse in der Sowjetunion*. Berlin, Akademie-Verlag 1994, p. 281.

their career plans as diplomats, journalists or academics.⁶⁸³ The MGIMO was considered a highly elitist cadre school, through which the bulk of Soviet diplomats, area studies experts and decision-makers in foreign policy went. While being by far the most professional institute of foreign relations, the MGIMO, during Stalinism, had limited its own possibilities with a series of restrictions such as the exclusion of Jewish students and the bullying of the often excellent academic staff. These constraints only added to the lack of capacity to supply enough international experts for all Soviet institutions. To meet the growing demand, ministries and party organs began training their own staff. Vocational schools gave civil servants extra lessons in world affairs, not in the broad approach of area studies, but at least in their respective fields of expertise. A common method of giving international experience to students and civil servants was to send them to Soviet embassies abroad as interns.⁶⁸⁴

The institutional framework to develop foreign expertise after 1953, was based on two trajectories: firstly, as far back as the 19th century, Russian *vostokovedenie* (“orientalism”) had dealt academically with the geography, languages, history and cultures of Asia, both within and outside the empire. As has been shown, the Soviets’ view of the emerging Third World from the mid 1950s was shaped by the experience they had had with the inner periphery in Central Asia and the Caucasus: in 1954, the MGIMO incorporated the *Moskovskij institut vostokovedenija* (“Moscow institute of oriental studies”). The second trajectory was an external inspiration, to which Anastas Mikojan referred during his speech at the XXth Party Congress in 1956: “in the United States, there are more than 15 scientific institutes that study the Soviet economy alone. ...and we snore and close down old research centres!”⁶⁸⁵ The establishment of think tanks in the United States had not gone unnoticed in Moscow, and inspired by organisations like the Rand Corporation, the Soviets now started to establish their own. The most notable foundation concerned with the intellectual conquest of the world abroad was actually a re-establishment: The *Institut mirovogo chozjajstva i mirovoj politiki* (“Institute of world economy and politics”) had been shut down in 1947, because its Hungarian director Jenö Varga was a foreigner and, moreover, it gave analyses that were not appreciated by Stalin. In 1956, shortly after Mikojan’s speech at the Party Congress, it reopened with the more modern sounding name *Institut mirovogo ekonomiki i meždunarodnych otnošenij* (“Institute of world economy and international relations”, IMEMO). As a branch of

⁶⁸³ ANATOLIJ TORKUNOV (ED.): *MGIMO Universitet. Tradicii i sovremennost' (1944-2009)*. Moskva, Moskovskie učebniki 2009.

⁶⁸⁴ ROSE E. GOTTEMOELLER; PAUL FRITZ LANGER: *Foreign Area Studies in the USSR. Training and Employment of Specialists*. Santa Monica, Rand 1983, p. 92.

⁶⁸⁵ Quoted after: DUDA 1994, p. 284.

the Soviet Academy of Science, it was led initially by the Armenian Anušavan Arzumanjan, and, from 1959, Nikolaj Inozemcev headed an agency eventually employing 700 high-profile researchers in its own tower building in Moscow's Novye Čeremuški district. The IMEMO conducted research in all branches of the social sciences and provided Soviet organs with information on global economic, political and social developments. As all foreign institutes in the USSR, it had to contribute to foreign propaganda and public relations.⁶⁸⁶

Besides the IMEMO, the Soviet Academy of Sciences established several regional study centres that eventually covered the whole world. The *Institut narodov Azii* ("Institute of the peoples of Asia", INA) developed several subdivisions from Japan through Pacific Studies to the Middle East); an independent *Institut Afriki* ("Africa institute", IAF) came into being in 1959. Another one was established for Latin America (*Institut Latinskoj Ameriki*, ILA) in 1961 and, finally, one for the United States and Canada (*Institut SŠA i Kanady*, ISK) in 1967. Within already existing structures of the Academy and many more scientific and political institutions, regional offices gathered expertise for the respective geographical units. After years of Stalinist introspection, Soviet academics read and analysed 6900 international scientific journals, a Chilean visitor reported in 1959.⁶⁸⁷ The number of international experts would finally rise to 7400 researchers in 12 institutes in Moscow alone by the time of perestroika.⁶⁸⁸ Their life was glamorous by Soviet standards. The *meždunarodniki* could travel abroad, had access to international literature and contacts with foreigners. While they were not "free of competition and responsibility for good work" as a critical Western observer believed, they – as long as they did not dissent too obviously from the official party line – lived secure lives protected from unemployment and with many publishing opportunities.⁶⁸⁹ In Soviet society, their prestige was high and so were their salaries: the Portuguese communist Francisco Ferreira, who worked for the Brazilian radio programme in Moscow, recalled that his *meždunarodnik* colleagues at the station not only had a fun job, a good reputation and privileges like dachas and many holidays. They also earned ten times more than the best engineers in the Charkov factory he was working at before.⁶⁹⁰ The Chilean liberal parliamentarian Raúl Aldunate, during his visit to the USSR in 1959, remembered the

⁶⁸⁶ DUDA 1994; ROSE 1988, p. 269.

⁶⁸⁷ ALDUNATE, p. 68.

⁶⁸⁸ RICHMOND 2003, p. 81.

⁶⁸⁹ APOLLON DAVIDSON; IRINA FILATOVA: 'African History. A View from behind the Kremlin Wall', in: MAXIM MATUSEVICH (ED.): *Africa in Russia, Russia in Africa. Three Centuries of Encounters*. Trenton, Africa World Press 2007, pp. 111–131, p. 118.

⁶⁹⁰ FERREIRA 1975, pp. 105f.

same ratio between intelligentsia and workers' wages.⁶⁹¹ The offspring of many a high-ranking state and party official, banned from party careers according to an unwritten Soviet rule, were among this group: the daughters of Vjačeslav Molotov and Aleksej Kosygin and Georgij Žukov's son studied in the early days at the MGIMO.⁶⁹² Jurij Brežnev was Soviet trade representative in Switzerland, his sister Galina an official for *Novosti*. Andrej Gromyko's son Anatolij firstly went as special envoy to Great Britain and in the 1970s became head of the Africa Institute. Ljudmila Kosygina later became a researcher at the Institute of Scientific Information and her sister the president of the All Union Library for Foreign Literature.⁶⁹³ Not without justification, Western observers considered the *institutniki* and especially the *meždunarodniki* a "privileged caste".⁶⁹⁴

Scholars in the social sciences and humanities were considered important for the legitimisation of the Soviet regime. They had been severely hit by the purges of the 1930s and suffered a pronounced break in continuity from pre-Soviet Russian social science. In the 1950s, they were thus the Soviet group with the highest ratio of CP members and generally considered much more conformist than their colleagues in the natural sciences.⁶⁹⁵ The newly founded area studies were run mostly by such loyal social scientists, but, thanks to their novelty and the relatively liberal intellectual atmosphere of the Thaw, they enjoyed a relatively high degree of academic liberty. That said, they were not given free rein: most *meždunarodniki* still had to pass through a complicated screening before they could leave the country. Exit visas were given only upon recommendation of the work place, the local party branch and, finally, the KGB (which, in need of linguistic and regional expertise, became an important employer of *meždunarodniki* itself).⁶⁹⁶ The diplomatic service even had an entire department that was only responsible for the surveillance of its own diplomats abroad.

While, in their professional and personal lives, the *meždunarodniki* enjoyed privileges that went way beyond what an average Soviet citizen could expect, they had no carte blanche for their writing and public speech. The highest authority on academic questions remained the Central Committee. Only government and CP institutions and the Academy of Science were allowed to publish political analysis. In social studies and political journals, editors had to be members of the CP, their editors appointed by higher authorities, and those in significant

⁶⁹¹ ALDUNATE, p. 67.

⁶⁹² KAREN CHAČATUROV: *Zapiski očevidca*. Moskva, Novosti 1996, pp. 67–69.

⁶⁹³ LEONOV 1995, p. 258; GOTTEMOELLER; LANGER 1983, p. 23.

⁶⁹⁴ ODED ERAN: *Meždunarodniki. An Assessment of Professional Expertise in the Making of Soviet Foreign Policy*. Ramat Gan, Israel, Turtledove Publications 1979, p. 183.

⁶⁹⁵ BEYRAU 1993, pp. 41; 210–216.

⁶⁹⁶ ZUBOK 2009, pp. 88–120; GOTTEMOELLER; LANGER 1983, p. 100.

positions had to be confirmed by the Central Committee or even the Politburo. Editorial boards for journals covering the outside world, included always high officials from the International Department of the Central Committee, and every book published within the organisation of the Academy, had to be reviewed by the Academy Council. Finally, all books and all journal issues had to be counterchecked by the state censor *Glavlit*, which did not care so much about ideological debates, but usually only made sure no unwanted information on the Soviet military or economy was revealed. Criticism of political leaders or the party was explicitly forbidden.⁶⁹⁷ Neither was the choice of research topics completely free: maxims for Soviet area studies were *partijnost* ('partisanship'), *konkretnost* ('relevance') and *sovremennost* ('topicality').⁶⁹⁸ When the Central Committee wanted a topic researched or political line followed in academia, they placed – authorless – prefaces in academic journals.⁶⁹⁹ The closer a research topic was to current affairs, the stricter were the rules: pure academics, such as historians of the 18th century or ethnographers, could be rather free in their expression. A *meždunarodnik* writing on recent developments in a certain area of the contemporary world was under much closer surveillance.⁷⁰⁰

These international experts in the Soviet Union have received little attention from newer scholarship. Standard works on Soviet intellectuals and *institutniki* do not refer to the area studies at all.⁷⁰¹ The bulk of the information on Soviet area studies was gathered and interpreted by US Sovietologists during the Cold War or by Soviet renegades. This contemporary Western scholarship usually analysed publications of Soviet regional specialists not out of a purely academic interest in the area studies themselves, but in a sort of exegesis that sought to gather information on Soviet politics and conditions.

In a first variant, Western observers read Soviet academic writing in order to get information on the Kremlin's policies on different areas and political movements of the world. Information on Soviet political internals was hard to come by, and academic writing in the form of globally distributed scientific journals was easily accessible. The Kremlinologists grabbed these journals gratefully and interpreted the articles just as they interpreted the symbolic politics of the inner circle of Soviet leadership: as a reflection or a testing probe on

⁶⁹⁷ JERRY F. HOUGH: *The Struggle for the Third World. Soviet Debates and American Options*. Washington, The Brookings Institution 1986.

⁶⁹⁸ ERAN 1979, pp. 135f.

⁶⁹⁹ E.g.: 'Postanovlenie CK KPSS. O zadačah partinnoj propagandy v sovremennykh uslovijach i istoričeskaja nauka'. *Voprosy Istorii* 6 (1960), pp. 3–9.

⁷⁰⁰ GOTTEMOELLER; LANGER 1983.

⁷⁰¹ BEYRAU 1993.

Soviet foreign policy stances.⁷⁰² Some of these authors, especially during times of high political tensions, displayed a strong political bias and sometimes rather crudely exaggerated Soviet ambitions to conquer the world by all means possible.⁷⁰³ In second variant, especially during the late Soviet Union from the mid 1970s, Western observers divined secret deviance and criticism of the Soviet government between the lines of Soviet academic writing on the outside world. One scholar, for instance, hypothesised that Soviet studies on China, temporarily disbanded in 1960 with the schism, actually debated the future of the USSR itself. Open discussion by academics about the political system would not have been tolerated. Reform oriented scholars used their academic writing to express their criticism, but did it indeed so cryptically that politicians never cared – good for the scholars (no repression) and bad for society (no reforms).⁷⁰⁴

Both perspectives had a point: Soviet academics in area studies were linked closely to Soviet foreign policy, and occasionally scholars found cryptic ways to cautiously criticise conditions in or actions of the USSR. But what both Western contemporary views of Soviet area studies had in common was that they saw Soviet academia only as a reflection of political phenomena, of Soviet foreign and domestic policy. In both variants, the interest was not so much in the academics themselves, but “to find information that could help answer [questions about the Soviet Union], and, in the process, to enhance our ability to predict world affairs.”⁷⁰⁵ The existing literature on Soviet area studies has also hardly examined the persons involved in these institutions, the academics themselves, but rather focused on their writing.

However, while there cannot be talk of a free scientific community in the Soviet Union, science not only reflected high politics. It had a story of its own. This fifth and last chapter will look at a generation of Soviet experts on Latin America, the influences on them and their careers. In line with the principal argument of the book, the professional biographies of these Latin Americanists show that Soviet internationalism after Stalin drew on both socialist internationalism of the 1920s and cultural internationalism from the 1950s. A first section will look at individual ‘father figures’ of Soviet Latin Americanistics; these were staunch socialist internationalists with a pre-war socialisation, and they conveyed their beliefs to a younger

⁷⁰² PRIZEL 1990; ERAN 1979; JOSEPH G. OSWALD; ROBERT G. CARLTON (EDS.): *Soviet Image of Contemporary Latin America. Compiled and translated from Russian. A documentary history 1960-1968*. Austin, University of Texas Press 1970.

⁷⁰³ E.g.: TYRUS W. COBB: ‘National Security Perspectives of Soviet “Think Tanks”’. *Problems of Communism* 6 (1981), pp. 51–59, p. 52; P. URBAN: ‘Los estudios iberoamericanos en la URSS’. *Estudios sobre la Unión Soviética* 3 (1962), pp. 27–40.

⁷⁰⁴ GILBERT ROZMAN: *A Mirror for Socialism. Soviet Criticisms of China*. London, Tauris 1985.

⁷⁰⁵ ROZMAN 1985, p. 3.

generation who carried this conviction into the newly established Soviet organisations and the higher administration. Chapter two has argued that the artistic and literary intelligentsia, after great hopes in de-Stalinization, soon lost their enthusiasm for the boorish Khrushchev and, at the latest after the crushing of the Prague spring, retreated into private life, emigrated to Israel or found a new spiritual home in Russian nationalism. The academic, institutionalised intelligentsia, however, this chapter will try to illustrate with a collective biography of several renowned Latin Americanists, waved the banner of internationalism even after Soviet tanks rolled into Czechoslovakia, irrespective of the increasingly pragmatic imperialism of their government. This chapter traces a conviction, the idea of socialist internationalism in the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin, throughout the periods of Khrushchev's Thaw and Brezhnev's stagnation.

The resumption of socialist internationalism was a specifically Soviet trend, but the expansion and institutionalisation of world-wide regional expertise was not. Later sections of the chapter explain how Soviet factual knowledge on Latin America increased tremendously, becoming far more specific. A rather similar culture of regional experts emerged in the United States (and to some extent in Western and Eastern Europe) at the same time. Area studies were not only a Soviet, but a global phenomenon of the global Cold War; and with their increasing collaboration with colleagues abroad, also beyond the Iron Curtain, they were part of cultural internationalism from the 1950s. The Cold War made governments on both sides of the Iron Curtain not only massively increase their military expenditure and enforce technological development. It also led them to realise that power needs knowledge. The Soviets, as Mikojan's references exemplify, took inspiration for these institutes from the enemy camp. But influences happened also the other way round: the contest with the Soviet Union, especially after its translocation from Europe to the Third World, made government officials in Washington realise how little they themselves actually knew about many areas of the world. Just as in the Soviet Union, centres of research were founded in the United States, which brought together specialists from different fields, historians, social scientists, linguists, anthropologists, economists and so forth, who all had, or developed, specific knowledge on one area of the world. For the first time, scholars participated in the making of US foreign policy. Most urgently, the United States needed to know more of the USSR itself and built up, more or less from scratch, an academic armada of Sovietologists, who, more often than not, blurred the distinction between academic scholarship and politically partisan intelligence

analysis.⁷⁰⁶ But many other world areas were studied closely now, too, and modernisation theorists in these institutions predicted a bright future for the Third World, which was to develop along the lines of the United States itself.⁷⁰⁷ US Latin American studies most conspicuously expanded as a reaction to Soviet advances: for a long time, the United States considered its southern neighbours the world area with the lowest geopolitical priority, but it immediately and tremendously expanded its research after the Cuban revolution and the first Soviet inroads on the island.

In the United States as in the Soviet Union, a global foreign policy needed expertise, and to that end, they expanded scientific institutions and funded research in fields that had hitherto been neglected. In both countries, the political leadership considered the academe a tool for their own good, but its professors sometimes saw things differently. Even in the Soviet Union, some non-political branches of the social sciences were actually able to profit from the Cold War rivalry. Yet the autocratic Soviet leaders persisted in a state ideology that claimed a predominance of politics over all other social systems including the sciences. The penultimate section of this chapter addresses the difficult question of whether, under these circumstances, the *meždunarodniki* could exercise an impact on Soviet foreign policy making at all. The debates around the end of the Chilean popular front under Salvador Allende, as outlined in a last section, show that a young generation of socialist internationalists in the new institutions was firstly much more informed about Latin America than a decade before – and secondly often not at all in line with official Soviet policies.

Old internationalists. The ‘father figures’ of Soviet Latin Americanistics

As the introduction has shown, a tremendous expansion and differentiation of the academic system took place after the end of Stalinism. Before 1953, however, no Soviet institution – besides the short-lived *Ispano-Amerikanskoe obščestvo* in Leningrad – had dealt exclusively

⁷⁰⁶ DAVID C. ENGERMAN: *Know your Enemy. The Rise and Fall of America's Soviet Experts*. Oxford, Oxford University Press 2009.

⁷⁰⁷ MICHAEL ADAS: *Dominance by Design. Technological Imperatives and America's Civilizing Mission*. Cambridge, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2006; NILS GILMAN: *Mandarins of the Future. Modernization Theory in Cold War America*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press 2003; CHRISTOPHER SIMPSON (ED.): *Universities and Empire. Money and Politics in the Social Sciences during the Cold War*. New York, New Press 1998, p. 68; LAURA NADER: ‘The Phantom Factor. Impact of the Cold War on Anthropology’, in: NOAM CHOMSKY (ED.): *The Cold War & the University. Toward an Intellectual History of the Postwar Years*. New York, New Press 1997, pp. 107–146, pp. 129ff.; IMMANUEL WALLERSTEIN: ‘The Unintended Consequences of Cold War Area Studies’, in: NOAM CHOMSKY (ED.): *The Cold War & the University. Toward an Intellectual History of the Postwar Years*. New York, New Press 1997, pp. 195–231, p. 202.

with Latin American affairs. Latin American studies existed in the Soviet Union under Stalin, but were done by “solitary enthusiasts”⁷⁰⁸ rather than established institutes. Those who now taught the new generation of *meždunarodniki* had developed their own expertise on the Hispanic world from their careers as professional internationalists and academics during the 1920s and 30s. In order to better understand the intellectual roots of Soviet internationalism after Stalin, it is worthwhile having a short look at the lives of some of most influential teachers of the future *meždunarodniki*. This section introduces, as a first step, four of these ‘father figures’ of Soviet Latin Americanists; Ivan Majskij, Lev Zubok, Josif Grigulevič and Sergej Michajlov, each representing a different trajectory of socialist internationalism.⁷⁰⁹ The second part will show how, in their later careers, these old internationalists, along with several influential academic teachers, conveyed their world view to a generation of students.

Ivan Majskij (1884-1975) was an early Menshevik, who had spent much of his younger life in tsarist prisons. He migrated to Switzerland and later to Germany, where he got a degree from the University of Munich, and, finally, to Great Britain. Back in Soviet Russia, he became a member of the CPSU in 1921, chief editor of the journal *Zvezda* (“the star”) and began a diplomatic career that led him, as ambassador, to Finland, to Japan and again to Great Britain during the war. At the same time, Majskij was the Soviet representative in the *Transnational Committee for Non-Interference into the Spanish Civil War* from 1936-39 (although the Soviets actually did interfere!). As Soviet vice foreign minister from 1943, he participated in the Yalta and Potsdam conferences. After the war, he began his academic career as a historian at the Soviet Academy of Science, where he researched and wrote about the history of 19th century and republican Spain. Yet during the last wave of the late Stalinist anti-cosmopolitan campaign, Majskij, born in Russia to Polish-Jewish parents, was arrested, ostensibly for espionage, and sentenced to detention in the Gulag in 1953.

The life line of Lev Zubok (1894-1967) resembled Majskij’s in many respects: born into a Jewish working class family from Odessa, Zubok emigrated to the United States before the First World War. While working in a factory, he got his higher education as a historian at the University of Pennsylvania, became active in the US labour movement and subsequently a member of the CPUSA from 1919. He returned to Russia after the Civil War, enrolled in the CPSU, worked with the old Bolshevik internationalist and *Sovinform* head Solomon

⁷⁰⁸ ACADÉMIA DE LAS CIENCIAS DE LA URSS (ED.): *Estudios Latinoamericanos soviéticos de hoy*. Moscú, Nauka 1987, pp. 5f.

⁷⁰⁹ The sources of the biographical data, unless otherwise stated, are obituaries and congratulatory addresses from the last pages of the journal *Latinskaja Amerika*. Some additional information is taken from the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia and the MGIMO’s alumni website (www.alumni.mgimo.ru; last access: 15-3-2011).

Lozovskij in the Profintern and began a successful career as a historian with a focus on US imperialism in Latin America and the world wide workers' movement. While Lozovskij was sentenced to death and executed in 1952, Zubok only lost his job as a professor at the Moscow State University and his position at the *Vysšaja Partijanja Škola*, the Central Committee's research institute in 1949.

A third 'father figure' of Soviet Latin Americanistics was Josif Grigulevič (1913-1988), whose turbulent life justifies some extra lines in this section: born to a Karaite Jewish family in Lithuania, young Josif joined the illegal Polish Communist party, was imprisoned in 1931 and deported from Poland two years after. He studied at the Sorbonne in Paris and spent much time in Argentina, where part of his family had emigrated to – and where he worked for French communist front organisations and the Comintern. In 1936, he travelled to Spain, where he made friends with the *Izvestija*- and *Pravda*-correspondents Ilya Ehrenburg and Michail Kol'cov, with TASS-envoy Ovadi Savič, with the jet set of the Latin American left radical intelligentsia, and with a young Catalan communist by the name of Ramón Mercader. Under command of the NKVD general Aleksandr Orlov, Grigulevič organised the arrest and execution of several left deviates in Spain. The Stalinist so-called "mobile groups" most infamously freed Andreu Nin from a *Falange* prison in 1937. Nin, the head of the anti-Stalinist Workers' Party of Marxist Unification (POUM) was put on trial by *Max* (or *Felipe*), as Grigulevič called himself at the time, and shot by the group two days later. Summoned to Moscow himself in 1939, Grigulevič feared the worst, but was in fact only given training as a secret agent. Unlike his brother in arms, *Pravda* correspondent and NKVD informer Michail Kol'cov, he survived the purges, partly because he was important to Stalin for another task: in 1940, he travelled (as *Južek*) to Mexico City, where he joined a group around Pablo Neruda and David Siqueiros in a first and unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Leon Trotsky.⁷¹⁰ For a second assault, Grigulevič only did the organising and let the execution to his young friend from Spain, Ramón Mercader, who killed Trotsky in August that year. Under the name of *Artur*, Grigulevič remained in Latin America for several years as an undercover NKVD agent, supplied Moscow with information on the continent, wove a net of acquaintances and planted bombs where German representatives tried to propagate Nazism among European immigrants.

⁷¹⁰ Neruda always disavowed his participation, but probably did help at least with visa issues as Chilean consul to Mexico at the time, and was also good friends with everyone else in the group, including the hit man Vittorio Vidali. Siqueiros vigorously defended his own – very physical – participation in the first attack, but later claimed "this was only to scare him, not to kill him", SIQUEIROS 1977, p. 369.

In 1949, Grigulevič moved to Rome (as *Teodoro B. Castro*), established an import/export business with Central America and succeeded in the biggest exploit of his career as a spy: he became successively special envoy for Costa Rica at the Vatican, ambassador to the Vatican, and, in 1952, the first Costa Rican ambassador to Italy and to Yugoslavia. During his time in Latin America, Grigulevič had met the Costa Rican writer Joaquín Gutierrez (see chapter three), who helped to create the new identity. Gutierrez was the vice-consul for Costa Rica to Chile and his father a leading diplomat in the Costa Rican ministry of foreign affairs; therefore he could provide the necessary connections to get passports and the diplomatic posting. The Soviets needed information on the politics of the Holy See, as they now occupied Catholic territories in Eastern Europe; and they needed information on international opinion on the Trieste question. Grigulevič delivered. While he was being given Soviet citizenship and a CPSU membership card, Grigulevič-Castro was also developing a friendship with the pope and with the Italian prime minister Alcide de Gasperi, represented Costa Rica at the 6th General Assembly of the United Nations, was a well-known and popular man in Rome's international jet set and the diplomatic scene, a close friend of the female US ambassador to Italy, and finally achieved what he had been planning for years: meetings with high officials in Yugoslavia. For his task was not only to inform Moscow, but also to organise the assassination of Tito. The execution was planned for April 1953, but was aborted by orders of Lavrentij Berija after Stalin's death in March. In the same year, Grigulevič's superior in the Spanish Civil War, Aleksandr Orlov, defected to the United States (which actually went unnoticed with the US authorities for many years), and the identity of Ramón Mercader, who served 20 years in a Mexican prison cell without ever even giving his name, was revealed by his mother. The cover of Castro, the Costa Rican diplomat was in danger. And times had changed in Moscow, where, after Berija's execution, Malenkov and Khrushchev were the new men in power. Grigulevič was ordered back to the USSR in December 1953, and all documentation on him in Costa Rica fell victim to a mysterious fire in the local foreign ministry. Well-informed of the several anti-Semite waves of purges back in the Soviet Union, the Stalinism-fearing Stalinist Grigulevič was still sceptical about his fate. He left his wife and children in Switzerland with instructions in the worst case scenario. It can be regarded a sign of the times that he did not end his life at the NKVD execution grounds in Butovo – but only much later in his bed after a prolific career as a Latin Americanist.⁷¹¹

⁷¹¹ MARJORIE ROSS: *El secreto encanto de la KGB. Las cinco vidas de Iósif Griguliévich*. San José, Grupo 252

Grigulevič was an archetype of the revolutionary internationalist militant: born to a national minority of the Russian empire, highly educated, smart, cultured and worldly. He was fluent in Yiddish, Lithuanian, Russian, Spanish (to the extent that he convinced Costa Ricans that he was their compatriot!), Polish, English, French, Italian and Portuguese, and in addition to that an expert in Latin American literature and European ancient history, about which he gave lectures at the Italian Academy of Science during his time in Rome. At the same time, he was a hyper-ideologised communist cadre, ruthless when it came to eliminating real or perceived adversaries in *mokrye dela* (“wet business”), subordinate to any and every order of the Stalinized Communist International.

Sergej Michajlov (1912-1984), about the same age as Grigulevič, was also an archetype, but, in stark contrast to the ruthless master spy, that of a loyal bureaucratic internationalist. Born in Staraja Russa, where his father worked as a primary school teacher, Michajlov got a degree in philology in 1939, and, being fluent in English, French, Italian, Spanish and Esperanto, found work as Anastas Mikojan’s secretary in the foreign trade commissariat. Michajlov’s life story is decidedly less exciting than Grigulevič’s and can be summed up quite briefly: he became a member of the CPSU and began a career in the Soviet diplomatic service. While Grigulevič was chasing fascists and imperialists and executing traitors from the communist camp, Michajlov dutifully stamped documents and sipped champagne at embassy receptions in Rumania, Turkey, Italy – where he got to know Grigulevič – and, from 1956, held a post at one of only three Soviet embassies in Latin America, in Uruguay.

After his career as a loyal diplomat, Michajlov, upon personal recommendation from Anastas Mikojan, was appointed first director of the newly founded *Institut Latinskoj Ameriki* (ILA) in 1961. It was not so much a personal call from academics or any reputation as a researcher in the field which got him the job – in fact, hardly any anyone at the Academy of Science had heard of him before. Michajlov’s first task was to select members for the institute; the loyal, career-oriented cadre civil servant was to make sure that academics were appropriate not only intellectually but also according to the standards of the International Department of the CPSU. It was difficult to choose staff, Michajlov himself remembered: due to the exotic field they had many people interested, but only few were qualified. Michajlov built up the organisational foundations of the institute and, in 1965, returned to the foreign ministry and served as ambassador to Brazil.⁷¹²

Editorial Norma 2004.

⁷¹² S. KORNEEV: ‘Svjazy Akademii nauk SSSR s Latinskoj Amerikoj’. *Latinskaja Amerika* 8 (1974), pp. 136–143, p. 138.

While Sergej Michajlov can be considered an internationalist functionary, the other ‘father figures’ of Soviet Latin Americanistics all had their intellectual roots in the Communist world movement and were, each in their own way, convinced and active socialist internationalists: Ivan Majskij was an internationalist politician, Lev Zubok an internationalist academic, and Josif Grigulevič an internationalist militant. All of them influenced a younger generation of *meždunarodniki*, Michajlov more through his administrative position, the others through their positions as academic teachers after Stalin’s death.

Ivan Majskij was released from the Gulag in 1955 and rehabilitated in 1960. As a professor of modern history, he now supervised a young generation of historians of the Hispanic world at Moscow State University. Still a dedicated socialist, he was also a radical critic of Stalin and his legacy in the Soviet Union – and one of the signatories of the 1966 petition against the rehabilitation of the dictator. Lev Zubok, an academic already before the war, had managed to keep his position at the newly founded MGIMO, where he taught from 1948 until 1961. Rehabilitated after Stalin’s death, he became a founding figure of Soviet studies of America, which at the time still encompassed both North and South of the continent. From 1957, he was the senior researcher at the Institute of History in the Soviet Academy of Science. Zubok, too, remained faithful to socialist internationalism, an attitude he conveyed to his students, and finished, shortly before his death in 1967, his *opus magnum*, a grand two volume history of the Second International.⁷¹³

Josif Grigulevič was sent to the CPSU’s party high school, dismissed from the secret service in 1956 and given positions at the Latin American department of the VOKS and, in 1960, at the Institute of Ethnography at the Soviet Academy of Science. His network of connections helped the former spy also in his new civilian life as an academic: Sergej Michajlov catered for his old friend and nominated him as a founding member of the ILA, where he worked for the remaining 27 years of his life. While Grigulevič also taught classes on Latin American history (and on spy techniques to KBG cadets), he probably had his biggest impact on the younger generation through an impressive output of academic writings. In 1965, he became a *Doktor Nauk*, the highest academic degree in the Soviet Union, with a study of the Cuban cultural revolution. Grigulevič, who now occasionally used the new pseudonym Josif Lavreckij, published 58 books on the history of the Catholic Church and many other aspects of modern Latin America. He became a highly respected corresponding member of the Soviet academy of Science (an accolade very few Latin American experts were awarded), and he

⁷¹³ LEV ZUBOK: *Istorija vtorogo internacionala*. Moskva, Nauka 1966; thanks to Vladislav Zubok for sharing this information on his grandfather!

served as chief editor of the magazine *Obščestvennye nauki i sovremennost'* ("social sciences and modernity") and its Spanish edition *Ciencias Sociales* ("social sciences"). He sold almost a million copies, in the series *Žizni zamečatel'nych ljudej* ("The lives of remarkable people"), of his biographies of Latin American artists like his friend David Siqueiros and liberation heroes from Simon Bolívar (with a foreword by the other friend Neruda) and José Martí to Salvador Allende, and, especially successful, Che Guevara. Grigulevič was a member of the Latin American department of the GKKS and vice-president of the SSOD friendship society with Venezuela, an activity that brought him an honorary membership of the Venezuelan National Academy of Science.

His past remained a secret and was revealed only after his death, even though some fellow historians at the ILA remembered being suspicious about his refusal to share information on his biography or have his picture taken. Even in a long interview he gave on the occasion of his 70th birthday, his only comment on his life was "I have been dealing with Latin America since the 1930s". He did not hide, in the same interview, that his hopes for socialism were still alive: "the French Revolution needed a hundred years, too, to be established in Europe. Latin America will not need that much time to reach socialism."⁷¹⁴ His activities for the Stalinized Comintern notwithstanding, there is reason to believe him that he felt relieved at Stalin's death. He knew too well that only a great deal of luck and his talent for masquerade saved him, the Jewish internationalist intellectual, from all the waves of Stalinist purges. Nonetheless, Grigulevič never seems to have doubted the necessity to spread socialism on earth, at whatever the cost. During Stalinism, he had always returned to Moscow, even though he knew that his life was in danger. And he kept fighting for the internationalist cause as an academic writer and teacher to his students. He knew probably every single rank and file person in the Spanish and Latin American left and communist movements and was extremely well connected to the highest positions within the Soviet Union. It was people like him, Zubok or Majskij who again raised the banner of internationalism in the Soviet Union after the isolation and nationalism of late Stalinism.

Where the old internationalists met the future meždunarodniki. The early MGIMO

One of the most important links between the two generations of internationalists was, still during the isolation of late Stalinism, the MGIMO, where both Majskij and Zubok taught

⁷¹⁴ 'Odin iz starejšich sovetskich Latinoamerikanistov. Beseda s členom-korrespondentom AN SSSR I. R. Grigulevičem'. *Latinskaja Amerika* 5 (1983), pp. 141–143.

classes from the late 1940s. Solomon Lozovskij, at the time still vice foreign minister and head of the *Sovinformburo*, came over at least once a month, one student remembered, and his writings were official classroom material – until he was ousted, secretly put on trial and executed in 1952.⁷¹⁵

Academic writings in Russian on the Third World were still very rare at the time. One of the few ‘solitary enthusiasts’ who had written about Latin America in the 1930s was the geographer and historian Ivan Vitver (1891-1966), who joined the MGIMO in the late 1940s. The Indonesia-expert Aleksandr Guber, too, had done some, if not much, research on Latin America at Moscow State University before the war, apparently enough for someone from the younger generation to declare him the “patriarch of Soviet Latin Americanistics”⁷¹⁶. Based on this sparse knowledge, a group of professors and students founded a ‘Spanish group’ at the MGIMO in the late 1940s. Members of this informal circle recalled their romanticism for the Spanish Civil War as main motive for focusing their studies on the Hispanic World. “All the boys in class were enthusiastic”, a student of international journalism remembered from his childhood, “we dreamt of the Ebro and of Madrid. At night in school, we saw the *Kinokronika* and our rector would give us the latest news from Spain... It was thus a sentimental-romantic motive why I picked Spanish as my foreign language, which I associated with internationalist solidarity.”⁷¹⁷ Another ‘Spaniard’ confirmed: it was “out of sympathy for the internationalist fighters of the Spanish Civil War”, why he chose the Spanish-speaking world as his regional field.⁷¹⁸ Before long, the ‘Spanish group’ focused much more on Latin America than Spain, which added another attraction to some prospective students: he chose this field, another student later explained, because of the “exoticism of these far away countries. ... the prospect of travelling there was just too tempting.”⁷¹⁹

The teachers of the new generation of *meždunarodniki* were of course not all Latin Americanists. At the MGIMO, several other outstanding academics from different fields left an impression on the young generation. Evgenij Tarle had already been a respected historian before the October Revolution and had secured Stalin’s clemency with an ostentatious account of Napoleon’s Russia campaign. As one of the founders of the MGIMO, he taught there from the beginning and was later considered the “teacher of the *shestidesjatniki*”, the romantic socialist generation of the 1960s. The orientalist Grigorij Erenburg (cousin of the

⁷¹⁵ TORKUNOV, ED. 2009, p. 15.

⁷¹⁶ KUTEJŠČIKOVA 2000, p. 153.

⁷¹⁷ CHAČATUROV 1996, pp. 67–69.

⁷¹⁸ LEONOV 1995, p. 20.

⁷¹⁹ B. MARTYNOV: ‘Molodoj čelovek’. *Latinskaja Amerika* 7 (2006), p. 140.

writer Ilya Ehrenburg), the ancient historian Anatolij Bokščanin, the Arabist Charlampij Baranov and the philosophers Michail Lifšic and Mark Rozental were remembered by their students as other remarkable and influential intellectuals, as was the jurist Sergej Krylov, one of the authors of the UN charter and judge at the International Court of Justice.

“In the very early days of the institute, only academic performance and no bribery or nepotism decided on admission”, recalled an alumnus.⁷²⁰ “Initially, there was a very democratic spirit”, a student from the first generation remembered in the same vein, “it was only a bit later that all the sons and daughters of rank and file party members, statesmen and diplomats came. ... Classes at the MGIMO were broad and intensive; there were regional studies, politics, economy, but also literature on the schedule. ... Most teachers were outstanding in their field”, he recalled. His Spanish teacher was a Spanish veteran from the Civil War, and modern history was taught by Al’bert Manfred, who had been done time in the Gulag for three years in the 1930s.⁷²¹

Another student recalled the seminars as a “laboratory of interdisciplinary research” and the education at the MGIMO “the best thing that could have happened to me..., a fantastic humanistic education that opened up an interesting and fulfilling life for me.”⁷²² Less impressive must have been the obligatory “grey lecturers of Marxism-Leninism” and classes by retired diplomats who also taught at the MGIMO. And lingering as downright appalling and very burdensome in the Latin Americanists’ memoirs was the ‘moral terror’ instigated by some Komsomol-activists against Jewish professors and in any way ‘deviant’ or ‘suspicious’ students on campus.

“There were three sorts of students”, one of them explained: firstly, the offspring of the party and state elite; secondly, young and talented but inexperienced boys from provincial Russia, often with parents from the lower intelligentsia, and the veterans from the Second World War. The latter received preferential treatment, were admired by the younger ones, but had often difficulties in keeping up with academic standards in class. Many of the second group became good journalists and diplomats, the alumni recalled, but they were eaten up with careerism from early on. And then there were those who had the same ambition, but no talent. They tried to make up for their academic deficits with special commitments to ‘social work’: “this was not only bothersome, but outright dangerous. Unfortunately these people, albeit a

⁷²⁰ LEONOV 1995, pp. 8–22.

⁷²¹ CHAČATUROV 1996, pp. 67–69.

⁷²² A. ŠESTOPAL; N. ANIKEEVA: ‘Iberoamerikanistika v MGIMO. Tradicii i sovremennost’. *Latinskaja Amerika* 4 (2001), pp. 24–29.

minority, dominated the atmosphere at the MGIMO at that time.” He summed up: “it was an oppressive atmosphere..., not a church of the sciences, but a trampoline of careers.”⁷²³

The renewed state terror of late Stalinism had made itself palpable also within the elite cadre school: while the many Jewish professors seem to have found a comparatively secure place, Jewish students were hardly admitted until the death of Stalin, an exclusion that was never made public, but worked just as well informally. In private conversations between professors and students, some criticism seems to have been uttered: a student recalled that one professor cursed Stalin as a *starij čert* (“old devil”) in front of him, courage that – at least in retrospect – impressed him deeply.⁷²⁴

The lack of recent first-hand information on their subject of study and the political interference were serious limitations of the academic training at the MGIMO until the end of Stalinism. Nonetheless, the young future Latin Americanists got a good general education thanks to the individual excellence of several academic teachers. They also took over an anti-Stalinist socialist spirit from the old guard of internationalists among their professors. Yet their knowledge of Latin America was still rather limited: when the MGIMO rector asked two of his research assistants to give a 36 hour lecture on Latin America in early 1953, the young men were desperate: “you cannot imagine how difficult it was to get any information to fill this time,” one of them recalled, “books were such a rarity in the libraries!”⁷²⁵ Another alumnus from the Spanish group recalled how he, after getting his degree from the MGIMO, was sent abroad in the mid 1950s, but “had no clue of many things [about Latin America] that today every first-former knows.”⁷²⁶

New institutions and a new generation of professional internationalists

The gap in Soviet knowledge on the Third World was yawning wide open in the mid 1950s, and the new political leadership realised this deficit as they increasingly sought to establish contacts with the Global South. From the mid 1950s, both newly-founded and already time-honoured Russian and Soviet official academic institutions developed a refined regional specification that for the first time included Latin America as a separate entity for study. The

⁷²³ LEONOV 1995, pp. 8–22.

⁷²⁴ CHAČATUROV 1996, p. 70; LEONOV 1995, pp. 18–20.

⁷²⁵ VIKTOR VOL’SKIJ: ‘Sovetskaja latinoamerikanistika. Nekotorye itogi i zadači’. *Latinskaja Amerika* 3 (1971), pp. 6–16.

⁷²⁶ CHAČATUROV 1996, pp. 10–25.

Moscow State Institute of History opened a Latin American section in 1953. Several departments of the Soviet Academy of Sciences followed: in 1957, the IMEMO split its department of the Americas into a Northern branch for the United States and Canada, and a Latin American one; the Gorky Institute of World Literature, the Institute of General History and the Institute of Philosophy had completed the same restructuring by 1961.⁷²⁷ Most resources for this expanded research on the Third World were allocated to Moscow, but smaller Latin America centres opened at universities all over the Union: in Leningrad and Kiev of course, but also in Voronezh, Alma-Ata, Frunze, Dushanbe, Lvov, Tbilisi, Baku and Kishinev, to name but a few. The gap in knowledge gradually filled: in 1946, Soviet scholars had published one book on Latin America; in 1953 the number had risen humbly to twelve. Seven years later, already before contacts with Cuba were established, 60 volumes a year informed Soviet readers about all aspects of life and history in Latin America.⁷²⁸

Anastas Mikojan had suggested the expansion of Soviet area studies at the 20th Party Congress. It was also he who, after falling in love with Latin America during his visit to Cuba (see chapter one), saw through the establishment of what was to become one of the biggest institutions of Soviet area studies: the *Institut Latinskoj Ameriki* (“Institute of Latin America”, ILA), an interdisciplinary research institute within the organisational structure of the Academy. It opened its doors in a vast former military building in central Bol’shaja Ordynka street in Moscow in the spring of 1961. More than 100 researchers and an expanding special library with international (including a lot of Western) literature and journals made it one of the largest research facilities of its kind on Latin America worldwide. Seven departments gathered and processed information on the economies, foreign policy and international relations, workers and social movements, culture and geography, history and agrarian problems of all states and cultures south of the Rio Grande. The recently “discovered” and cherished revolutionary Cuba got its own department.⁷²⁹

Not only did academic institutions refine their regional specifications. The International Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU, too, got its own Latin American subdivision, and so did its affiliated Institute of Social Sciences. The foreign ministry established a Latin American department, and finally also the KGB and the military secret

⁷²⁷ E. LARIN: ‘Centr latinoamerikanskich issledovanij Instituta vseobščej istorii’. *Latinskaja Amerika* 4 (2001), pp. 46–48.

⁷²⁸ MOISEJ AL’PEROVIČ: *Sovetskaja istoriografija stran Latinskoj Ameriki*. Moskva, Nauka 1968, p. 17; INSTITUT LATINSKOJ AMERIKI (ED.): *Latinskaja Amerika v Sovjetskoj pečati*. Moskva, ILA RAN 1964.

⁷²⁹ VIKTOR VOL’SKIĬ: ‘The Study of Latin America in the U.S.S.R.’. *Latin American Research Review* 3/1 (1967), pp. 77–87, p. 85.

service GRU. This massive expansion and differentiation of institutionalised Latin American expertise in the USSR provided hundreds of lucrative and prestigious positions for specialists – which were still rare in the Soviet Union at the time. Initially, leading positions at the newly created institutions and departments were thus staffed with functionaries like Sergej Michajlov at the ILA. The founding director of the Latin American Department at the Institute of History of the Academy of Science was Nikolaj Lavrov (1915-1989), like Michajlov originally a humanist who made a career in the Soviet administration, a highly decorated officer in the Red Army, a member of the state board for the Lenin Prize and a “loyal officer and patriot” as he was recalled by his colleagues.⁷³⁰ The younger generation of professional internationalists, the *meždunarodniki*, did not so much share these military virtues. They were well-educated, very ambitious and breathed new life into Soviet academic and political institutions. Many of them had diplomas from the MGIMO and, from the mid 1950s, began their careers in the newly created positions in the internationalist academic and political institutions.

The first generation of Mgimovci and their march through the new institutions

Some of the graduates from the ‘Spanish group’ at the MGIMO have already been mentioned in chapter two: Moscow born Vasilij Čičkov (1925-), the author of several novels and childrens’ books was sent, after his graduation, to Mexico and Central America as correspondent for *Pravda* and was the very first Soviet to set foot in revolutionary Cuba in January 1959.⁷³¹ Genrich Borovik (1929-), the Minsk born Soviet star journalist who wrote the first reportage from Cuba and later lived for many years as *Novosti* correspondent in New York, had been his classmate at the MGIMO. A third member of their group, the future KGB Latin America expert Nikolai Leonov, has already been referred to on several occasions, too. His career and those of four more alumni of the ‘Spanish group’ demonstrate, how this generation of regional specialists, all born in the 1920s, carried a spirit of anti-Stalinist socialist internationalism into the newly founded institutions and departments, where they began their careers in the mid 1950s. This section will examine the professional biographies of Anatolij Šul’govskij, Karen Chačaturov and Sergej (“Sergo”) Mikojan; whilst these three were active in both journalism and politics, the historian Viktor Vol’skij represents here the type of a rather academic internationalist. Albeit from very different social backgrounds, all

⁷³⁰ N. KALMYKOV; E. LARIN: ‘Oficer, patriot, latinoamerikanist’. *Latinskaja Amerika* 4 (2001).

⁷³¹ MIKOJAN 2006, p. 49.

five had very similar political convictions that characterised the 1960's generation of academic intellectuals.

Nikolaj Leonov (1928-) was born to a family of peasants in the Rjazan' oblast. His father was the only Communist in the village and soon left the mother. Bullied for being an unbaptised child from a suspect family, young Nikolaj proved to be a very gifted pupil and was recommended to study in Moscow, where, in 1947, he made his way into the MGIMO. Shortly before his graduation in 1952, while the last wave of Stalinist purges swept through the Soviet Union, some of his fellow students were accused of having raped a female classmate. Leonov decided to write to none less than Foreign Minister Andrej Vyšinskij, the notorious judge of many show trials during the Great Purges, in their defence. Shortly after, a black Volga-limousine came to pick up Leonov from university and brought him to the *Lubjanka*, the likewise notorious headquarters of the NKVD. In a short interrogation, Vyšinskij himself threatened Leonov with forced labour in Siberia, but, in the end, only had him excluded from further studies at the MGIMO. Leonov was awarded his graduation degree, yet, although an excellent student, was assigned the least prestigious position for a *meždunarodnik*: an underpaid administration job in the publishing house *Editorial Progreso*.⁷³²

The majority of the staff at *Progreso* were Spanish refugees, whom Leonov befriended and from whom he picked up his fluency in authentic everyday life *castellano*. As the work proved very unsatisfying, he happily grabbed the first opportunity to escape. Shortly after Stalin's death, the foreign ministry decided they needed more knowledge on foreign countries and sent young experts for language training all over Europe. Leonov applied and was accepted. However, Spain under the Dictator Franco did not issue visas to Soviet citizens at the time, and Leonov was sent for language studies to the Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and then to a traineeship at the Soviet embassy in May 1953. On the ship that brought him across the Atlantic, he began a lifelong friendship with a young Cuban age-mate, who was returning from the preparatory meetings for the World Youth Festival in Prague: Raúl Castro. Leonov stayed for three years in Mexico, studied philology at UNAM and got a full position at the embassy. He made friends with Raúl's brother Fidel and a young Argentinean medical student by the name of Ernesto Guevara, who addressed everyone around him with an Argentinean expression that would soon stick as his nickname: *jche!* ("hey!"). The group around the Castro brothers had, in a burst of juvenile megalomania,

⁷³² LEONOV 1995, pp. 8–22.

attempted to stir a revolt by attacking barracks in Eastern Cuba. After some time in prison, they went into Mexican exile, and planned yet another attempt to topple the Cuban strong man Batista. When they were arrested in the summer of 1956, the Mexican authorities found Leonov's visiting card from the Soviet embassy in Che Guevara's pocket. Leonov was dismissed from the foreign service and had to return to the publishing house in Moscow. Still unfulfilled with his work there, he settled on an academic career as a historian of Latin America at the Soviet Academy of Sciences under Nikolaj Lavrov.

Shortly after the Cuban Revolution in early 1959, Leonov got another invitation to the *Lubjanka*. This time, the reception was heartier: the KGB had learnt that he knew the Castro brothers from Mexico. Desperate for information on what was happening in the Caribbean, the secret service offered Leonov a position as a KGB-agent. All too aware of the repressive past of the Soviet secret service, Leonov hesitated, but finally agreed, convinced that, some years after Stalin's death, things had changed much for the better. "It was a time of great optimism and confidence", he recalled, "we had won the war, Stalin's repressions were over, we conquered the cosmos, the consumer situation was getting better, and Khrushchev's optimism was catching... Even though I still had bad associations with the building, I entered *Lubjanka*."⁷³³ When, in late 1959, Anastas Mikojan went to Mexico and Cuba to open the Soviet exhibitions (see chapter one), Leonov came along as translator. In Havana, they met his old Cuban pals, who had succeeded in their apparently forlorn cause of revolution on the island. Leonov now stayed in Mexico and replaced his predecessor Aleksandr Alekseev as the KGB's man for Latin America. At the same time, he was an associated founding member of the Institute of Latin America, where colleagues and friends remembered him as "a bright, clever, serious and experienced man..., whose general's shoulder straps did not spoil his character"⁷³⁴ With great nostalgia, Leonov recalled from these days his friend and patron, the master-spy-turned-historian, Josif Grigulevič.⁷³⁵ Following his 'father figure', Leonov continued his academic writing throughout his life as secret agent and published a series of books on the history of Central America, on the history of the Catholic Church in Latin America and a very benign biography of the Panamanian strongman Omar Torrijos. "In science", he recalled from the time of Brezhnev's stagnation, "a certain democratic spirit continued."⁷³⁶ When he returned to Moscow in 1968, Leonov made a career in the KGB

⁷³³ LEONOV 1995, pp. 40f.; 85; 93; 286.

⁷³⁴ MIKOJAN 2006, pp. 49–50.

⁷³⁵ NIKOLAI LEONOV; EUGENIA FEDIAKOVA; JOAQUIN FERNANDOIS: 'El general Nikolai Leonov en el CEP'. *Estudios Públicos* 73 (1999), pp. 77; 87; 91.

⁷³⁶ LEONOV 1995, p. 36.

administration; he became head of the foreign espionage department in 1971 and, finally, vice-president of the KGB and head of the analytical department.⁷³⁷

Leonov's boss at the ILA, and successor of the functionary Sergej Michajlov, was Viktor Vol'skij (1921-1999). From a Lithuanian white-collar family, Vol'skij had studied forestry science before the war, was drafted, fought and was created Hero of the Soviet Union. He was accepted into the newly established MGIMO as one of the first generation and, after a first degree in 1949, defended a dissertation about the United States' oil-imperialism. In his early academic career he gained a reputation as a talented economist and expert of capitalist countries firstly at the MGIMO and, from 1959, also as a professor at Moscow State University. In 1966, he was appointed director of the ILA, a position he would keep until after the dismantling of the Soviet Union. Vol'skij was considered the "founder of the modern school of Soviet Latin Americanistics" and wrote, among over 300 scientific works on Latin America, the standard works on Soviet-Latin American relations.⁷³⁸ In 1970, he was nominated for the council for developing countries at the Academy and later became a full member of the Academy – the highest award in Soviet academia. Vol'skij's academic reputation went beyond the USSR: he was a member of the Peruvian, Dominican and Mexican geographical societies, was awarded the Order of the Aztec Eagle, the highest decoration for foreigners in Mexico, and won state prizes in Venezuela, Peru and Cuba. Vol'skij was an honorary doctor at universities in Lima, Barranquilla, Havana and even an honorary citizen of the cities of Quito, Guadalajara, Rio de Janeiro and Jalapa.

The honour of the Mexican Aztec Order was awarded to yet another Soviet historian: Anatolij Šul'govskij (1926-1991) was born into a typical family of Soviet *intelligenty*: his mother was a teacher, his father an engineer. After abandoning studies at a Red Army academy, he graduated from the MGIMO in 1953. For several years, he worked in the *Inostrannaja Literatura* publishing house for international literature. Sergej Michajlov called him to the newly founded Institute of Latin America in 1961, and he held a parallel position at the IMEMO from 1963 and at the *Politizdat* publishing house as Latin American expert. Šul'govskij wrote many scientific and popular scientific books on Simon Bolivar, on the proletariat in Latin America, on the Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas (for which he received the Aztec Order) and especially on the role of the army in Latin American states. For his research, Šul'govskij travelled often and extensively to many parts of the Americas, "even though the *vlasti* ("those in power") time and again directly or indirectly, for these and those

⁷³⁷ LEONOV; FEDIAKOVA; FERMANDOIS 1999, p. 72.

⁷³⁸ VOL'SKIJ 1971; VOL'SKIJ 1967.

reasons” thwarted his trips abroad. But Šul’govskij was far from being a dissenter: when the Central Committee demanded more research on the role of the Communist parties in the region, it was he who made sure this work was done at the ILA, if in a rather nonpartisan way. He was “a brainchild of the socialist system, a Soviet historian”, but one who “did not try to confuse the desired with reality”, a long time colleague remembered in his obituary.⁷³⁹ With this attitude, Šul’govskij was a typical Soviet internationalist *intelligent*, he was fluent in German, Spanish, Portuguese, English and French, knowledgeable in many fields from cinema and architecture to painting and Latin American novels and, like many other Soviet intellectuals – for once leapfrogging their Western counterparts –, a big football fan.

At the ILA, Šul’govskij worked for many years with Karen Chačaturov (1927-2005). The son of an Armenian intelligentsia family had grown up in a multiethnic environment in Tbilisi; his father was an Azerbaijan born Armenian, his playmates, he recalled, were Caucasian Jews, Georgians, Germans and the children of Spanish refugee families from the Civil War. The father’s family was hit hard by the Great Terror of the 1930s, and several of Karen’s uncles were tortured and exiled to Siberia for years.⁷⁴⁰ A very talented student, young Chačaturov attended a renowned Tbilisi high school and was accepted to the MGIMO. After his graduation, he worked as a journalist for the Soviet Army journals *Krasnyj Flot* (“the red fleet”) and *Kraznaja Zvezda* (“the red star”) and wrote his early articles, in best Stalinist pathos, from a Soviet battle ship in the Atlantic. In 1953, he covered the violent overthrow of the Guatemalan president Arbenz with the help of the CIA – and found the topic of his life. US interventions in Latin America became Chačaturov’s academic specialisation, and he wrote about them with such passion and fervour that, until perestroika, he was denied visas to the United States and Canada for conferences and to meetings of the Soviet-US society.

In 1957, Chačaturov was appointed press-attaché at the Soviet embassy in Uruguay, with his ‘father figure’ Sergej Michajlov (“outstanding character, excellent diplomat”) as superior, and later also became head of the *Sovinformbjuro/Novosti* in Latin America. From Uruguay, he regularly wrote for the *Literaturnaja Gazeta* and local left newspapers. In addition to that, he organised visits by Soviet journalists – Anatolij Sofronov from *Ogonek*, Adžubej from *Komsomolskaja Pravda*, Nikolaj Gribačev from *SSSR* or Danil Kraminov from *Pravda* – during their trips through South America (see also chapter two).⁷⁴¹ Chačaturov stayed for five years, only interrupted for a couple of months when he built up the *Novosti*-office in post-

⁷³⁹ E. DABAGJAN: ‘Anatolij Fedorovič Šul’govskij (1926-1991)’. *Novaja i Novejšaja Istorija* 5 (2007), pp. 178–191; E. DABAGJAN: ‘Jarkij i mnogogrannyj talant’. *Latinskaja Amerika* 4 (2001), pp. 18–27.

⁷⁴⁰ CHAČATUROV 1996, p. 57.

⁷⁴¹ CHAČATUROV 1996, pp. 10–25.

revolutionary Cuba. He summed up his experience of Uruguay in a colourful booklet that told the Soviet readership about the beauty of the country and its culture, the evildoings of the Yankees and the enthusiasm of the Uruguayan people for the Cuban Revolution.

Chačaturov returned to Moscow in 1962 and began an academic career as protégé of another ‘father figure’, the politician-turned-historian Ivan Majskij. He found a position at the ILA and completed a dissertation at Moscow State University in 1969. In his academic endeavours, he travelled to almost all countries of the Americas (except Canada and the US...), and he was awarded orders in Chile and Venezuela. For a long time head of the Latin American section of *Novosti*, Chačaturov became vice-president of the entire organisation in 1971, which made him responsible for the activities of *Novosti* in the entire Third World. As a professor at the diplomatic school of the foreign ministry and as a leading *žurnalist-meždunarodnik*, he was a serious voice in Soviet Latin Americanistics. But it was especially thanks to his seat in the International Department of the Central Committee that this voice was also heard at highest levels of politics, as conceded the Russian Foreign Minister Kisljak in an obituary.⁷⁴²

The last representative of this generation presented here is Sergej (“Sergo”) Mikojan (1929-2010). He graduated from the MGIMO in 1952, and, after a dissertation on India and Pakistan, joined the IMEMO as scientific assistant and editor of the journal *Mirovaja ekonomika i meždunarodnye otnošenija* (“World economy and international relations”). In early 1960, he travelled with his father, the old Armenian Bolshevik and Khrushchev’s man in Havana, Anastas Mikojan, to Cuba. Enthralled with the tropical revolution, young Mikojan became friends with Che and Fidel, and decided to change the focus of his scientific work on Latin America and especially Cuba. Sergio recalled his own father as inspiration (perhaps in a bit too rosy a light): “he was an internationalist of the old school, it was part of his conception of himself. ... He belonged to a generation in which many internationalist Jews were killed in Stalin’s purges, but he himself stayed true to the cause.” Sergio took over his father’s internationalist and socialist spirit, but was an outspoken critic of Stalin, whose terror had affected his family, too: his father-in-law, Aleksej Kuznecov, had been the first secretary of the CPSU in Leningrad – and had been shot during the second Leningrad affair in 1950.

Mikojan Jr., after his conversion on Cuba, entered the ILA and, from 1969, edited the institute’s newly founded monthly journal *Latinskaja Amerika*. His background in the highest Soviet gentry and his friendship with influential members of the *nomenklatura* provided him

⁷⁴² SERGEJ KISLJAK: ‘K ego sovetam prislušivalsja MID Rossii’. *Latinskaja Amerika* 9 (2005), p. 7; CHAČATUROV 2002; BLASIER 1983, p. 202.

– in the post-Stalinist USSR – with a security that allowed him to be very experimental and open-minded in his editorial and scientific work and enabled him to survive several attempts of both the propaganda department of the Central Committee and the presidium of the Academy to oust him as chief editor. One of the most reform-oriented and openly critical Soviet Latin Americanists, Sergo Mikojan was still a convinced socialist internationalist. Even in his 2004 recollections he celebrated the Cuban revolutionaries, and the *comprometidos* Pablo Neruda and David Siqueiros as the great heroes of his life.⁷⁴³

Excursus: Jews in Soviet area studies

From its foundation in 1944, the MGIMO supplied all branches of Soviet internationalist institutions with its alumni, who represented the bulk of leading *meždunarodniki* in the USSR. Yet there was one important group excluded from studies at the MGIMO throughout late Stalinism: Jews. Many of them found their way into Latin American studies after 1953, where they joined an older generation of Jewish internationalists such as Zubok, Majskij or Grigulevič. Indeed, remarkably many researchers of Latin America had a Jewish family background, as is often evident from their father's names: the historian Boris (Moisevič) Merin (1932-2007), at the ILA from 1963, was an expert on social movements in Latin America and a leading member of the Soviet solidarity committee with Latin American countries. The anthropologist Abram (Davidovich) Dridzo (1926-2003) was a researcher with a talent for poetry at the Academy of Sciences; and Lev (Samojlovič) Ospovat (1922-2009) was the author of several biographies of Latin American artists.

Two other Jewish historians stand out from the Thaw-generation of Soviet Latin Americanists: Moisej Al'perovič (1918-), son of a Jewish insurance company agent from Moscow, graduated from Moscow State University in 1941. After fighting four years in the Red Army, and fluent in German, he worked for the Soviet Military Administration in Germany. Returning to the Soviet Union, he finished his dissertation on Mexican-US relations, but – as a Jew in the Soviet Union in 1949 – was not given an academic position in Moscow. The Soviet Ministry of Education sent him to the provincial pedagogical university of Rjazan' instead, where he taught at the local university until he could return to the Soviet capital in 1954. He became an expert on liberation movements in 16th to 19th century America and of both Mexican and Paraguayan history at the Academy's Institute of History,

⁷⁴³ MIKOJAN 2006, p. 50; MIKOJAN 2004.

from 1968 as “leading scientific worker”. Al’perovič was also decorated with the Aztec Order, as well as with the title of honorary doctor of the Autonomous Nacional University of Mexico City (UNAM).⁷⁴⁴ He had established his reputation with a series of books on the history of Mexico, the United States and one on the entire Latin America, *From the Ancient Times to the Early XXth century*. The latter book, co-authored with Lev Slezkin (1920-) became a standard reference for all scholars. Slezkin himself had grown up in Moscow’s bohemia of the 1920s in a Jewish intelligentsia household; his father, the author Jurij Slezkin, was friends with Mikhail Bulgakov, Vladimir Mayakovsky and Anatoly Lunacharsky. Lev studied history at MGU, finished his *kandidatskaja* in 1953 and found a position with Lavrov and Al’perovič at the Academy’s section of the Americas (which only later subdivided into North- and Latin American branches). Al’perovič and Slezkin were rather latitudinarian academics: both got into trouble several times with the authorities for their writings on Latin American liberation movements. While they had their problems with party dogma and hypocritical cowardice, which still prevailed in Soviet academia, they were nonetheless convinced socialist internationalists; they were Soviets “in the non-official sense” remembered a colleague.⁷⁴⁵

The relatively high ratio of Jews in Soviet Latin Americanistics is remarkable, and even more so is the fact that almost all of them were academics only, without the ties to more politicised institutions that most of their Slavic and Caucasian colleagues had. It is very likely that, while open discrimination and exclusion stopped after 1953, Jewish *meždunarodniki* were still often obstructed from careers in more influential positions. With the increasing rehabilitation of Stalin from the late 1960s, Soviet anti-Semitism was again institutionalised, and Al’perovič found a shrewd way to comment on this tendency. His book on the 19th century Paraguayan strongman José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia was clearly a parable on the recent history of the Soviet Union and its dictator: de Francia, as a *mestizo* ethnically different from the country’s elite, was trained for the priesthood but never entered it. Instead, he installed himself as absolute sovereign of the country for a quarter of a century. He isolated his state, felt threatened by all surrounding neighbours, forbade all contact with the outside world, and aimed at creating a utopian state based on the idea of Rousseau’s social contract. A secret police conducted random terror and suppression on the one hand, and, on the other hand, an egalitarian population policy enforced education for all. The central state supported the

⁷⁴⁴ ‘Jubilej Moiseja Samuiloviča Al’peroviča’. *Novaja i Novejšaja Istorija* 2 (2009), pp. 214–216; BORIS KOVAL’: ‘Korifej otečestvennoj latinoamerikanistiki. K 90-letiju Moiseja Samuilovica Al’peroviča’. *Latinskaja Amerika* 9 (2008), pp. 92–96.

⁷⁴⁵ BORIS KOVAL’: ‘K jubileju L’va Jur’eviča Slezkina’. *Novaja i Novejšaja Istorija* 3 (2010), pp. 250–251.

underdeveloped national economy and eradicated the old elites, had church possessions banned and the land nationalised. The increasingly maniac leader uncovered conspiracies against him and forced the arrested to confess publically. After the dictator's death, political prisoners were freed, but the following juntas were perceived as chaotic. For that reason, the dictator continued to have many loyal followers long after his demise, especially among the lower classes.⁷⁴⁶ Al'perovič's bottom line: the lack of democratic institutions, self-isolation and centralism prevented positive development of the country after the death of the dictator.⁷⁴⁷ There is not the slightest hint in the book that it alluded to anywhere else but 19th century Paraguay – but the analogy is too obvious to be not understood as a comment on Stalinism and its legacies in the Soviet Union of the 1970s.

Stalinist repression till 1953 and the remnants of Stalinism and anti-Semitism throughout the 1960s and 70s did keep many Jews from following higher careers in Soviet administrative jobs. It did not (yet), however, result in a loss of their socialist ideals, as is shown by the life and work of another Jewish-Soviet Latin Americanist, Kiva Majdanik (1929-2006). He graduated from the Moscow State University, with a specialisation in Latin American history in 1951, with top grades, but at a bad moment: due to the ongoing anti-cosmopolitan campaign, the son of a renowned Jewish lawyer from Moscow did not get a recommendation for an *aspirantura*. He was sent to provincial Ukraine as a high school teacher for several years. After the 20th Party Congress in 1956, he was allowed to return and began his dissertation on the Spanish Civil War at the Academy of Sciences under supervision of Ivan Majskij, the former diplomat who had just been released from the Gulag. From 1963 to 1968, Majdanik lived in Prague as Latin American expert for *Problemy mira i socializma*. The international, multi-language communist journal had originally been founded to replace the disbanded structures of the Cominform. From the 1960s, it was a hub, where Soviet intellectuals could discuss quite freely with socialists from all over the world – and where they were sometimes inspired to criticism of their own state. Majdanik, too, built up contacts and friendships with many Latin American leftists from the Prague editing board. In exchanges with the Salvadorans Schafik Handal and Roque Dalton, and with the Dominican Narciso Isa Conde, Majdanik developed a distinct revolutionary idea of socialism, often very critical of the Latin American Communist parties and even the CPSU. For a while, Majdanik's solo runs were tolerated, although even Latin American CPs time and again demanded he be laid off.

⁷⁴⁶ MOISEJ AL'PEROVIČ: *Revoljucija i diktatura v Paragvaje*. Moskva, Nauka 1975.

⁷⁴⁷ AL'PEROVIČ 1975, p. 342.

Highly educated, worldly and fluent in Spanish, Portuguese, French, English, Italian, German, Czech and Russian, Majdanik found a position as a historian and political scientist at the IMEMO. In his, for Soviet standards very unconventional, academic work, he dealt with Cuba, Brazil, Nicaragua, Mexico, Venezuela, and with workers' and liberation movements all over the continent from an unorthodox Marxist perspective. In a time of increasing rehabilitation of Stalin, Majdanik chose to use the Trotskyist term *Thermidor* in his sharp criticisms of Stalinism yet he was still able to contribute to an influential publication of his institute, *Developing countries. Regularities, tendencies, perspectives*. But in the 1970s, he got increasingly into trouble with the authorities. Some of his publications never made their way through the censorship: a foreword for his friend and fellow historian Michail Gefter was pulped, along with the entire edition of the book on orders of the Central Committee. A booklet on *Ultra left liberation movements in Asia, Africa, Latin America*, prudently endorsed by Majdanik with a note "*only for internal use*", was nonetheless considered so dangerous that the leadership of the Academy decided to burn (!) it right away. What saved him from worse was probably his network of friends who included Sergo Mikojan and prominent communist foreigners in Moscow and Prague. Dolores "La Pasionaria" Ibárruri, the exiled head of the Spanish Communist Party PCE, who at the time was developing herself from a hard core Stalinist into a more moderate socialist, was among them. Isa Conde was also in Moscow in exile for almost a year and, together with Kiva, served as best man at Schafik Handal's wedding in Moscow.

With these personal contacts, and even through his own financial means, Majdanik organised Soviet support for the Central American rebellions from the late 1970s.⁷⁴⁸ His activities had long raised suspicion among the authorities, who regularly wire-tapped his telephone. In 1980, Majdanik met with Handal and two of his young scholars from the IMEMO, Andrej Fadin and Tatjana Vorožejkina in the latter's apartment. Handal delivered a flaming speech about the prospects for socialism in El Salvador, on which Fadin commented trenchantly: "this is all very well with your heroic struggle, but I may ask comrade Schafik: all these sacrifices, these values, these political possibilities, all this heroism – only to finally live in the same shit system as we do here in the USSR??" Majdanik later made the mistake of mentioning this incident in a phone call to Handal. Fadin was arrested and sentenced for being part of the *molodye socialisti* ("young socialists"), a group taking inspiration from the Western New Left and Eurocommunism. Majdanik was excluded from the CPSU on the

⁷⁴⁸ NARCISO ISA CONDE: *Kiva Maidanik. Humanidad sin límites y herejía revolucionaria*. Santo Domingo, Editora Tropical 2007.

grounds of “unauthorized contacts with foreigners” (with Handal, the head of a CP!) and anti-Soviet conspiracy. He also lost his position at the IMEMO until he was readmitted after Brezhnev’s death two years later; he was however, never appointed professor and lost his permission to travel abroad.⁷⁴⁹

The meždunarodniki as torchbearers of Soviet internationalism in the 1960s

The massive expansion, by and large from scratch, of Soviet area studies on Latin America from the mid 1950s not only produced academic research that found international respect and recognition. The academic and political institutions that dealt with the world abroad also nurtured hundreds of *meždunarodniki*, a type of new professional internationalist. The average graduate of the first generation was male and born in the 1920s. During their childhood, they lived through the dread of Stalinist state terror. At the same time, the Spanish Civil War created a great romantic cause for altruistic revolutionaries in a far away and exotic country, which was suddenly, through media and refugees, very present in the lives of many of this generation. They experienced, soon thereafter, the horrors of the Second World War, either fighting themselves as very young men, or witnessing their fathers and older brothers fight, be wounded or die. Imperialism was thus no abstract threat to them.

During the late 1940s and early 1950s they, as talented students, got their higher education, most of them at the newly founded MGIMO. Those with a Jewish family background were barred from studies at the MGIMO until 1953 and experienced an institutionalised anti-Semitism also in the years thereafter. These restraints notwithstanding, many Jewish students also managed to get a good education and academic positions.

All *meždunarodniki*, Jewish or not, were multilingual, they had some experience of life abroad – in the Soviet Union still a rarity at the time – and they were very ambitious. All of them were critical of Stalin, whose repression most of them had felt in their immediate vicinity. They thus welcomed Khrushchev’s reforms and the denunciation of the dictator’s crimes. “Kiva had a high estimation of the 20th Party Congress”, remembered Majdanik’s friend and biographer Isa Conde.⁷⁵⁰ Viktor Vol’skij recalled how he could finally convince the censors to publish his PhD, which proposed a new look at the developing countries, thanks to a reference to Khrushchev’s speech.⁷⁵¹ Nikolaj Leonov, too, still admired

⁷⁴⁹ ISA CONDE 2007, pp. 50f.

⁷⁵⁰ ISA CONDE 2007, p. 57.

⁷⁵¹ A. GLINKIN: ‘Slovo o druge’. *Latinskaja Amerika* 4 (2001), pp. 11–17.

Khrushchev in his memoirs: “back in that day as today, I feel great sympathy for this man, and I am sure that, with him, Russia lost her last political leader of stature.”

Relieved by the end of Stalinism and infected by Khrushchev’s politicking and his swashbuckling optimism, all the *meždunarodniki* joined the Communist Party. Sergo Mikojan criticised Stalin remarkably openly, but never lost faith in the party, whose ranks he joined in 1953, shortly after the death of the dictator. Vol’skij was a member, and so were Chačaturov and Šul’govskij, the latter not only nominally, like anyone in any relevant position in the USSR, but as an active politician. Even the bustling Majdanik was in the Party – until he was thrown out. To be sure, being a member of the CPSU was quasi-indispensable for any Soviet citizen who wanted to travel abroad. But many young and well-educated Soviets, the first generation already born under the Soviet regime, did not join the ranks of the CPSU after 1953 for these pragmatic reasons: at least until the mid 1960s, many of them thought of themselves as a “vanguard of a fair and egalitarian society” and shared a sense among them of a need to improve the party from within.⁷⁵²

Leonov was – at least in hindsight – highly critical of Stalinism and Soviet deficiencies such as the bureaucracy, the influence of the military, careerism, nepotism and denunciation. Nonetheless, he was a dedicated socialist and enrolled with the Komsomol and later the Party. Reflecting on his relations with the Soviet powers in his post-Soviet memoirs, Leonov claimed to have been always judicious, critical and without ideological limitations. But he considered himself a convinced patriot and communist, which were interchangeable terms for him at the time: “my appreciation of the Party and power structures was based on the fact that I considered them my state, therefore my *rodina* (“homeland”).⁷⁵³ If the Soviet Union followed a “revolutionary-imperialist”⁷⁵⁴ paradigm, as Vladimir Zubok claimed, then Leonov can be considered the embodiment of this principle: a loyal and career-oriented civil servant to an empire, whose geopolitical interests he safeguarded with all means necessary. Yet this imperialist stance was based on his political conviction, an almost romanticist socialist internationalism: “I was an orthodox communist and a loyal servant” Leonov described himself in retrospect, and claimed for his generation: “we were led by the belief that the fate of the global conflict between capitalism and socialism would be decided in the Third World.”⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵² ZUBOK 2009, pp. 34–36; CHAČATUROV 1996, p. 72.

⁷⁵³ LEONOV 1995, p. 22.

⁷⁵⁴ ZUBOK 2007.

⁷⁵⁵ LEONOV 1999, pp. 53; 85.

From their teachers and father figures, socialist internationalists from the 1920s, the *meždunarodniki* inherited old internationalist ideals. Along their march through old and new Soviet institutions, they still carried this conviction with all its initial romantic connotations, and their academic work often reflected this stance: in Latin American history and politics, they found stories of imperialism and liberation galore. Almost all the writings by this generation of Soviet academics were on national liberation movements, revolutions, anti-Western thought, anti-US struggle, workers movements, different socialist leanings and included countless biographies of liberation heroes from José Martí to Fidel Castro.⁷⁵⁶ The unconditional enthusiasm for the latter and for the socialist prospects of Cuba and Latin America shows that, thanks to the *meždunarodniki*, Soviet knowledge of Latin American past and present had grown tremendously in the decade after 1953, but was still based on clear ideological leanings and full of glorifying romanticism.

Differentiation of regional expertise and the impact on Soviet politics

The romanticism soon gave way to an increasingly differentiated body of knowledge on many aspects of the past and present of all Latin American countries. Through their professional careers, the *meždunarodniki* gained, by Soviet standards, a remarkable degree of experience of life outside the Soviet Union. All Latin America experts had travelled across the Atlantic for research or work with Soviet organisations. Chačaturov had spent many years living in Uruguay, Leonov more than a decade in Mexico. Nikolaj Čigir', a 1951 MGIMO graduate, spent eight years in Cuba as first TASS-correspondent; and Viktor Kropotov, who pursued a classic diplomatic career, spent altogether 16 years at the Soviet embassies in Mexico and Cuba.

Others had already lived abroad before they began their careers in the Soviet Union: the head of *Sovinformbjuro* in Latin America in the 1950s, Vladimir Masukevič, had been born to Belorussian parents in Mexico.⁷⁵⁷ The Ukrainian Pavel Bojko (1928-2007) had emigrated to Argentina with his family in 1937 and, after Stalin's death, came back to the Soviet Union; after his studies at Moscow State University and the Party High School, he took over the Brazilian section at Radio Moscow, and, from 1966, worked as an economic expert at the

⁷⁵⁶ AL'PEROVIČ 1968.

⁷⁵⁷ CHAČATUROV 1996, p. 45.

ILA.⁷⁵⁸ Semen Gonionskij (1916-1974), a diplomat and historian of Latin America, had seized the opportunity of the war time rapprochement between the United States and the USSR and had gone to study at Columbia University from 1941 to 1942. His first destination as diplomat was Bogotá, but when relations were interrupted in 1946, he returned to Moscow, where he pursued an academic career at the MGIMO and the Institute of Ethnography at the Academy of Science.

The growth of knowledge about the world abroad continued thanks to an ever-increasing internationalisation of the institutions of Soviet area studies. In 1955, first cautious scientific contacts had been established with Latin America, building on a book exchange agreement with Mexico. The year after, Soviet researchers were allowed for the first time to travel to Brazil for a geographical congress. In 1958, the first scholars from Argentina arrived at the Academy in Moscow.⁷⁵⁹ From these tender beginnings, the number of exchanges soon rose significantly. The *Institut Latinskoj Ameriki* contributed to this (re-)connection of Soviet academe with the rest of the world and, more than any other body, to Latin American countries in particular. Its researchers had access to international, including Western, scientific literature, and the most renowned Soviet historians could publish in Western and Latin American scientific journals. Somewhat ironically, reading early Cold War US assessments of Latin America led many Soviet Latin Americanists initially to the same – if perhaps more joyful – belief in imminent revolutions all across the Americas.⁷⁶⁰

From its foundation in 1961, the ILA sent its researchers abroad, starting with a series of *komandirovkas* to Cuba. By 1966, the ILA exchanged books and maintained contact with scientific centres in 25 countries, most closely with those in Eastern Europe and the Cuban Academy of Science.⁷⁶¹ Universities all over the Americas, Western Europe and China and even the states of Argentina, Mexico, Brazil and Cuba signed reciprocal agreements, too. As an institutional member of several UN bodies, the ILA sent researchers to UNESCO, CEPALC (United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) and UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organisation): the economist Lev Kločkovskij (1927-), founding researcher of the ILA and professor at the MGIMO, was the Soviet representative in CEPALC; Anatolij Glinkin (1926-2006), a 1952 MGIMO graduate,

⁷⁵⁸ Pavel Nikolaevič Bojko. Obituary in *Latinskaja Amerika* 6 (2007), p. 140.

⁷⁵⁹ KORNEEV 1974, pp. 137–140.

⁷⁶⁰ RABE 1999, p. 197; AL'PEROVIČ 1968.

⁷⁶¹ HUGO FAZIO VENGOA: 'América Latina Vista por los Académicos Soviéticos. Preámbulo de las Relaciones Ruso-Latinoamericanas'. *H-Critica* 15 (2003), pp. 31–49, p. 35; A. MAEVSKIJ: 'Meždunarodnye naučnye svjazi Instituta Latinskoj Ameriki'. *Latinskaja Amerika* 7 (1974), pp. 148–152; VOL'SKII 1967, pp. 84–86.

led the UNESCO department of social sciences in Paris from 1968 to 72.⁷⁶² The vice director of the ILA, Marklen Lazarev (1920-2008), had been a lawyer to the lend lease programme and, for that purpose, had lived two years in the United States from 1944 to 1946 and was a permanent member of the International Court of Justice at the Hague for 15 years.⁷⁶³

By the same token, international academics and representatives of international organisations were received within the institute's walls: as head of the UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), Raúl Prebisch came to the ILA in 1963, 1966 and 1967, where his theories of structuralist economics (a precursor to dependency theory) evoked heated discussion among Soviet researchers.⁷⁶⁴ The ILA regularly organised congresses, where Soviet academics debated with staff of Latin American embassies, with Latin American students from Moscow universities and with Latin American leftist writers and politicians, but also apolitical researchers from all over the world. Roland Ely, an Argentinean professor at the *Universidad Nacional de Buenos Aires* conducted research at the ILA in 1965 as a guest scholar.⁷⁶⁵ In 1966, as many as 18 Soviet researchers spent several weeks each in different Latin American countries, and 75 Latin Americans came as guests of the ILA to Moscow.⁷⁶⁶ The US Latin Americanist Russell Bartley was the first Western historian to conduct fieldwork in Moscow in 1967/68.⁷⁶⁷ And when Radio Free Europe organised a conference on Soviet Latin Americanistics in Munich in 1968, the head of the ILA, Viktor Vol'skij, himself participated.⁷⁶⁸ In the late 1960s, the ILA had contacts with 450 institutes, libraries and universities all over the world. By 1973, an impressive number of 350 guest scholars had been received, most of them Latin Americans.⁷⁶⁹ Even the rather Soviet-critical US professor Cole Blasier was able to spend several months at the institute in 1978, thanks to Sergej Mikojan's personal commitment.⁷⁷⁰

From 1969, the ILA internationally distributed its own popular scientific journal: *Latinskaja Amerika* combined news, articles, essays and debates on Latin America in a colourful and innovative format. Sergo Mikojan was editor in chief, and the Moscow based Spanish

⁷⁶² Anatolij Nikolaevič Glinkin. Obituary in *Latinskaja Amerika* 9 (2006), p. 105f.; COLE BLASIER: 'The Soviet Latinamericanists'. *Latin American Research Review* 16 (1981), pp. 107–123, pp. 109f.

⁷⁶³ Marklen Ivanovič Lazarev. Obituary in *Latinskaja Amerika* 2 (2009), p. 108-109.

⁷⁶⁴ BEKOPITOV 1976.

⁷⁶⁵ ROLAND T. ELY: 'El panorama interamericano visto por investigadores de la URSS'. *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 8/2 (1966), pp. 294–317.

⁷⁶⁶ Očet o rabote po linii meždunarodnyh naučnyh svjazej Instituta Latinskoj Ameriki AN SSSR v 1966 godu, undated, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.1021 l.2-25.

⁷⁶⁷ BLASIER 1983, p. 180.

⁷⁶⁸ VOL'SKIJ 1971, p. 13.

⁷⁶⁹ MAEVSKIJ 1974, p. 152.

⁷⁷⁰ MIKOJAN 2004; BLASIER 1981, p. 122.

communist Juan Cobo saw to its Spanish language edition *América Latina*. A decade later, the Russian and Spanish edition were both appearing monthly at 140 pages to the tune of 15,000 and 8000 copies respectively in 54 countries worldwide, an quantity that reflected the editors' ambition to be more than a purely academic journal. Leftist Latin American authors wrote occasionally for the journal, and many issues were dedicated to a guest of the institute with a long interview. Many a Latin American left intellectual and politician, from Jorge Amado and Mario Vargas Llosa to Mexico's president José Lopez and Nicaragua's minister of culture, the leftist Catholic Ernesto Cardenal, accepted invitations; Gabriel García Márquez came four times for interviews and chats with the Soviet Latin Americanists.⁷⁷¹

The political impact of Soviet area studies

Through these international contacts, at institutional as well as individual level, the Soviet Union gained precious specialist knowledge about the world abroad. Many researchers wrote about the Latin American liberation movements, some, like Chačaturov, specialised in US imperialism in the area, others studied different aspects of Latin American states and societies, their social movements, their churches, their military and a range of very specialised fields: Vladimir Bulavin (1927-2006), one of the first graduates from the MGIMO in 1950, became an expert on energy supply throughout the continent, Victor Vol'skij, Lev Kločkovskij and Igor' Šeremetev specialised in economic developments, and a precise cartography of Latin America was undertaken by Jakov Mašbic (1928-1997).⁷⁷² The original motivation for building up a refined system of area studies and acquiring this knowledge of the world abroad was a political one: in times of a global conflict, Soviet foreign policy decision makers desperately needed expertise on distant world regions. The academic institutions, which according to Soviet ideology had to serve the purposes of the state, had to deliver this knowledge, and they were given lavish funds and excellent working conditions to this end.

It is an open question, whether the regional experts, through this privileged position, actually had an impact on Soviet policy: as for the relationship between the government and the academe in the Soviet Union, there are very divergent opinions. On the one hand, institutions like the ILA and the IMEMO did supply the Central Committee, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the KGB with – secret – briefings on world areas. First hand information on world

⁷⁷¹ MIKOJAN 2004, p. 36.

⁷⁷² TORKUNOV, ED. 2009, pp. 216–226.

affairs was a rare commodity in the USSR, and the *meždunarodniki*, thanks to their travels, personal connections and access to different sources of information, often knew their countries much better than political decision makers.⁷⁷³ It has therefore been argued that “geopolitical decisions were based on academics rather than diplomats, because academics were the administrators and interpreters of the absolute truth in the Soviet Union.”⁷⁷⁴ On the other hand, several restrictions on Soviet academia challenge this view: firstly, Soviet foreign policy was formulated within a very small circle of Politburo members, and regional experts were expected to deliver information rather than to contribute to its process of decision making. This hierarchy was just as pronounced between the KGB and the academe: Leonov recalled how difficult it was to work with the professors from the IMEMO, simply because they were deeply afraid of the secret service.⁷⁷⁵ Some scholars thus drew the conclusion that: “academics are very seldom contacted by officials. ... (they) were perceived as party propagandists and often willingly acted as such”;⁷⁷⁶ and some stated that Soviet academics had “hardly any influence on politics”.⁷⁷⁷

A look at the Soviet Latin Americanists themselves suggests, however, that the *meždunarodniki* did influence to some extent the Soviet stance towards the world, if not at highest levels of foreign policy making. It was not so much their books and articles that left a political mark. Those Latin Americanists who confined themselves to purely academic work had very little impact outside universities, and it is probably safe to assume that their research was not acknowledged by anyone in the Politburo. Yet the *meždunarodniki* carried their internationalist spirit into higher levels of the Soviet administration, due to their constant fluctuation between different academic institutions and bodies of the Soviet state. Academics from MGU or the IMEMO often turned to broader area studies at the ILA, and taught at the same time at the MGIMO, Moscow State University or the Lumumba University.⁷⁷⁸ Others moved from area studies into international journalism. Furthermore, the bulk of *meždunarodniki* shared their internationalist expertise with other Soviet organisations, were involved in, or contributed out of conviction to, Soviet political and economic activities. All state and party organs that dealt with cultural diplomacy drew on the staff of area studies and

⁷⁷³ LEONOV; FEDIAKOVA; FERNANDOIS 1999, p. 72; ARTURO FONTAINE TALAVERA: ‘Estados Unidos y Unión Soviética en Chile’. *Estudios Públicos* 72 (1998); COBB 1981, pp. 53f.

⁷⁷⁴ FAZIO VENGOA 2003.

⁷⁷⁵ LEONOV 1995, pp. 138f.

⁷⁷⁶ DAVIDSON; FILATOVA 2007, p. 118.

⁷⁷⁷ BLASIER 1981.

⁷⁷⁸ TORKUNOV, ED. 2009, pp. 216–226.

their network of contacts.⁷⁷⁹ The old master spy Grigulevič now held positions at the ILA and the Latin America sections of both GKKS and SSOD. Aleksandr Alekseev (born Šitov, 1913-2001), who has popped up in different functions in all chapters so far, came originally from the secret services, too. Young Šitov had studied languages at MGU and, in 1941, changed his name and began working for the NKVD. During the war, Alekseev was undercover in Teheran and in Northern Africa, and in 1952 was sent to Buenos Aires. From 1958, he headed the Latin American section of the GKKS and, as a correspondent for TASS, reported from the Cuban revolution as one of the first Soviets. Initially rather sceptical about the prospects of the *barbudos*, Alekseev, a very charismatic and affable character according to the recollections of his friends and disciples, developed an intimate friendship with the revolutionaries.⁷⁸⁰ The Castro brothers and Che Guevara ended up liking their *Don Alejandro* so much that they had the unpopular first Soviet ambassador, Sergej Kudrjavtšev, sent back and successfully demanded Alekseev as Moscow's representative in Havana.⁷⁸¹ Alekseev thus became a diplomat, firstly in Cuba, later also in Argentina.

Many more Soviet *meždunarodniki* provided counselling, contacts and translations for Soviet-Latin American business transactions and political relations: the historian Anatolij Glinkin, the head of the foreign policy section of the ILA, and Marklen Lazarev, the vice director of the ILA, were both lecturers at the MGIMO, MGU and Lumumba – and they were both counsellors to the Soviet Foreign Ministry.⁷⁸² Others held positions in the academic branches of the CPSU: the ILA-historians Sergej Semenov (1929-) and Boris Koval' (1930-), both 1953 MGIMO graduates, oversaw the Spanish language editions of Soviet journals, Semenov the *Problemy Mira i Socializma*. (*Problemas del Paz y Socialismo*), Koval' the journal of the Socialist International, *Socialismo del futuro*. Together with the head of the ILA's Cuban section, Vasilij Ermolaev (1917-1974), both of them taught at the same time in the history department of the Central Committee – therefore had at least an indirect influence on how future decision makers would perceive the world.⁷⁸³

⁷⁷⁹ ILA. *Instituto de América Latina. 30 años 1961-1991*. Moscú,

⁷⁸⁰ MIKOJAN 2006, pp. 18–19; CHAČATUROV 1996, pp. 37f.

⁷⁸¹ VOLKER SKIERKA: *Fidel Castro. Eine Biographie*. Reinbek b. Hamburg, Rowohlt 2005, pp. 125; 163; ALEXEEV, ALEXANDR: *Cuba después del triunfo de la Revolución*, isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic608387.files/Alexeev.pdf (last access: 13-2-2011).

⁷⁸² BLASIER 1981, pp. 109f.

⁷⁸³ "O vremeni i o sebe". K 75-letiju Borisa Iosifoviča Koval'ja'. *Latinskaja Amerika* 6 (2005), pp. 72–79; VASILIJ ERMOLAEV: *Nacional'no-osvoboditel'noe i rabočee dviženie v stranach Latinskoj Ameriki posle vtoroj mirovoj vojny. Lekcii, pročitannye v Vysšej partijnoj škole pri CK KPSS*. Moskva, Vysšaja partijnaja škola pri CK KPSS 1958.

There was considerable interchange of expert staff between the different internationalist organs and institutes. Some of the Latin Americanists made careers that brought them into elevated posts in the Soviet administration. Most of them kept their academic jobs, but worked for media, for government agencies, for the party organisation, the military and intelligence services, in missions abroad, commercial enterprises and international exchange organisations as well, where they wrote speeches and drafted papers. It was through these power positions and their personal contacts that some made their voices heard. Chačaturov, parallel to his academic work at ILA and MGIMO and a dissertation with the old internationalist Ivan Majskij, pursued a career in the *Sovinformbjuro/Novosti* and finally became vice president of the news agency TASS and had a seat in the Latin American section of the Party's International Department. Leonov made his way from an assistant in a publishing house for international literature to a historian at the Academy, finally to KGB-vice president, head of its strategic department and a member of the Soviet defence council. Through these positions, some of the *meždunarodniki* exercised a certain influence on Soviet politics. Yet, while someone like Chačaturov certainly had considerable influence on the Third World strategies of TASS – and others on their respective organisations –, their impact on the highest realms of Soviet grand foreign policy was still limited. Leonov recalled writing countless suggestions on how to improve Soviet Third World policy in reports “that never made it beyond [KGB-boss] Andropov's desk.”⁷⁸⁴

The politically most influential Soviet Latin Americanist must have been Michail Kudačkin (1923-2010) and he, too, not through his academic writing, but due to his institutional involvement. Born in a village in what is today the Volgograd Oblast', Kudačkin joined the Red Army right after his secondary education and fought, from 1941 to 1945, in the war against Germany. Highly decorated several times already during the war, he was made a *Hero of the Soviet Union* in 1946 – and enrolled at the MGIMO. With his 1951 degree, he continued his studies at the *Akademija obščestvennyh nauk pri CK KPSS* (“the Central Committee's academy of social sciences”), which he finished in 1955. He specialised in the history of Latin America, became an active member of the CPSU and finally the head of the Central Committee's Latin American department, where he was in charge of over 30 regional experts.⁷⁸⁵ Academically, Kudačkin never reached the fame of others in the field, with some books on Latin American liberation movements and as editor of *Problemy mira i socializma*.

⁷⁸⁴ LEONOV; FEDIAKOVA; FERMANDOIS 1999, pp. 72; 83.

⁷⁸⁵ Michail Fedorovič Kudačkin, obituary in: *Latinskaja Amerika* 11 (2010), p.104; http://www.warheroes.ru/hero/hero.asp?Hero_id=12404 (last access: 22-11-2011); BLASIER 1983, p. 71.

Yet politically, he was *the* crucial person for everyone writing about and dealing with Latin America. A member of the CPSU from 1944, he, thanks to his position in the Central Committee, sat directly at the interface of science and politics. No major organisational or personnel decision in Soviet Latin Americanistics could be made without him, and in theoretical debates among scholars he was the final authority. Luckily for the Soviet Latin Americanists, he had a rather liberal mind and held his protective hand over his friends from Sergo Mikojan and Karen Chačaturov to Nikolaj Leonov and Kiva Majdanik, whose critical articles he did not impede from being published. Kudačkin was rather sceptical about the prospects of socialism in Latin America and undogmatic in his stance towards the Soviet Union in private conversations, but “never used a single critical word in his publications”,⁷⁸⁶ remembered Sergo Mikojan. With this – be it cowardly or shrewd – adjustment, Kudačkin kept his considerable influence on Soviet policies for Latin America. In the strictly hierarchical Soviet system of governance, he was the highest ranking expert of the continent, the source of information for everyone in the CC and, through personal contacts, linked to decision-makers in the Politburo, whose members were briefed personally by representatives of the International Department on the fields of their respective expertise. Sources on Kudačkin’s interactions with the powerbrokers are scarce, unfortunately, but it is clear that, through his access to the inner circle of Soviet foreign policy making, Kudačkin had more influence than any other *meždunarodnik* on Soviet policies towards Latin America.

Soviet decision-makers could only chart a foreign policy based on information on the regions concerned, and this information came from the *meždunarodniki*, partly from the academic ones, but more so from those who made parallel careers in higher organs of the secret services, the Party or the state. In this sense, some of them did have an impact on Soviet conceptions of the Third World. Most other Latin Americanists did not influence higher politics, but they carried their spirit of internationalism in many bodies of the Soviet administration, into lower ranks of the party, into the press or into internationalist organisations. While for Soviet geopolitics, Latin America always remained the least important major world area, many of the internationalist academics continued to consider it “one of the areas with the best perspectives for advancing towards socialism”.⁷⁸⁷ Thanks to an “old boy network”,⁷⁸⁸ especially among MGIMO alumni, many Latin Americanists were in

⁷⁸⁶ MIKOJAN 2004, p. 31.

⁷⁸⁷ VLADIMIR DAVYDOV: *Orígenes, composición institucional y orientación temática de los estudios latinoamericanos en Rusia*. Moscú 2010.

⁷⁸⁸ GOTTEMOELLER; LANGER 1983, p. 23.

close personal contact with those few who had a say in politics and thus exercised an indirect influence that had little to do with the books they wrote.

Undesigned consequences: how Soviet humanities profited from Cold War area studies

The expansion of Soviet area studies was politically motivated, but it created also expertise in fields that had no relevance for geopolitics at all. The lavish funds given to amass regional knowledge provided the liberal arts, in particular those with a certain distance from ideology, with good working conditions, too. Thanks to the Cold War rivalry, Soviet anthropologists, art historians and literary scholars were able to conduct research that often was on par with that of their colleagues from the best Western universities.

Rostislav Kinžalov (1920-2006), after fighting as a volunteer in the war, became a scholar of the folklore of indigenous America. He was *the* Soviet – and an internationally renowned and published – expert on the pre-Columbian art of Central America and organised a series of exhibitions in the Soviet Union from 1956. After a joint research project with the linguist Jurij Knorozov (1922-1999), who had laid the foundation for the deciphering of the language of the ancient Maya, and with the mathematician Jurij Kosarev, who had contributed early computer models, the team published a Russian-Maya dictionary in 1960.⁷⁸⁹

Vladimir Kuz'miščev (1925-1988) and Jurij Zubrickij (1923-2007) had also fought in the war against Germany as very young men. From the battlefields, they came to join the recently founded MGIMO, where they developed a fascination for Latin America, and from where they graduated in the early 1950s. Kuz'miščev worked for some years in the America section of the VOKS and the Latin American section of its successor SSOD, and became a historian at the ILA from 1967, where he specialised in the cultural history of Latin America. He was personally and emotionally very linked to his research, travelled more than 20 times to the Americas, and friends reported he had his humble apartment in Southern Moscow all decorated with Sombreros and other Latino-folklore. In this spirit, he translated Latin American literature and wrote his series of best selling historical novels on the Maya (see chapter two).⁷⁹⁰

Zubrickij discovered the pre-Columbian cultures of the South American Andeans, *terra incognita* for Russian/Soviet sciences, and they became the research topic of his life. He was

⁷⁸⁹ Rostislav Vasil'evič Kinžalov. Obituary in *Latinskaja Amerika* 9 (2006), p. 107-109; AL'PEROVIČ 1968, p. 24; E. EVREINOV; JU KOSAREV; V. USTINOV: *Primenenie elektronnyh vyčislitel'nyh mašin v issledovanim pis'mennosti drevnich Majja*. Novosibirsk 1961.

⁷⁹⁰ Vladimir Aleksandrovič Kuz'miščev. Obituary in *Latinskaja Amerika* 7 (1988), p. 143.

the first Russian to learn Quechua, which, as the Peruvian writer Francisco Miró Quesada recalled, made an incredible impression on people from the region, whenever he travelled in their country or received guests in Moscow.⁷⁹¹ ‘Iuri el Grande’, as he was called by his South American acquaintances, held a position at the ethnological department of the Academy of Sciences from 1959 to 1972 and later at the ILA. He spent his entire life researching the Andeans and wrote books about Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia, which were translated and published in these countries, too. Besides his research, he taught at Lumumba University, gave language classes and, from 1965, organised radio broadcasts in Quechua, Aymara and Guarani. As a member of the Soviet federation of journalists, he wrote about his trips in high gloss journals like *Vokrug Sveta*, *Ogonek* or *Nauka i žizn’*. Research trips and conferences brought him to most countries in the Americas, including the United States; he was awarded an honorary doctorate from two Peruvian universities and was given the freedom of the city of Cuzco, former capital of the Inca-empire, and the state order of Peru. Besides his academic feats, Zubrickij, an “in all respects non-mediocre human being, ... a poet and dreamer, full of creativity”, as he was called in *Latinskaja Amerika’s* normally rather sober obituaries, was an avid poet himself and, thanks to an impressive linguistic knowledge, translated poetry from languages that many people inside and outside of the Soviet Union had not even heard of, such as Georgian, Lithuanian, Quechua, Aymara, Guarani, and Mapudungun as well as Spanish.⁷⁹²

Other arts of modern Latin America also found advocates in the 1960’s Soviet Union: the architect Vladimir Chajta (1933-2004), after his graduation from the Moscow Institute of Architecture, took an interest in Latin American ways of construction and, as an affiliate to the ILA, introduced the Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer to the Soviet Union.⁷⁹³ And even Latin American folk music got its own Soviet expert with Pavel Pičugin (1932-) from the Institute of World Literature, who wrote regularly in *Sovetskaja Musyka* about the latest trends in Latin tunes and published note sheets and analyses of Latin American music. Similarly, Georgij Stepanov (1919-1986), head of the language and literature department of the Academy of Science, was a veteran of the Spanish Civil War and a partisan during the Second World War. He became an internationally renowned expert of Spanish linguistics and regional varieties and a literary translator.

⁷⁹¹ MIRÓ QUESADA 1989, p. 31.

⁷⁹² Jurij Aleksandrovič Zubrickij. Obituary in *Latinskaja Amerika* 6 (2007), p. 142-144

⁷⁹³ Pamjati V. L. Chajta. Obituary in *Latinskaja Amerika* 10 (2004), p. 92f.

The enormous popularity of Latin American literature in the Soviet Union was due in no small part to Vera Kutejščikova (1919-). This literary critic had begun her career at the department of the Americas of the VOKS in the 1940s. From 1956, she introduced and propagated Latin American authors to a Soviet readership from her position at the *Institut mirovoj literatury imeni Gor'kogo* (“Gorky institute of world literature”) at the Academy of Science, where she, after a trip to Mexico in the same year, organised the Latin American section and published her standard work *The history of Latin American literature in the 20th century*.⁷⁹⁴ At the same time, Kutejščikova occupied the position of lecturer at the newly founded Spanish section of the *Progress* publishing house, where she laid the foundation for the *boom* in Latin American literature in the Soviet Union in the 1960s.⁷⁹⁵ Kutejščikova, too, found international recognition for her work and was awarded the Aztec Order as well as an honorary degree of the UNAM. Like many intellectuals of her generation, she had grown up a convinced Stalinist during her adolescence and later recalled being relieved about the murder of Trotsky. After the 20th Party Congress and lingering through the Thaw, this generation of the 1960s harboured an idealised notion of 1920s socialism and internationalism, which they believed was still unsoiled by Stalin’s crimes. It was Eisenstein’s fascination for Mexico, Kutejščikova later remembered, which kindled her interest in Latin America. And about Vygodskij, the early proponent of Latin American literature in the 1920s, who had died in the Gulag, she wrote: “at the time, I hardly knew anything about the fate of Vygodskij, ... but later I developed some aching feeling of kinship with the man.”⁷⁹⁶

By the late 1960s, the yawning Soviet gap in knowledge on Latin America of the decade before was by and large closed. Much of the Soviet writing on contemporary history and political relations was embedded in an “ideological frame work ... that annoys deeply”⁷⁹⁷, as the Western observer Russel Bartley described it. But in other fields, Soviet scholars delivered highly qualified research that impressed him to the extent that he conceded: “the Soviet research on Latin America is at such high a level that experts in the field who do not read Russian are in an unfortunate position.”⁷⁹⁸ The ILA historians proudly quoted him in

⁷⁹⁴ VERA KUTEJŠČIKOVA: *Roman Latinskoj Ameriki v XX. veke*. Moskva, Nauka 1964.

⁷⁹⁵ V. ZEMSKOV: ‘Ot izučenija literaturnogo processa k osmysleniju civilizacionnoj paradigmy. Latinoamerikanistika v Institute mirovoj literatury’. *Latinskaja Amerika* 4 (2001), pp. 30–45; KUTEJŠČIKOVA 2000.

⁷⁹⁶ KUTEJŠČIKOVA 2000, pp. 20–22; 90.

⁷⁹⁷ RUSSEL H. BARTLEY: ‘A Decade of Soviet Scholarship in Brazilian History: 1958–1968’. *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 50/3 (1970), pp. 445–466, p. 465.

⁷⁹⁸ RUSSEL H. BARTLEY: ‘On Scholarly Dialogue. The Case of U.S. and Soviet Latin Americanists’. *Latin American Research Review* 1 (1970), pp. 59–62, p. 60; OSWALD 1966, p. 91.

resumes of their own work, but preferred not to echo the aforementioned less enthusiastic comment.⁷⁹⁹

The fall of Allende and the return of open academic debate to Soviet area studies

During Stalinism, great insecurity and fear had prevailed in Soviet social sciences and humanities; serious research and publications had almost come to a standstill and were replaced by “axioms... that, at most, were allowed to be illustrated, yet not to be discussed” and couched in an “ideological bellicose language.”⁸⁰⁰ During the Thaw, this rigorous constraint slackened; with the establishment of area studies and their expansion throughout the 1960s, regional experts gathered much empirical knowledge on the world abroad. The Soviet view of Latin America at the end of the decade was significantly less stereotypical and homogenising, as researchers continuously published ever more detailed studies on many aspects of the past and present of most states of the continent. This included politics, stance towards the Third World, the Catholic Church, the armed forces or the trade unions – as well as the great differences between different countries and among social strata within them.⁸⁰¹

This differentiation of knowledge brought back a degree of cautious debate into the Soviet academe. Always within a Marxist-Leninist conception of history, Soviet scholars offered now different interpretations of Latin American developments. Scientific journals published articles that still used cautious wording and never directly opposed an individual scholar or a policy, but, for an informed reader, clearly argued against other opinions. Under these liberalised circumstances, it was even possible for members of the ILA to express, from below, their preferences for the directorship for the institute. A Latin American *meždunarodnik* recalled that, after the old director, the internationalist functionary Sergej Michajlov, left in 1965, the academic staff was afraid of being allotted a clueless *nomenklatura* man as successor (“...who had no idea of where Grenada was and that Svetlov had praised it in his song”). When, after five months, the position still remained unstaffed, the Latin Americanists suggested one themselves. The Central Committee sent a representative

⁷⁹⁹ VOL'SKIJ 1971, p. 13; AL'PEROVIČ 1968, pp. 64f.

⁸⁰⁰ BEYRAU 1993, p. 47.

⁸⁰¹ PRIZEL 1990.

into the ILA, who sharply rebuked this insubordination; but in the upshot, they got the director they asked for, Viktor Vol'skij.⁸⁰²

The *meždunarodniki's* reactions to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 confirm that the obsequiousness of Soviet academe had given way to a cautiously critical stance: Anatolij Šul'govskij, within the walls of the ILA, made no secret of his sympathies for Dubček and his disapproval of the invasion.⁸⁰³ Vera Kutejščikova recalled: “my contemporaries would never again forget that day; we were overwhelmed by feelings of shame and despair”,⁸⁰⁴ and she compared the violence in Prague with the violence against protesting students in Mexico City the same year. Kiva Majdanik, in Czechoslovakia for *Problemy mira i socializma* during the events, even criticised the Soviet course of action publically – and lost his job for this insolence.

Increased self-awareness among academics fomented discussion, and so did another factor: institutional competition. The expansion of area studies created a rivalry between, for instance, historians of the ILA and the Academy's History Department, who in certain articles both indirectly claimed to be more professional and modern than the other.⁸⁰⁵ With the end of the somewhat naive Third World enthusiasm of the Thaw, experts sometimes felt the need to prove their *raison d'être* and to justify their further existence. Nikolaj Leonov recalled that his Latin American department of the KGB often took initiatives only “to prevent being aborted”.⁸⁰⁶ By the same token, the ILA also made sure officials knew of the advances the Cold War enemy was making in the field of area studies and, in 1970, published an anthology of Latin American studies abroad.⁸⁰⁷

The substantially increased knowledge and an atmosphere of competitiveness brought something back to academic life in the Soviet Union that had been severely restricted during Stalinism: relatively open academic debate. While differentiation and qualitative improvement happened everywhere in Soviet area studies, none of the published Soviet debates on the outside world was more sophisticated than the one dealing with Latin America. The quick establishment of a hitherto hardly existing field gave many young scholars academic opportunities that they took up with enthusiasm and optimism. Moreover, since

⁸⁰² GLINKIN 2001.

⁸⁰³ DABAGJAN 2007; DABAGJAN 2001.

⁸⁰⁴ KUTEJŠČIKOVA 2000, p. 213.

⁸⁰⁵ OSWALD, CARLTON, EDS. 1970.

⁸⁰⁶ ANDREW; MITROCHIN 2005, p. 65.

⁸⁰⁷ VOL'SKIJ 1971; INSTITUT LATINSKOJ AMERIKI (ED.): *Zarubežnye centry po izučenuju Latinskoj Ameriki*. Moskva, ILA RAN 1970.

Latin America had only minor relevance in geopolitical terms to the Soviet Union, academics were relatively free of direct political responsibility.⁸⁰⁸

Progressive vs. conservative scholars

By the late 1960s, there were differing opinions on the stage of development that capitalism had reached in Latin America. Based on these interpretations, there were different stances towards the support of left populists, left military regimes, Communist parties and alternative socialist movements. Two lines of thought evolved in the Soviet debate, represented by two groups of scholars, who, in the absence of better terms, shall be called ‘conservatives’ and ‘progressives’. Conservatives were those who were most loyal to the Soviet state and its official policies; the progressive ones were those who rather took a stand for international socialism, and, for that matter, Latin American revolutionary movements. In the centre of all debates on the Third World in general and Latin America in particular was the question of violent revolutionary struggle: the official Soviet position condemned it, and being associated with ‘left extremism’ or even ‘Maoism’ could still bring people into serious trouble in the late 1960s. However, there was the successful example of Cuba, which gave some Latin Americanists leverage to openly and publically propose revolutionary struggle on the continent. Anything remotely critical of Soviet policies still had no chance of getting published, so the discussants always referred to foreign groups with a certain leaning; if scholars wanted to express their damnation of support for revolutionary groups, they would not point their finger at the International Department of the CPSU, but rather criticised the left-radicalism of, say, Régis Debray. By the same token, criticism of Soviet support for anti-communist populists was expressed only indirectly, such as through the repudiation of an article in a foreign newspaper.

The *meždunarodniki* of the ILA were usually in the conservative camp in these debates, and Šul’govskij and Vol’skij, as the leading historians of the institute, were its spokesmen. Šul’govskij, as a long-time colleague remembered in his obituary, was “a brainchild of the socialist system, a Soviet historian.” He was not only a nominal Party member, like anyone in any relevant position in the USSR, but active in the CPSU, whose grand foreign policy doctrines he supported.⁸⁰⁹ In a speech at a 1969 Third World conference in Frunze,

⁸⁰⁸ JERRY F. HOUGH: ‘The Evolving Soviet Debate on Latin America’. *Latin American Research Review* 16/1 (1981), pp. 124–143, p. 125.

⁸⁰⁹ DABAGJAN 2007; DABAGJAN 2001.

Šul'govskij summed up this political stance: the royal road to socialism was still “non-capitalist development” (see introduction). Central Asia, the certainly not coincidental venue for the event, was still to serve as a role model. The revolution had won in a highly developed country (*id est* in his view: Soviet Russia); backward countries thus could leapfrog the phase of capitalism by being inspired and helped by the socialist motherland (“Marxism-Leninism, that is the sentiment of historical optimism plus the experience of the peoples of the Soviet Union”). This was only possible via the working class, represented by the respective Communist parties, which did not exclude the possibility that, in the first place, a national liberation movement or military rule might lead the way (as in Cuba and Peru respectively). Many paths were possible, whoever denied that, like the left extremists, only played into the hands of imperialism. Šul'govskij paralleled the collaboration with different “anti-imperialist forces” to the (actually rather short lived) support of Muslim movements in early 1920s Central Asia. He denounced Maoist theories of a city versus countryside opposition, called dependency theory “far from objective reality” and “latently racist” and Che Guevara’s *foco*-theory “refuted by history”.⁸¹⁰

In the 1970s, Šul'govskij no longer considered Latin America a part of an imperialism-stricken Third World and compared it to Southern Europe rather than Asia and Africa. In a book co-written with his ILA colleagues Boris Koval' and Sergej Semenov, he suggested the concept of *Zavisimyj kapitalizm* (“dependent capitalism”) for the further study of Latin America.⁸¹¹ This was apparently too conservative even for the ILA. For a while, Vol'skij did not allow the book to leave the walls of the institute; later, the authors got into trouble with the censors at the publishing house. When the book came out finally, however, it did establish a new theory “from below” that was discussed rather openly in the Soviet scientific community.

On the progressive side of the debates, scholars discussed dependency theory and later liberation theology with more benignity. Usually couched as ostensible condemnations of certain foreign groups, they criticised the support of populists and military regimes, as in Brazil or Peru, and hinted at the revolutionary potential in some Latin American regions.⁸¹² These progressives, with Kiva Majdanik and Moisej Al'perovič the most latitudinarian amongst them, not only proposed a more active support of Latin American ‘liberation movements’, they also complained about the prevailing constraints within Soviet academia: in

⁸¹⁰ ŠUL'GOVSKIJ 1970, pp. 86–88.

⁸¹¹ BORIS KOVAL'; SERGEJ SEMENOV; ANATOLIJ ŠUL'GOVSKIJ: *Revoljucionnye processy v Latinskoj Amerike*. Moskva, Nauka 1974.

⁸¹² HOUGH 1986, pp. 89ff.

1968, Al'perovič, after outlining the successes of Soviet area studies, could even cautiously criticize the “mechanical interpretation of historical processes” by more conventional Soviet historians – again without giving names – and their lack of dialogue with non-Marxist historians.⁸¹³

The debate on Allende's fall

When, in 1970, Salvador Allende's popular front won the elections in Chile, both 'conservative' and 'progressive' Soviet scholars agreed that this first democratic election of a Marxist president was a historic and momentous event. Reactions from Soviet politicians were very benevolent, too: Ponomarev, the head of the International Department, saw the election as a “revolutionary blow to imperialism”.⁸¹⁴ Yet the enthusiasm did not reach the heights of the Cuban craze a decade earlier. Politicians as scholars harboured serious doubts from the beginning as to whether the regime could prevail. These doubts, the enormous costs of sustaining Cuba and the geopolitical backdrop of *détente* led to very little substantial Soviet support. Economic difficulties and attacks from leftist guerrillas debilitated the popular front, and, in 1973, Allende was overthrown by a CIA-backed military putsch and killed himself. Interestingly, no one in the Soviet Union found fault with imperialism for these events. The US media had been reporting for two weeks about the active role of the CIA and the State Department in the putsch, before *Pravda* tepidly mentioned “allegations concerning US involvement”.⁸¹⁵ Brezhnev called the events a “bloody fascist coup”⁸¹⁶, but did not refer to external influences. Ponomarev reminded his comrades that the Bolsheviks, unlike the *frente popular*, survived their revolution because they managed to get the economy running. Šulgovskij blamed Allende for being too straightforward with his reforms and defended the reticent Soviet position towards Chile. Kudačkin found fault with the left radicals and their lack of discipline, which pushed the middle classes into the camp of the reactionaries.⁸¹⁷ Eastern European and Soviet scholars agreed at a conference at the Academy: Allende's popular front was unprepared, and its own domestic policy caused its demise.⁸¹⁸ Tellingly, the

⁸¹³ AL'PEROVIČ 1968, p. 31.

⁸¹⁴ Quoted after: PRIZEL 1990, p. 163.

⁸¹⁵ PRIZEL 1990, p. 164.

⁸¹⁶ Quoted after: PRIZEL 1990, p. 27.

⁸¹⁷ MICHAİL KUDAČKIN: 'Algunas enseñanzas de la revolución chilena'. *Latinskaja Amerika* 1 (1975), pp. 80–88.

⁸¹⁸ PRIZEL 1990, p. 166.

only people who blamed the US for the end of Allende in Soviet debates, were the Guyanese Cheddi Jagan and the Bolivian Nina Tadeo in an issue of *Problemy mira i socializma*.

These surprising Soviet reactions focused different issues, but, at the core, they were still unanimous in their criticism. Yet in the wake of Allende's fall, a great breach of taboo took place in Soviet academia, as openly divergent opinions came to be published in the very same journal. Kiva Majdanik, historian of Latin America at the IMEMO, wrote an article that criticised the reluctant Soviet foreign policy towards Chile. In order to get this reproach published, he had to disguise it: the *New York Times* had written that the nationalisation of banks and industries had brought about Allende's downfall; Majdanik protested that, on the contrary, the deferential inclusion of "bourgeois circles" proved fatal for Chile's socialism – clearly a criticism much more of Soviet foreign policy than of US journalists! At the ILA, long and emotional discussions had taken place about the fall of Allende, firstly within the safe walls of the institute. During the preparations for a Chile edition of *Latinskaja Amerika*, however, conservatives and progressives could not agree on a common position, which in Soviet tradition they were expected to take in any publication. Mikojan remembered: "we had problems from the very beginning with the press administration..., it was dominated by a generation of ideological dogmatists. I was told once in the Central Committee: 'is it worth debating questions, about which we still have no established opinion?'... Back then, discussion usually looked like this: 'comrade X is correct to say..., I come round to the opinion of comrade Y.'... We wanted to do things completely differently."⁸¹⁹

In the aftermath of the Chilean putsch, Majdanik denounced not only Soviet passivity, but also Allende for not being determined enough against his adversaries. Evgenij Kosarev, however, argued, in paper called "Against revolutionary romanticism and illusions", that the Chilean socialists had shown a lack of patience and discipline and had acted hastily. Mikojan, his colleagues' qualms and the censors' initial *Nyet* notwithstanding, now called for what was a complete novelty in Soviet sciences: in the very same edition of the journal, two articles were to be published that held completely opposite opinions on the same issue. "The editorial team protested vehemently," Mikojan recalled, "but I wanted to make an interesting and newsworthy number and give arguments to the reader that allowed him to form his own opinion." Until he managed to follow through with this first dash of pluralism in the Soviet press, Mikojan had had to endure long debates and fights with his bosses at the ILA and with the directory of the Academy of Sciences, threaten with resignation, and continue the struggle

⁸¹⁹ MIKOJAN 2004, pp. 29–31.

with the propaganda department of the Central Committee and the *Glavlit* censors at the printing plant. His friend Nikolaj Leonov, the KGB man for Latin America, helped him take these hurdles. Finally, as any ILA publication, the issue still had to be approved by the Central Committee's Latin American department, "the court of last resort" as Mikojan called it. Luckily for him, the historians Vasilij Ermolaev and Michail Kudačkin were in charge there, and both were close friends of Mikojan, too. Thanks to his perseverance and his excellent contacts with high ranking party members, Sergo Mikojan won through, and the issue appeared.⁸²⁰

The animated debate around Allende, and in particular around his fall, shows just how much the Soviet perception of Latin America had changed through the 1960s. This becomes most evident in comparison with the enormous, and still somewhat naive, enthusiasm for the Cuban revolution and the ostensible prospects of socialism in continental Latin America around 1960. The initial condemnation of Goulart's overthrow in Brazil in 1964 was also still much more stereotypical and ideologised than the diversity of well-informed voices heard after Allende's ousting and his suicide in 1973.

With the Gorillas or with the Guerrillas? The *meždunarodniki* as banner-bearers of Soviet internationalism after Stalin

From the mid 1950s, the Soviet Union built up a refined system of area studies, which had two major impacts on science, politics and the higher administration: firstly, it expanded tremendously what the Soviets knew about the rest of the world and replaced the hyper-ideologised and schematised global mental map of late Stalinism with detailed regional expertise and a fair knowledge of world affairs. Secondly, as the professional biographies of the Latin Americanists exemplified, many of the academics conveyed a renewed spirit of internationalism into both newly founded and old Soviet institutions. The so-called *meždunarodniki* of the first generation were born mostly in the 1920s, experienced as young men, directly or indirectly, Stalinist state terror at home, the Great War against Germany and the new wave of Stalinist repression. As students and young professionals, they were influenced by academic teachers who had been socialist internationalists already in the 1920s and 30s, who had been confined to labour camps, were banned from work or, in some way or

⁸²⁰ MIKOJAN 2006, p. 50; 'Vokrug urokov Čili'. *Latinskaja Amerika* 5 (1974).

another, felt threatened for at least some time during Stalinism. They had never lost, however, their Leninist convictions, which they passed to their disciples in the 1950s. The story of the first generation of Soviet Latin Americanists supports the principal argument of this thesis: the *meždunarodniki* were banner-bearers of Soviet internationalism after Stalin, their inspiration came from socialist internationalism of the 1920, but they also belonged to a context of similar endeavours in Europe and Northern America at the same time. With their increasing interaction with the Third World on the one hand, and their academic exchange across the Iron Curtain on the other, the *meždunarodniki* were part of cultural internationalism from the 1950s.

Restrictions on academia were palpably loosened in the Soviet Union after 1953, and the Russian ethnocentrism of late Stalinism all but ended. Notably many of the Latin Americanists had a non-Russian family background: Mikojan and Chačaturov were Russian raised Armenians, Vol'skij was Lithuanian. Jews had not been able to enrol as students at the elitist MGIMO during late Stalinism, but a remarkable number nonetheless found their way into area studies later. In the optimistic atmosphere of the early Thaw, the young and ambitious *meždunarodniki* began their careers as academics, journalists, diplomats or secret service agents. They enjoyed lavish salaries, a good reputation and had the great privilege of being able to travel abroad. Excellent research was done at least in fields with a certain distance to ideology, and outstanding scholars made contact again with the academic world outside the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. At least within these small circles of elite scientists, the Soviet Union became cosmopolitan again. Some of those who went to Western countries received impressions that did not match the ideological image spread within the Soviet Union, and this view behind the facade led some of them to distance themselves from the Soviet system in the long run. But especially those *meždunarodniki* who devoted themselves to the Third World were staunch anti-imperialist socialist internationalists in the first place, and their experiences abroad only confirmed this view. “Progressive circles in Latin America”, Šul'govskij believed to have found out on one of his many trips, “take the USSR as inspiration for the solution of the national question and economic independence, which they still need to achieve long after their political independence, ... they see the Soviet Union as “the future of the world.”⁸²¹ As for their political orientation, ILA president Vol'skij

⁸²¹ ŠUL'GOVSKIJ 1972, pp. 13; 34.

left no doubts: “our research is built on the granite bedrock of Marxist-Leninist methodology, ... a creative Marxism ... is our internationalist obligation.”⁸²²

Some of this generation of regional experts came into conflict with the Soviet state time and again. Yet dissidents, as they emerged from the mid 1970s, were usually *institutniki* from the natural sciences, while the *meždunarodniki* remained committed socialist internationalists. Later generations studied and began their careers some time after pragmatism and often cynicism had replaced the optimism of the Thaw among the Soviet elites. Many became excellent regional experts, too, but they did not all develop into desk revolutionaries. This detachment between the generations sometimes happened quite literally within families: Lev Slezkin’s son Yuri firstly was trained as Portuguese translator, but, after some time in Mozambique in the late 1970s, emigrated to the United States and became a renowned historian of the Soviet Union. Lev Zubok’s grandson Vladislav, trained at the Academy’s *Institute of the USA and Canada*, likewise pursued an academic career in the United States. Yet theirs were stories of the late 1970s and 80s, and their deviance should not be projected back onto the generation before them.

The impact of the *meždunarodniki* on Soviet foreign policy is difficult to measure. A broader approach, which would have to look not only at the Latin Americanists but also at experts from other fields and which would have to include source material from the – still hardly accessible – archive of the Russian/Soviet Foreign Ministry, could give more detailed insights into the interactions of academic experts and the inner circles of Soviet politics. The biographical assessment of Soviet Latin Americanists has suggested that the *meždunarodniki* did influence to some extent the Soviet stance towards the world, but not so much through their writings and not so much on highest levels of foreign policy making. It was through a constant interchange of staff between different academic institutions and bodies of the Soviet state that the Latin America experts brought their internationalist spirit into many official organs and institutes. Some of the Latin Americanists also made careers as scientific functionaries or reached influential positions in the administration or the party. From these powerful positions and through their personal contacts, some made their voices heard and advocated a more active role for the Soviet Union in Third World matters.

This role of the *meždunarodniki* also helps understand an apparent contradiction in Soviet foreign policies when Khrushchev’s brinkmanship had ended. The theory of non-capitalist development and its wholesale application to an increasing number of Latin American

⁸²² VOL’SKIĬ 1971, pp. 7; 16.

regimes had reactivated a paradox in Soviet foreign relations: on the one hand, nationalist leaders from the Mexican state party PRI to the left populists in Brazil enjoyed Soviet approval and (mostly rhetorical) support. On the other hand, Communist parties all over the continent continued receiving orders and money from Moscow. Where they were illegal and persecuted, as in Colombia or Venezuela, they took up arms firstly to defend themselves, but also with the declared goal of toppling the bourgeois governments. With Brezhnev's takeover in 1964, this Soviet foreign policy paradox was exacerbated. The optimism, which made the Soviets support nationalist developmentalist regimes in the Third World, was gone and so were the charismatic leaders from Nasser in Egypt to Sukarno in Indonesia and Goulart in Brazil. The USSR now found increasing favour with military regimes in South America. The Brazilian coup in 1964 was publically condemned by the Soviet leadership, but in fact, a continuing collaboration with the communist hunting generals proved beneficial for both sides. Thereafter, the Soviets backed other "Gorillas", as the military dictators came to be called all over the Americas. The Peruvian generals in executive power or the Panamanian strongman Omar Torrijos fulfilled several criteria for the benevolence of the Soviets: like they themselves, the Gorillas were authoritarian rulers with a mission to modernise their societies through the state, they were occasionally critical of the United States and – most importantly – unlike socialists, never asked for financial help from Moscow. Nikolaj Leonov recalled: "at that time, revolutions worried the Kremlin more than the reactionaries, for when a revolution succeeded, requests for help, credits and money followed hard. A stable conservative government, however, ... offered normal relations, without problems, without concerns."⁸²³ An almost cynical pragmatism prevailed now in Soviet foreign policy towards Latin America, a world region too far away to be interesting for Soviet imperialists, who were more interested in Soviet global power and geopolitical influence than a more just world society. Guerrilla groups, which formed in many Latin American states and regions operated mostly without support or even against the explicit will of traditional Soviet-oriented Communist parties. Che Guevara's group in Bolivia, to name but the most famous example, was forsaken by the local pro-Moscow CP.

The civil servants and apparatchiki in the Soviet Foreign Ministry and its boss Gromyko were openly contemptuous of further Third World adventures: "not even the Central Committee could get him to travel to Middle East, Africa or Latin America", Leonov believed.⁸²⁴ Gromyko did eventually travel to Cuba with Party Boss Brezhnev in 1974; the Chairman of

⁸²³ LEONOV; FEDIAKOVA; FERMANDOIS 1999, p. 78.

⁸²⁴ LEONOV 1995, p. 141.

the Council of Ministers, Aleksej Kosygin, had already been there in 1967, and, throughout the 1970s, several high ranking Soviet state representatives visited many other Latin American countries. Yet these official visits of statesmen had little to do with internationalist solidarity or socialist romanticism. They were much more signs of the adaption of Soviet politicians to international customs of diplomacy. With their foreign trade, too, the Soviets participated in the world economic system according to its capitalist rules – in Latin America, remarkably, they traded mostly with the “fascist” regimes in Brazil and Argentina. To some extent, this adaption to the “international system”⁸²⁵ tamed the external behaviour of the USSR. The incredible endurance of ever-aging Soviet foreign policy makers added to this increasing incrustation: foreign minister Gromyko was in office from 1957 to 1986; Ponomarev headed the International Department of the Central Committee from 1955 to 1986 – to be followed by Anatolij Dobrynin, who had been ambassador to the United States continuously since 1962. The Soviets were now indeed so restrained towards revolutionary or even only reform-oriented leftists that many “friends of the Soviet Union” complained of being neglected in letters to Moscow: members of the Soviet-Uruguayan Friendship Society, for instance, asked for more Soviet activity in Montevideo in a 1967 report – other countries like West Germany and the United States now constantly offered free or very cheap concerts and artist exhibitions, they complained.⁸²⁶ The Bolivian Friendship Society, too, wrote several times to Moscow in 1971, disappointed that their letters remained unanswered and that they were never again invited to the Soviet Union.⁸²⁷

However, all this new pragmatism, increased professionalism and “normalisation” of Soviet foreign policy notwithstanding, the Soviets, throughout the Brezhnev period and thereafter, continued their support for Communist parties and tolerated the support of guerrilla units by their ally Cuba. The Chilean CP alone received 200,000 US\$ in 1963 and 645,000 US\$ in 1973, while Soviet foreign policy was very restrained towards the popular-front governed Chile. These were huge amounts of hard foreign exchange, whose numbers must be decupled to give today’s value, for the ever badly-off Soviet Union.⁸²⁸ This money was brought to Latin America in cash from Moscow and spread via the KGB network, which was interwoven with the eventually eleven Soviet embassies.⁸²⁹ While not inciting revolutions, the KGB was

⁸²⁵ IRIYE 1997.

⁸²⁶ Undated, GARF f.9518 op.1 d.1015 l.17-19.

⁸²⁷ 25-1-1971, GARF f.9576 op.10 d.141 l.7; 5-6-1971, GARF f.9576 op.10 d.141 l.102-103.

⁸²⁸ FONTAINE TALAVERA 1998.

⁸²⁹ LEONOV; FEDIAKOVA; FERMANDOIS 1999, p. 78.

now, after the end of Khrushchev's reign, allowed to be much more active in Third World politics than the Kremlin and especially the Foreign Ministry.⁸³⁰

There are several reasons for this contradictory policy. For one thing, even the most realist pragmatists in the Kremlin and the Foreign Ministry had to acknowledge that the Latin American radical left, a potentially pro-Soviet group, had turned to Cuba (which was not a problem), but were also increasingly flirting with Chinese-Maoist ideas. This was a problem.⁸³¹ Secondly, the two track foreign policy had its roots in a rivalry between the Foreign Ministry and the International Department of the Central Committee. It has been argued that in this controversy, members of the International Department pushed for more "revolutionary" activity in the Third World, while the civil servants in the ministry actively campaigned, firstly for restrictions in Third World adventures, and secondly for more political competence independent of CPSU structures.⁸³² All but one member of the International Department (as of 1983) had come from the area studies institutes; all but one were *Doktory Nauk*, the highest academic degree in the Soviet system. These 150 *meždunarodniki* on the one side taught and researched, and on the other side influenced the conception of Soviet foreign policy.⁸³³ Latin Americanist Michail Kudačkin was among them, but the more influential ones seem to have been specialists in other world areas. Many of them, supporters of Khrushchev's internal reformism and his Third World endeavours, were unhappy with the retrenchment under the new Soviet leadership. Using their connections to the influential Central Committee, it was they who pushed for more Soviet activities in the Third World, not (or at least not primarily) to strengthen the USSR's geopolitical position, but out of socialist internationalist conviction. The *meždunarodniki* now surrounded the nerve centre of Soviet foreign policy making. What was often perceived as Soviet imperialism in the Third World, actually went back to the initiatives of these internationalist romantics. In a time when most of the artistic and literary intelligentsia retreated to private life, emigrated to Israel or found a crutch in Russian nationalism, dissident human rights movements were supported mostly by *institutniki* from the natural sciences. The *meždunarodniki*, however, still waved the banner of socialist internationalism in an increasingly pragmatic Soviet empire, if not always successfully. The Latin Americanists, in particular, rallied mostly in vain: Kiva Majdanik's pleas for support of several guerrilla groups fell on deaf ears. And when the Sandinistas came to power in Nicaragua in 1979, although Leonov travelled to Managua and advertised more

⁸³⁰ ANDREW; MITROCHIN 2005, p. 40; WELLES 1970.

⁸³¹ PRIZEL 1990, p. 136.

⁸³² WESTAD 2007.

⁸³³ GOTTEMOELLER; LANGER 1983, p. 93.

substantial help from Moscow afterwards, only a fraction of this Soviet support materialised.⁸³⁴

⁸³⁴ LEONOV 1995.

Conclusion

Impacts and limits of Soviet internationalism in the cultural Cold War / Excursus: The bear in the backyard. US reactions to Soviet-Latin American interactions / Empire and political pragmatism in the 1970s / Russia's globalisation

In 1972, the Soviet film maker Roman Karmen travelled to Latin America and shot his long documentary on the “blazing continent” (*pylajuščij kontinent*), a great panorama of Soviet internationalism after Stalin as it has been presented in this thesis. Karmen paralleled the Mexican and Russian Revolutions, depicted the Spanish Civil War, the Soviet Great Patriotic War and the struggle against imperialism in Latin America as a continuous fight against the same enemy and compared the Venezuela of the 1970s with Azerbaijan before the October Revolution. Viktor Vol'skij, leading *meždunarodnik* and head of the *Institut Latinskoj Ameriki*, was the scientific advisor for the film, which mixed images of beautiful exotic landscapes and racy *latinas* with catchy folklore music and Spanish revolutionary slogans that no longer needed translation into Russian by the time. In one scene, leftist Latin American intellectuals explained the connections between old European fascists and capitalist imperialists in Latin America. Chilean alumni from Lumumba-University, in another scene, expressed their gratitude towards the Soviet Union (one of the youngsters presented in the film, Lenin Díaz, would be among the first *desaparecidos* (“the disappeared”) of the Pinochet dictatorship only a year after this interview). The United States figured as grand scale evildoer, its bloody imperialism cementing illiteracy and poverty; harrowing pictures showed freight trains full of foodstuffs leaving for the North while starving children cry. Yet 300 million Latin Americans, Karmen made his viewers believe, were full of optimism that, finally, socialism would prevail. The people, the revolutions, the imperialist string-pullers and the fascist dictators, the entire pandemonium of heroes and villains of the Global Cold War from the Soviet perspective made their appearance in Karmen's film, and it all came in a nice package of tropical eroticism and catchy rhythms. Latin America, in this depiction, was a world arena, where the Soviet perception of the world was proven.⁸³⁵

In the just under two decades between Stalin's death and the time Karmen shot his film, the Soviet Union gave up its rigid isolation from the world beyond the control of its army and became a global player, which challenged its Cold War enemy even in its “backyard”. To

⁸³⁵ ROMAN KARMEN: *Pyłajuščij kontinent* (1972), RGAKFD #24461.

Latin America (as well as towards other parts of the Global South, the Middle East, black Africa or South-East Asia), the Soviet Union now projected the image of an industrialised, independent, modern, idyllic state with a healthy and happy population – and it presented the republics of its own Central Asian and Caucasian peripheries as success stories of Soviet style modernisation. The spatial perception of the outer world was framed by this experience of socialist internationalism within its own empire from the 1920s, but now ‘peace’, ‘progress’ and ‘development’ ousted ‘revolution’ and ‘communism’ as catchphrases. In this picture of the new Soviet Union, harmony prevailed: there was social justice, free education and health care, and its peoples lived together peacefully and happily.

Impacts and limits of Soviet internationalism in the cultural Cold War

The success of this cultural charm offensive towards foreign and domestic audiences varied depending on the recipients: from the perspective of the Latin American left, the Soviet Union gradually, if not in such a quick and linear way as sometimes suggested, lost its role model character as socialist utopia, or Communist Mecca, during the Thaw. The peaceful path to socialism was too conservative a concept for many impatient rebellious Latin Americans. And the revelation of Stalin’s crimes, the invasions of Hungary in 1956 and, most importantly, of Czechoslovakia in 1968 ended the remaining idealist illusions of most leftists about the character of Soviet rule. Yet in the eyes of other Latin Americans from different political and social backgrounds, many traits of the Soviet state now commanded respect. European-oriented intellectuals found the Soviet emphasis on highbrow art and music appealing and were impressed by the politico-military and scientific prowess of the Soviet Union: as the only European power, it had (at least in its self-representation and in Third World perception) no colonial past and had resisted Western imperialist attacks. It had apparently managed to find a solution to the national question of the multiethnic state. And it had managed to turn a by and large pre-modern agrarian society into an industrialised superpower, erasing illiteracy on the way. Soviet internationalist organisations did a good job in creating a pro-Soviet stance both with their activities abroad and with Latin American visitors in the USSR. The tenor of most travelogues is predominantly positive, and those who lost their faith in the Soviet Union did not do so during their trip, but in reaction to Soviet higher politics or, if they were leftists, to quarrels within their own political movements or parties. Conversely, many who came to

the Soviet Union with no stable opinion went back home with a rather positive stance towards the USSR. Cold War culture, as many Latin American reactions to Soviet advances verify, was not only about fear of enemy invasion or nuclear annihilation. Especially in the Third World, these issues were less in the foreground than concepts of development towards industrial modernity and questions of cultural hegemony. The 1950s and 1960s saw not only the triumphant march of US consumer culture around the globe. While the limits of Soviet power became soon obvious in the sphere of geopolitics, the cultural Cold War was no early defeat of the Soviets: their wooing of Latin American intellectuals of all political leanings can be considered a success story of Soviet internationalism after Stalin, as can be the opening of Soviet universities to foreigners. The objective of this programme, to create a sympathetic stance towards the Soviet Union by giving complementary higher education, was met.

As for the impact on Soviet citizens, internationalism proved a success story within the re-launch of the Soviet project under Khrushchev. The ordinary Soviet man, while still very much limited in his freedom of movement, was supposed to be internationalist, but in a very particular way that has been described as a “combination of insularity and worldliness”.⁸³⁶ What made internationalism appealing for many common people was its expression not only in state-directed open propaganda, but in many branches of cultural production. Performed, written and sung by Soviet and Latin American artists alike, popular culture conveyed internationalism to a willing mass audience. It was through the consumption of this culture that the majority of ordinary Soviet citizens developed their idea of the outside world. Based on the positive stereotypes of post-war exoticism, many of them not only learnt to dance the mambo, but also absorbed their own interpretation of the ideals of international solidarity: what Soviet citizens got to hear and to see from Latin America were prime examples of imperialist exploitation and consequent underdevelopment. At the same time, the Soviet audience could revel in the global importance of their socialist homeland. That said, the adoption of official discourse usually took place as an active and creative process. Many Soviets actually fell in love with Cuba or Paraguayan folklore or fancied Che Guevara, but maybe did so for other reasons than those officially favoured – but without any idea of an act of resistance against the power structures. Others subscribed to the official discourse for rather pragmatic reasons: “whoever did not know how the Communist Party in Chile was doing”, Boris Groys wrote, “and which baneful adventures US imperialism was undertaking again, risked not getting a new flat, a pay rise or a travel permit, because one needed a

⁸³⁶ YURCHAK 2006, p. 158.

recommendation of the local party branch – which gave that recommendation only when it sensed that the person concerned was a genuine Soviet being, *id est* that he thought sufficiently philosophically, by putting his personal needs in the context of the whole world.”⁸³⁷ This expectation of the state was an invitation to bigotry and hollow repetition of the discourse. And, finally, there were those who faithfully adopted the official discourse without actually understanding it: a Soviet joke tells of the model worker at a meeting on the occasion of the putsch in Chile in 1973. Assiduously he steps to the speaker’s desk and declares: “I don’t know who arrested Pinochet and why, but if they don’t release Luis for the carnival, they’ll get into trouble with us!”⁸³⁸ The dutiful worker had picked up the names of putschist dictator Augusto Pinochet and the arrested Communist leader Luis Corvalán, but jumbled up the empty words in an attempt to say what he was expected to say. Others, like the bard Jurij Vizbor, popularised solidarity with Latin American without having any connection to state authorities. The appropriation of the official discourse through popular culture took various forms.

The Cuban Revolutionaries were a heavy setback for the admirers of the United States, Artem Troitzkij remembered, “Soviet youth erupted in euphoric enthusiasm”.⁸³⁹ Members of this generation recall being convinced of living in the strongest country on earth at the time. “Seriously, I really believed this back then!” remembered one interviewee in 2006 and added on the subject of Fidel Castro: “well, we used to sing such wonderful songs, I can’t recall them today, but we basically loved him. ... And we were ever fonder of Che Guevara. He was, as they say now, even cooler than Castro.”⁸⁴⁰ “I’m very favourably disposed toward Cuba both now and back then. I have a deep admiration for these people, who, despite their small numbers, solved such large problems.”⁸⁴¹, added another. “Cuba! What brotherhood!”⁸⁴² exclaimed a third. The pictures of Fidel and Che hung in many private flats, and “everyone knew how to sing *Kuba, liubov moja*.”⁸⁴³ For a moment in time, the Cuban Revolution seemed to prove that the world was going the Soviet way. The evolving collaboration with the “island of love” was the outstanding example of successful Soviet Third World engagement, yet the oft-cited specificity of Cuba in the Soviet view requires a caveat. Around 1960, the socialist perception was still that of an entire continent which had begun to free itself from US

⁸³⁷ BORIS GROYS: *Das kommunistische Postskriptum*. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp 2006, p. 58.

⁸³⁸ A. GOLUBEV (ED.): *Istorija SSSR v anekdotach*. Smolensk, Smjadyn' 1991, p. 139.

⁸³⁹ TROITZKY 1987, p. 19.

⁸⁴⁰ RALEIGH 2006, pp. 234f.

⁸⁴¹ RALEIGH 2006, p. 260.

⁸⁴² RALEIGH 2006, p. 129.

⁸⁴³ VAJL'; GENIS 2001, p. 55.

dominance, with Cuba being the somewhat arbitrary first example. In the emphatic words of Roque Dalton, the ever faithful to Moscow Salvadorian poet: “Cuba was not a historical exception, it is the vanguard of the Latin American revolution.”⁸⁴⁴ Or as Che Guevara put it: “what happens on Cuba today reflects the qualitative changes on the entire Latin American continent ... on its path to socialism.”⁸⁴⁵

The Soviet craze for all of Latin America had its roots in a socialist romanticising of the Hispanic world since the 1920s. But in many ways, the Soviet Union, after 1953, was also again in tune with many developments in the rest of the world and, in particular, the West. Soviet cinema reflected a longing for authenticity, as did Western *arthouse* cinema at the time. Latin American music – or local music with a dash of “Latin American” flair – was a very visible element of popular entertainment everywhere in the Northern hemisphere in the 1950s, where it served a demand for escapism after the hardships of war and the post-war era. The contrast of this folklorisation to the Soviets’ own cultural self-representation towards Latin Americans, however, reveals another, very European aspect: in their attempt to appear modern, civilised and cultivated, the USSR sent only high-brow artists abroad. In doing so, they constructed a cultural gradient between Soviet representatives of classical European high culture and the – selectively invited – folkloristic groups from Latin America. This practice shows a sense of cultural superiority Europeans maintained towards the rest of the world, be they from the East or the West of the old continent. A decade later, both in the USSR and in the West, socio-critical Latin American folk music and the leftist literature of the Latin American *boom* fostered the enthusiasm for the apparent romantic revolution; rebellious youngsters on both sides of the Iron Curtain cherished Cuba and the modern Jesus Che Guevara.

The establishment of area studies, too, was a common Northern hemispheric development: East and West built up a refined system of research on the South. In the Soviet case, area studies expanded tremendously what the Soviets knew about the rest of the world and replaced the hyper-ideologised and schematised global mental map of late Stalinism with detailed regional expertise and a fair knowledge of world affairs. Through a constant fluctuation of staff between different academic institutions and bodies of the Soviet state, the Latin America experts brought their internationalist spirit into many official organs and institutes. They conceptualised and organised the programmes of Soviet internationalism after Stalin and did so not only as complacent executors of political orders, but actively and out of

⁸⁴⁴ ROQUE DALTON: *Un libro rojo para Lenin*. Managua 1986, p. 220.

⁸⁴⁵ GUEVARA 1962.

conviction. The *meždunarodniki* acted as banner-bearers of Soviet internationalism after Stalin; their biographies exemplified the principal argument of this thesis: their inspiration came from socialist internationalism of the 1920s, but they also operated in a context of similar endeavours in Europe and Northern America at the same time.

The opening up to the world and the resurrection of internationalism after 1953 were, however, not the beginning of Westernisation and of the end of the Soviet project. This thesis has argued that Soviet internationalism after Stalin was a source of legitimisation for the new Soviet political elite and an integrative ideational moment for Soviet society during the turmoil of de-Stalinization. What other scholars have discovered about the victory in the Second World War and the technological feats of the 1950s and 60s applies just as well to the rekindled internationalism during the Thaw: it provided for a “newly won sense of superiority”.⁸⁴⁶ Internationalism, politically designed and creatively adopted, gave a mental map, to the political and intellectual elites as well as to ordinary Soviet citizens, of their state as “the centre of the civilised world”,⁸⁴⁷ as a trailblazer for modern society and a fighter for solidarity against imperialist threats. Similarly to the Russian confrontation with “backward” Central Asia during its colonisation in the 19th century, the Third World of the 1950s and 60s was a source of self-confirmation, an encounter in which, unlike with the West, the Soviets seemed to be the more “advanced” civilisation.

Excursus: The bear in the backyard. US reactions to Soviet-Latin American interactions

The United States did not need the pretext of a Russian bear getting up to mischief, in order to tamper in what it considered its own backyard. Already from the 1820s, the US army had intervened somewhere in Latin America at least once a decade. The Cold War rivalry, however, reinforced US strategic interests in the region, and a Soviet threat was to justify a long series of interventions from Guatemala in 1954 to Grenada in 1983. This Soviet peril was a rather abstract one in all cases but the Cuban, and, for that matter, US activities were much more directed against local leftist movements of all shades than against outside interferences. The United States’ maintenance of their informal empire in Central and South America during the Cold War has been assessed in countless studies. This excursus, briefly, focuses on some US reactions that have received less attention: firstly, beyond political,

⁸⁴⁶ GESTWA 2010, p. 243.

⁸⁴⁷ Introduction of the Second Edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 1958.

military and secret service activities, the United States, just like the USSR, started their own public diplomacy campaign towards Latin America. Secondly, just like the Soviets, the United States expanded their research and institutional knowledge on the Third World. Finally, the overestimation of the Soviet presence in Latin America led to fears of invasion that found a curious reflection in US popular culture.

Cultural diplomacy had hardly existed in the United States before the Cold War. Only a few private foundations had been running image campaigns in Latin America from the late 1930s, in order to curtail the influence of Nazism among European immigrants and to secure their economic interests in the hemisphere. In the post-war period, these activities came almost to a standstill, and, at a political level, the Truman and early Eisenhower presidencies overall paid little attention to Latin America. In the rising conflict with Moscow over Europe, Latin America was given low strategic priority. The 1949 *Mutual Defense Assistance Act* allowed for the expenditure of 1.3 billion US \$; not a cent went to Latin America, which, in 1950, was the only world area without a US aid programme.⁸⁴⁸ In 1953, the US State Department assigned the *United States Information Agency* (USIA) with the conduct of what they, too, called 'foreign propaganda'. Nominally an independent body, the USIA, just like the GKKS in the Soviet Union, was in fact often a cover organisation for activities of the secret services; and it, too, focussed on Europe from its foundation in 1953.

It was only after the Soviets began to put out their feelers to Asia and Africa in the mid 1950s that the USIA began its activities in Latin America on a large scale. Several violent assaults on the US Vice President Richard Nixon during a 1958 goodwill tour through Latin America, including the stoning of his car in Caracas, made it clear: there was increasing popular unrest and even outright hatred against the United States among its Southern neighbours. The developments after the Cuban Revolution, finally, convinced the new president John F. Kennedy that Latin America was "the most dangerous area in the world", and the head of a quickly established interdepartmental Task Force on Latin America believed that the Soviet Union had developed plans to take over all of Latin America during 1961.⁸⁴⁹ Kennedy bulked up the budget for public diplomacy, and, with the help of some of the personnel from the anti-Nazi activities during the Second World War, the USIA now launched their own image campaign all over Latin America.⁸⁵⁰ The United States set out to counter what they saw as an

⁸⁴⁸ BETHELL; ROXBOROUGH 2007, pp. 308–312.

⁸⁴⁹ RABE 1999, pp. 12f.; 22; RUTH LEACOCK: *Requiem for Revolution. The United States and Brazil, 1961-1969*. Kent, Kent State University Press 1990, p. 20.

⁸⁵⁰ Ursula Prutsch: *Creating good neighbors? Die Kultur- und Wirtschaftspolitik der USA in Lateinamerika, 1940-1946*. Stuttgart, Steiner 2008; Uwe Lübken: *Bedrohliche Nähe. Die USA und die nationalsozialistische*

increasing popularity of the Soviet Union – with activities that strikingly resembled those of the Soviets themselves. Chapter one has demonstrated how Soviet internationalists copied US methods of public diplomacy; in fact, both superpowers influenced each other mutually with their campaigns.

Parallels were often already obvious from the choice of terms: officials called US public diplomacy straightforwardly ‘propaganda’; a huge US development aid programme for Latin America from 1961 was given the socialist sounding name *Alliance for Progress*; CIA-agents suggested and implemented the formation of their own ‘front organisations’, in order to penetrate associations of students, journalists and the like.⁸⁵¹ Exhibitions on the economy and life in the United States had been held in Latin America from 1950, already before the first Soviet one in Argentina in 1955. But the State Department warily registered that the Soviets left a good impression and thus expanded the US programme – and changed the title of a new tour of exhibitions to Guatemala, Colombia, Bolivia and Chile to ‘people's capitalism’.⁸⁵²

Kennedy himself, in 1961, suggested the establishment of the so-called ‘Peace Corps’, brigades of young volunteers who were sent mostly to the countryside of many Third World countries. Probably in reference to similar Komsomol activities, the US President declared: “not only the youth of the socialist countries, but also our youngsters have the idealism to dedicate themselves to social causes”. Both public and private entities in Latin America, the most important area of the programme, could ask for volunteers to be sent. The first ones left to Colombia and Chile in the same year, more of them went to Brazil, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador from 1962, and, from the mid 1960s, some 4000 young American per year helped on farms, in schools, universities, with rural electrification service, planning commissions or in the slums of all Latin American countries.⁸⁵³

As the Soviets expanded their scholarship programmes for foreign students, the US Department of Health, Education and Welfare employed a ‘Specialist for education in the USSR and Eastern Europe’ who, from 1960, monitored developments at Soviet universities and their programmes for foreigners. To counter Soviet successes in this field, the secret services funded, through their ‘front organisation’, the *International Student Conference* (ISC) (inspired by the Cominform’s *International Union of Students* (IUS)), “the

Herausforderung in Lateinamerika, 1937-1945. Stuttgart, Steiner 2004, p. 398; C. Trussell: ‘Funds Increased for Propaganda. But Critical House Units Cuts Administration's Figures’. New York Times, 30-5-1961.

⁸⁵¹ JEFFREY TAFFET: *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy. The Alliance for Progress in Latin America*. New York, Routledge 2007; RABE 1999, pp. 198f.; CAUTE 1988, p. 324; AGUDELO VILLA 1966.

⁸⁵² BELMONTE 2008, p. 133; HADDOW 1997, p. 39.

⁸⁵³ CECÍLIA AZEVEDO; FERNANDO PURCELL: *From Local to Global Encounters. The United States Peace Corps Volunteers in Brazil and South America*. Rio de Janeiro 2010.

overwhelming majority of youth and student organisations, not only in the United States, but throughout the free world."⁸⁵⁴

Just as the Soviets, the United States directed a good chunk of their public diplomacy efforts towards intellectuals. The CIA's 'front organisation' for writers and thinkers was the *Congress for Cultural Freedom* (CCF), which had its own Latin American department and offices in Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, Colombia and Brazil. Its purpose was to keep reform oriented intellectuals, writers as much as social scientists, from falling into the Soviet camp. To that end, it, on the one hand, lavishly supported countless artistic and cultural activities, poetry, readings, and music – among others the first concert of electronic music in Argentina. On the other hand, it organised campaigns to inform the public about the Eastern bloc in general – and the persecution of artists there in particular – and placed articles in newspapers, radio broadcasts, TV and newsreels.⁸⁵⁵ The CCF also financed several Spanish and Portuguese-language magazines: *Visión* (*Visão* in the Brazilian edition) and the *Cuadernos del Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura* (*Cadernos brasileiros*) were published in Paris and spread all over the Americas with the explicit, if unachieved, goal to undermine the influence of the popular Cuban journal *Casa de las Americas*. The editorial boards of these journals were dominated by leftists, often former Communists, who had developed into vehement anti-Stalinists.

Better than anyone else, the writer Julián Gorkin epitomises a type of Cold Warrior, who fought against the Soviet empire with CIA money – and with the methods he had learned during his time in the Comintern. Born as Julián Gómez García Ribera into a Spanish working class family in 1901, he was, as a very young and very convinced socialist, enthralled by the events of the Russian Revolution and changed his last name as a reference to Gorky and Lenin. A resolute Bolshevik internationalist throughout the 1920s, he translated and distributed Communist newspapers from his French exile. Gorkin broke with Stalinism during the Spanish Civil War, and, upon orders from Moscow, spent 17 months in a Catalan prison. He survived the war and an attempted assassination and moved to Mexico, where he edited journals for the POUM, wrote anti-Stalinist books – and was recruited by the CIA. Gorkin became head of the Spanish-language section of the CCF, the *Congreso por la libertad de la cultura*; his former *compañero* Ignacio Iglesias led its official journal, the *Cuadernos*, from Paris. Together with yet another Spanish ex-Communist, Valentín González, called *El*

⁸⁵⁴ KOTEK 1996, p. 6; ROSEN 1973.

⁸⁵⁵ ELIZABETH CANCELLI: *O Instituto Latino Americano de Relações internacionais e a guerra fria. A Criação de agendas políticas e intelectuais na América Latina*. Rio de Janeiro 2010, p. 7; FRANCO 2002, p. 32; SAUNDERS 2000, p. 213.

Campeſino (“the peasant”) and once Gorkin’s designated assassin in Spain, they toured all over the Americas in the 1950s and 60s, held conferences, distributed their books and gave fervent anti-Soviet speeches that occasionally drifted into rather crude conspiracy theories about Nazi-Communist collaborations to conquer the world and about a Soviet people that deeply hated their political leaders. With several – Communist inspired – campaigns against the stalwart Communist Pablo Neruda, the Communist apostates around Gorkin evoked their greatest international response.⁸⁵⁶

The expansion of regional expertise and the establishment of institutionalised area studies was another field, where Soviet and US efforts went on very similar lines. At about the same time as the Soviet Foreign Ministry, in 1960, the State Department established its own Latin American department. The Department of Defense launched, in 1963, the ‘Project Camelot’ for the intellectual penetration of Latin America. Experts from several fields including psychologists were to predict and control revolution and development from Mexico to Chile. Until the 1950s, there had been hardly any participation of scholars in the making of US foreign policy, whereas Kennedy even had his own counsellor for Latin America, the economist Walt Rostow, a staunch anti-Communist, who envisioned a bright future for the Third World along the lines of the United States in his 1960 quasi-Marxist *The Stages of Economic Development. An anti-Communist Manifesto*. Newly founded and lavishly funded centres of research brought together specialists from different fields, historians, social scientists, linguists, anthropologists, economists and so forth, who all had, or developed, specific knowledge on one area of the world. Elite universities such as Harvard or Columbia, with the financial support of the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, established regional centres which included all areas of the Third World and prominently Latin America.⁸⁵⁷ The US Army as well as the CIA chipped in and interposed their authority on research in many institutions like the *Institute of International Labor Research* in New York.⁸⁵⁸ This expansion of Latin America expertise did not go unnoticed in the Soviet Union, where the director of the *Institut Latinskoj Ameriki*, Viktor Vol’skij, in 1971, counted 348 US centres of Latin American studies, half of which had been founded only after the Cuban Revolution.⁸⁵⁹

⁸⁵⁶ VALENTÍN GONZÁLEZ; JULIÁN GORKIN: *Comunista en España y antistalinista en la URSS*. Sevilla, Espuela de Plata Ediciones 2008, pp. 135–140; JULIÁN GORKIN: *Contra el estalinismo*. Barcelona, Ambito Ediciones 2001; JULIÁN GORKIN: *El imperio soviético. Sus orígenes y desarrollo*. Buenos Aires, Editorial Claridad 1969.

⁸⁵⁷ ENGERMAN 2009; ADAS 2006; GILMAN 2003; NADER 1997, pp. 129ff.; NOAM CHOMSKY: ‘The Cold War and the University’, in: NOAM CHOMSKY (ED.): *The Cold War & the University. Toward an Intellectual History of the Postwar Years*. New York, New Press 1997, pp. 171–194; WALLERSTEIN 1997.

⁸⁵⁸ SAUNDERS 2000, p. 355.

⁸⁵⁹ VOL’SKIJ 1971.

The support of the US army and the CIA for many of the US efforts to counter Soviet advances in Latin America had long been denied by officials in Washington. In 1965, however, a Norwegian report unveiled the financial structure of *Camelot* and the programme was abandoned.⁸⁶⁰ A year later, the US magazine *Ramparts* exposed the close links of the *Congress for Cultural Freedom* with the CIA, which thereupon restructured into the *Association for Cultural Freedom* with the Ford Foundation as official source of money.

These US reactions to Soviet activities, including the adoption of Soviet methods, could be scrutinised much more deeply with a sourced based analysis that would go beyond the scope of this thesis. But from these few examples it is already apparent how the geopolitical situation of the Global Cold War not only produced delimitation and borders, but also stimulated interactions between the enemy camps. This ping-pong game of action and creative reaction could be expanded to include more actors, as Western and Eastern Europe became increasingly active in Latin America from the late 1960s. Communist China began, in content if not in extent, rather similar programmes to attract Latin Americans to their model of rural based Communism. The Chinese State Circus had toured Latin America already in 1956, a Peking-Opera followed in 1959. The Havana branch of the *New China News Agency* sent journals, films and radiobroadcasts in Spanish, Portuguese and Quechua all over the continent from the 1960s; the CPC established bi-national friendship societies and invited left politicians like Allende, Dórticos or Guevara to Beijing. Like the Soviets, the Chinese directed their activities not so much towards the Communist Parties – Maoist CP splinters of noteworthy size had only developed in Peru, Brazil and Colombia – but towards a wider audience.⁸⁶¹

Soviet activities in Latin America did not only entailed US counter-measures in all the fields this thesis has analysed from the Soviet side, cultural diplomacy, policies towards Latin American students and intellectuals, and the expansion of area studies. The presence of the Russian bear in the backyard also caused open fear. This US state of mind was reflected in dozens of Hollywood films of the Cold War, finding expression already in the 1953 movie *Captain Scarface*, in which a Soviet captain tries to plant an atomic bomb in the Panama Canal Zone, and reaching its climax with a series of productions of the mid 1980s. “Soviet

⁸⁶⁰ ELLEN HERMAN: ‘Project Camelot and the Career of Cold War Psychology’, in: CHRISTOPHER SIMPSON (ED.): *Universities and Empire. Money and Politics in the Social Sciences during the Cold War*. New York, New Press 1998, pp. 97–133, pp. 98f.; WALLERSTEIN 1997, pp. 220ff.

⁸⁶¹ CECIL JOHNSON: ‘China and Latin America. New Ties and Tactics’. *Problems of Communism* 4 (1972), pp. 53–66; WILLIAM RATLIFF: ‘Chinese Communist Cultural Diplomacy toward Latin America, 1949-1960’. *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 1 (1969), pp. 53–79; POPPINO 1964, p. 176.

Union suffers worst wheat harvest in 55 years”, cinema goers learned in 1984, “Labor and food riots in Poland. Soviet troops invade. Cuba and Nicaragua reach troop strength goals of 500,000. El Salvador and Honduras fall. Green Party gains control of West German parliament. Demands withdrawal of nuclear weapons from European soil. Mexico plunged into revolution. NATO dissolves. United States stands alone.” After this dramatic introduction, the blockbuster film *Red Dawn* envisioned a full-blown invasion of the United States by combined Soviet and Latin American forces. The Russians attacked from Alaska; Cuban, Nicaraguan, San Salvadorian, and Honduran troops marched through Communist ruled Mexico. For no apparent reason, they all meet in a small town in Colorado and, before long, lock up the entire adult population in a quickly set up Gulag camp in the Eastern Plains. Yet a group of local teenagers, starring the young Charlie Sheen and Patrick Swayze, fights back and miraculously manages to drive the forces of evil out of their homeland. The director John Milius based the plot of this most violent film ever shot so far on CIA studies of ostensible US weaknesses.

A similar production from 1985, *Invasion USA*, depicted the brutal – and utterly pointless – murders of innocent people by Latin American Communists and Soviet terrorists in the swamps of Florida. In a rare explanatory moment, their chief Rostov declares: “America has not been invaded by a foreign enemy for 200 years. Look at them, soft..., they don’t even understand the nature of their freedom or how it can be used against them, they are their own worst enemy. But they don’t know it.” With no less brutality, Chuck Norris drives back the evildoers. In the 1987 action thriller *Predator*, finally, Jesse Ventura, the future governor of Minnesota and Arnold Schwarzenegger, the future governor of California, cast out Aliens and Soviet military advisors from the Central American jungle.⁸⁶²

The immediate backdrop of this great paranoia were the Civil Wars in Central America from the late 1970s and the – actually rather humble – Soviet support for the *Sandinistas* in Nicaragua. But the films also built on a decades-old US fear of Soviet internationalism and its activities in Latin America. The combination of Cold War fear and a call to arms, which characterised these films of the early 1980s, even shaped several academic assessments of Soviet activities in Latin America. Many tremendously overestimated Moscow’s influence in the area, saw their studies explicitly as criticism of “liberal” foreign policy and advocated a

⁸⁶² TONY SHAW; DENISE JEANNE YOUNGBLOOD: *Cinematic Cold War. The American and Soviet Struggle for Hearts and Minds*. Lawrence, University Press of Kansas 2010.

"usurpation of Moscow's own tactics", the use of proxies and military assistance to several countries in the region.⁸⁶³

Empire and political pragmatism in the 1970s

While the Soviet Union did give some support to the Central American left movements from the late 1970s – and considerably scared politicians and the public in the United States –, the Kremlin's policies in South America now looked very different. Beginning with Brezhnev's accession to office, the Kremlin found favour with an increasing number of military regimes in the region. The Brazilian coup in 1964 had been publically condemned by the Soviet leadership, but in fact, the continued collaboration with the anti-communist generals around president Humberto Castelo Branco was beneficial for both sides, who had a lot more in common than they would have acknowledged themselves: both the USSR and Brazil were democracies on paper, but, in fact, one-party states that outlawed and persecuted political opponents. Decision making was centralised, the opposition was curtailed, and parliaments or congresses had little political influence. Trade unions, academia, the judiciary and the media were under political control. In both countries, the military had a tight grip on all sectors of society, including politics, and cemented its position from their propaganda departments in the ministries of the interior. Secret services worked with extra-legal methods against real and ostensible foes of the regime, and they developed refined mechanisms of control and repression. Representative democracy was despised and a cult of the military prevailed. In Brasília, the socialist utopian city, the new men in power now found much space for their military parades, which looked just like those of their counterparts in Moscow, and the wide streets and squares offered no hideouts for possible demonstrations. Other reasons contributed to the surprisingly relaxed nature of Brazilian-Soviet relations: after a short period of convergence with the USA, the military government, just like the left-wing populists before them, sought to expand Brazil's influence in the world by pursuing an independent foreign policy. The Soviet Union served two purposes in Brazilian geopolitical manoeuvring: it had become a trading partner and it offered political leverage in relations with Washington.⁸⁶⁴

The relation to the Brazilian dictators proved advantageous, and thus the Soviets backed other Gorillas, as the military dictators came to be called, all over the Americas. Like the Brazilian

⁸⁶³ ASHBY 1987; BARK 1986.

⁸⁶⁴ RUPPRECHT 2011.

one, the 1968 putsch in Peru was initially condemned in Soviet media. But as soon as the new rulers made some statements against the influence of the United States in South America, military-ruled Peru became one of the closest Soviet allies in the hemisphere, a reliable purchaser of large amounts of Soviet weaponry. Soviet military advisors were sent to Lima, and Soviet doctors and voluntary students came to Peru to assist in the aftermath of the 1970 earthquake.⁸⁶⁵

The same policy towards military regimes that were cautiously critical of the United States was pursued in the cases of Panama's nationalist strongman Omar Torrijos from 1968 and the Bolivian military regime under the Generals Alfredo Ovando and Juan Torres from 1969.⁸⁶⁶ This pragmatism prevailed as the Soviet Union built up a conventional diplomatic network with finally eleven embassies in Latin America and the Caribbean until the early 1970s. During his visit to Moscow in 1973, the Mexican president Echeverría allegedly confirmed the similarities of their states in a conversation with Brezhnev personally: "the only difference between our two systems is: if you have a problem, you subtract; if we have a problem, we add.", in the sense that the Soviets excluded, or in former times, killed, those in conflict with the government, whereas the PRI made potential adversaries dependent on its own party system through a series of favours and benefits. Like the Soviet leaders themselves, the Gorillas were authoritarian rulers with a mission to modernise their societies through the state, they were critical of the USA and – most importantly – unlike leftists, they never asked for financial help from the Soviets. Nikolaj Leonov recalled: "at that time [around 1970], revolutions worried the Kremlin more than the reactionaries, for when a revolution succeeded, requests for help, credits, money etc. followed hard. A stable conservative government, however, ... offered normal relations, without problems, without concerns."⁸⁶⁷ Towards the end of the 1970s, Soviet regional experts even analysed Latin American military dictatorships, in order to learn from their strategies of retention of power. When, in 1978, García Márquez' *Otoño del patriarca* ("Autumn of the Patriarch") appeared in the USSR, many Soviet citizens immediately drew parallels to their own gerontocratic leader(s).⁸⁶⁸

In the course of the 1980s, finally, the Latin American Gorillas disappeared. With their fantasy uniforms, jingling from an armada of fantasy medals, with their senile stubbornness and their caricaturesque sclerotic appearance, they shared a lot more with their Soviet

⁸⁶⁵ LEONOV 1995, p. 107; COBO 1970; KRUGLOW 1969; COBO 1968.

⁸⁶⁶ *Izvestija*, 22-11-1969.

⁸⁶⁷ LEONOV; FEDIAKOVA; FERMANDOIS 1999, p. 78.

⁸⁶⁸ KUTEJŠČIKOVA 2000, p. 326.

counterparts than they would have admitted – and they left the political stage at about the same time.⁸⁶⁹

Russia's globalisation

For Russians as for many Latin Americans, the end of the 1980s marked the end of an era. With the self-dismantling of the Soviet one-party regime, the Cold War faded out, and not only the Bolsheviks, but also the last military dictators who had strangled Latin America's states for so many years lost their all-encompassing political power. Communist party apparatchiks, left guerrillas and anti-communist gorillas, the political pandemonium for several decades, finally realised their time was over and left the historical stage. Both Russia and all Latin American states but Cuba entered a period of intensified international integration into the Western-centred commercial world. Argentina, Brazil and Mexico joined what became the G20, the group of the twenty major economies on earth; Russia, more for political than economic reasons, was even admitted to the G8. This integrative process, part of what was increasingly referred to as globalisation in scientific and public discourse, was linked intrinsically with a liberalisation of the economy and the financial markets. Large parts of the populations perceived this development firstly as liberating, but soon as shocking and even more so when, in the late 1990s, both Russia (once a world superpower) and Argentina (once a Latin American showcase for living standards and development) went bankrupt.

The bulk of academic and journalistic writing on the internal integration of both Latin America and the Soviet Union/Russia has focused on their references to the West, to North America and Western Europe precisely. When the USSR, hollowed out politically and discredited ideologically, disbanded in the course of events in late 1991, there was much talk about the formerly Communist ruled countries returning to Europe – as if they had not always been an integral part of it. Many more voices were heard that spoke of Russia's integration into a world system they rejoined after 70 years of isolation. Already by the beginning of perestroika, the *New York Times* had suggested “drawing the Soviet Union into the global system”⁸⁷⁰ with American financial help; by its end, Russian liberals agreed in the same newspaper that their goal was “reintegrating the Soviet Union into the global economy and

⁸⁶⁹ VOLPI 2009, p. 58.

⁸⁷⁰ Leonard Silk: 'Economic Scene, Responding to Gorbachev'. *New York Times*, 13-5-1987.

community”⁸⁷¹. After the failed putsch of August 1991 that marked the end of the empire, the German news magazine *Spiegel* featured the Russian bear on its cover as it smashed the bars of its Soviet cage and announced the “return of Russia from immaturity and backwardness back into world civilisation”.⁸⁷² The end of the Soviet bloc, readers learn from the blurb of a recent historical assessment, led to “an outcome that opened up to a deeper global integration”.⁸⁷³ And was it not true? TV pictures were full of opening borders, collapsing walls and cut barbed wire. People from East Berlin to Vladivostok and from Tallinn to Tashkent could indeed finally travel, leave their countries and return as they pleased; international commerce was freed of tiresome tariffs; Western consumer culture found its way into the last nooks of the formerly so strictly regimented Soviet empire. Western style internationalism and capitalist values had triumphed, it seemed, over Eastern isolationism in the 1990s.

Some historians have recently pointed out the fact that Russian/Soviet integration into the world market did not come overnight with Gorbachev’s failed attempt at socialist resuscitation, but actually already dated back to the 1970s.⁸⁷⁴ At cultural, intellectual and scientific levels, as this thesis has outlined, the (re-)integration of the Soviet Union into global discourses even dated back to the mid 1950s and came as a result of the rekindled Soviet internationalism after Stalin. The end of Soviet isolation from the world began with Stalin’s death and, for a while, contributed rather to the cohesion of the Soviet Union than anticipated its disintegration.

⁸⁷¹ Serge Schmemmann: ‘Gorbachev back in Fold. With Liberals Again, Reaching Out to West’. New York Times, 22-5-1991.

⁸⁷² Vom Kommunismus befreit. Ein Weltreich zerbricht, in: Der Spiegel 36 (1991), cover and p. 188-210; Die Hoffnung heißt Germanija, in: Der Spiegel 30 (1990), p. 16-17.

⁸⁷³ STEPHEN KOTKIN; JAN TOMASZ GROSS: *Uncivil Society. 1989 and the Implosion of the Communist Establishment*. New York, Modern Library 2009.

⁸⁷⁴ LEO MCCANN: *Russian Transformations. Challenging the Global Narrative*. London, New York, RoutledgeCurzon 2004; STEPHEN KOTKIN: *Armageddon Averted. The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000*. Oxford, Oxford University Press 2001.

During the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1990, Octavio Paz, that year's Nobel Prize winner and now published for the first time in Russian, invited writers and intellectuals to Mexico City to discuss the collapse of communism for the journal *Vuelta*; among others Mario Vargas Llosa, Jorge Edwards and Carlos Franqui participated and agreed that they were seeing a positive development in Russia.⁸⁷⁵ Their generation's *latinoamericanidad* was long past its peak by that time; a younger generation oriented themselves more towards the United States and Europe than to their neighbouring countries: "for Mexicans today, Bolivia is as exotic as Kazakhstan", the Mexican novelist Jorge Volpi explained.⁸⁷⁶ But even in post-Soviet times, this younger generation of Latin American writers has retained a fascination for the USSR historical experiment. The exiled Cuban José Manuel Prieto (1962-) had studied in the Soviet Union and has dedicated most of his successful literary work to topics on Russia and the USSR. His 1998 novel *Livadia* (translated to English as "Nocturnal Butterflies of the Russian Empire") was considered by Volpi one of the "most indispensable literary works in the Latin American 20th century".⁸⁷⁷ Volpi himself gave a balanced view of the history of the late Soviet Union from the two points of view of an Afghanistan veteran and *Ogonek*-reporter – and a female employee of the International Monetary Fund in his 2006 novel *No será la tierra* (English as "Season of Ash"). Ignacio Padilla, together with Volpi co-founder of the anti-Magic-Realism movement *Crack* did the same in his 2003 novel *Espiral de artillería* ("Artillery spiral"), from the perspective of a doctor and forced informant before and after the fall of the Communist regime.

The Soviet Union and its advances towards the Global South left a trail of relics all across Latin America not only in literature. At an abstract level, the reputation of the Soviet Union is still much better in Latin America than in Europe, which demonstrates until today the degree of success of the Soviet image campaigns. As chapter three has shown, Soviet attempts were particularly successful with their education policy; associations of alumni from Soviet universities (and even of their Russian or Ukrainian wives who came along) exist in most countries and nostalgically recall their student days in the USSR at regular, including pan-Latin American, meetings. Their members work, or worked, as doctors, professors, engineers or in the public administration of most Latin American states; one former student of

⁸⁷⁵ KUTEJŠČIKOVA 2000, pp. 359–363.

⁸⁷⁶ VOLPI 2009, p. 31.

⁸⁷⁷ VOLPI 2009, p. 197.

Lumumba University has opened a Russian café in the centre of Bogotá. Only a tiny minority fought violently for their political ideals and even fewer still do so today; among the few are Timoleón “Timochenko” Jiménez and Joaquín Gómez of the current leadership of the Colombian guerrilla troops FARC.

Some of the real estate of the Soviet friendship societies was taken over by the Russian Foreign Ministry; the SSOD became the *Rossijskij centr meždunarodnogo naučnogo i kul'turnogo sotrudničestva* (“Russian centre of international scientific and cultural collaboration”, Rossotrudničestvo) in 1992 and now runs these institutes in the style of the Cervantes- or Goethe-Institutes in Peru, Mexico, Argentina and Chile. Many others lost support from Moscow in the 1990s and either shut down or survive independently through their members or through piano lessons Russian expatriates give to local children. The arguably most curious relic of this kind is the *Instituto León Tolstoj* in Bogotá’s old centre La Candelaria, a rundown but atmospheric Soviet island in South America with a Russian library and a cinema with a huge collection of Soviet film reels. Soviet flotsam and jetsam are, as a matter of course, most visible in Cuba, from *Minsk* refrigerators in every other household to the abandoned construction site of a Soviet nuclear power plant in Juragua. Unlike what tourism catalogues would have us believe, it is not mostly US Chevrolets from the 1950s, but rather the less picturesque Ladas, Moskvichs and GAZ-lorries from the 1980s which predominate on the streets of Havana to this day.

On a political level, a new wave of left governments in Latin America since the 2000s has become acceptable only with the end of the Cold War. They have their roots much more in indigenous Marxism than in Soviet communism, but, nonetheless, have tightened their links with the successor states of the USSR. “We take as a premise that Russia should return to Latin America, and that is why [we] are positively seeking to expand diplomatic, economic, and trade relations with Moscow,” the Bolivian president Evo Morales said after he met with Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and Hugo Chavez in Caracas in April 2010.⁸⁷⁸ Beyond the usual arms sales, there are plans for Russians engineers to build an airport, a nuclear power plant and even a space centre in Bolivia. The Venezuelan president Chavez has established strong ties on several state visits to Moscow, has had a nuclear power plant built by Russia, has held common Russian-Venezuelan military manoeuvres in the Caribbean and signed an agreement on student exchange, scientific collaboration and a petroleum deal with

⁸⁷⁸ Bolivian ministers to visit Moscow in late April. Ria Novosti, 4-4-2010.

the Belorussian leader Alexander Lukashenko.⁸⁷⁹ Nicaragua, where Daniel Ortega returned to the presidential office in 2007, and Venezuela are the only states besides Russia (and some bribed South Sea islands) that have recognised the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgia.

On the other side in Russia, too, traces of the Soviet affair with Latin America can be found: Latin American TV soap operas such as the Brazilian *A escrava Isaura* (“The slave Isaura”) or the Mexican *Los ricos también lloran* (“The rich also cry”) had already enjoyed enormous success all across the Eastern bloc in the 1980s and consoled many Russians through the hardships of the early 1990s.⁸⁸⁰ Che Guevara’s popularity has prevailed until today in the post-Soviet space, the semantics of the symbol frayed enough to offer a link between very contrary discourses. On excursions to several CIS states during research for this PhD, I met among many others an Armenian, born in the early 1980s, by the name of Ernesto; I was bid goodbye by a Kirgiz acquaintance (who did not know about my thesis) with the words: *Hasta la victoria siempre!*, and I saw a government-run PR-company in the Slavic-populated Moldovan separatist republic of Transnistria juxtaposing Che and Vladimir Putin in their pro-Russia campaign.

For the *meždunarodniki*, Che remained a source of inspiration, irrespective of their further careers: The late Kiva Majdanik became an outspoken critic of the new Russian leadership and of capitalism in general. Among other activities, he participated at the World Social Forums in Porto Alegre; the last book he wrote shortly before he died in 2006 was a very favourable biography of his theoretical and personal idol and inspiration, Che Guevara. Similarly, the historian Zoja Sokolova had taken her degree at MGU shortly before the Cuban Revolution; in a competition of the *Kuba* magazine, she had won a trip to the island, developed her academic passion and, from her position at the still functioning *Institut Latinskoj Ameriki*, continues writing emphatic books on Cuba until today.⁸⁸¹ Nikolaj Leonov, during perestroika, still contrasted “Che’s ascetic-moral ethics” to the rampant debauchery in the mouldering Soviet Union.⁸⁸² After the trauma of the chaotic 1990s, however, Leonov turned into a nationalist politician and an orthodox believer and reported that “no name is mentioned in Moscow these days as often as General Pinochet’s. ...many in Russia today feel

⁸⁷⁹ Chavez Says Venezuela and Russia Will Build a Nuclear Reactor in Oil-Rich Zulia. Latin American Herald Tribune, 19-11-2008.

⁸⁸⁰ KUTEJŠČIKOVA 2000, p. 19.

⁸⁸¹ ZOJA SOKOLOVA: *Vsja pravda o Fidel'e Kastro i ego komande*. Moskva, Astrel' 2009; MAKSIM MAKARYČEV: *Fidel' Kastro*. Moskva, Molodaja Gvardia 2008.

⁸⁸² LEONOV 1999, pp. 31–63.

that we need a Pinochet, a strong man who stops the decay of the country. ... In Russia, they think that Chile is a capitalist paradise.” Leonov himself also favoured a strong man solution, but was sceptical, because the military (“which in Latin America has often intervened in the interest of the *patria*”) was corrupt and disillusioned in Russia – he opted for the secret service instead, and supported his former scholar Putin on his way into politics.⁸⁸³

Among Russian intellectuals and artists, Che Guevara has retained his rebellious image. The *comandante*'s portrait, re-imported from Western Europe's New Left, is a popular motif in state-critical art by painters such as Aleksandr Barkovskij or Aleksandr Šaburov.⁸⁸⁴ While deconstructing Soviet heroes in his 1994 novel *Generation P*, Victor Pelevin still uses (the ghost of) Che as a positive, idealist counter-character against the consumerism of the first post-Soviet years in Russia. Even in 2009, for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution, a flood of Russian publications glorified the romantic revolutionary heroes Che and Fidel. The image still evokes positive associations, and while it is used in different strands of Soviet nostalgia, plain commercial adverts in Russia use it, too, to emphasise their products' “revolutionary” prices.

A great example of today's nostalgia towards Soviet internationalism is the *Stolovaja No. 57*. On two floors of the pricy GUM shopping mall on the Red Square in Moscow, a huge Soviet style canteen is designed in the style of the 1957 Youth Festival. With the USSR being literally sealed off from the rest of the world for many years, the festival had been a remarkable event and is today considered a formative experience of the so-called Gorbachev-Generation. The song “Moscow Nights”, written on the occasion of the festival, is until today one of the most famous and popular Russian tunes (and sung in Spanish as *Noches de Moscú*). How much the festival was linked to the guests from the Third World in popular perception, is evident from the iconography of the canteen: it in no way relates to Western impact, but consists of stereotypical depictions of youngsters from Asia, Africa and the inevitable guitar playing *muchacho* from Latin America, including many original watercolours, painted in 1957 by the Soviet people's artist Nikolaj Žukov.

The hopefully numerous future researchers of Soviet internationalism after Stalin should also consider the *Stolovaja* as an affordable and pleasant lunch place during research at the Russian Archive of Contemporary History nearby.

⁸⁸³ LEONOV 1995, pp. 313f.

⁸⁸⁴ www.art4.ru (last access: 18-9-2009).

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