

## ACCOUNTS ON SOVIET UNION CULTURAL DIPLOMACY (1953-1959)

*Lucian JORA*

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Talking about cultural diplomacy and propaganda an important chapter still uncovered by the contemporary researchers for various reasons is the Soviet cultural diplomacy during the cold war. There were some researches most of them being based on interviews and memorial sources. The hard sources consisting in official reports and recommendation at the pick of Cold War were opened only recently and partially. There were from the American side at the time some efforts coming from scholars to project an image of the Soviet techniques carefully calculated to facilitate Soviet foreign policy objectives, and at the same time to reveal the Kremlin efforts to avoid harmful “alien” influences towards its citizens<sup>1</sup>. David C Munford, The Ford Foundation and the Political Sciences Department of Yale University at the beginning of the 60'es granted a scholarship whose result to our knowledge the first public designated report analyzing the Soviet cultural diplomacy techniques at that particular time. His research was widely used in addition to the personal experience of various scholars, diplomats or political activists in US. Most of the considerations made at the time had resisted the time test been valid and useful today. Having a 50 year perspective from the time most of those reports were written and commented, it is in our intention to present in this article a commented and annotated account of various comments and reports written at the time.

The first study of the kind, to our knowledge had appeared in a moment of partial openness of the USSR during Nikita Hruskhev when the first contacts and significant exchanges of scholars and tourists were organized<sup>2</sup>. To the stupefaction of political analysts even Mongolia (a puppet regime into the Soviet hands) invited foreign scholars, including Americans to take part in a philological conference held in Ulan –Bator in September 1959. It was the so called “Soviet “cultural offensive” initiated by the Hruskehev regime of such an unexpected scale that it forced the British and American governments to set up new administrative systems capable to deal with the new and unsuspected problem. Are usually quoted two significant documents “The State Department Circular” of June 1959, of a Bureau of Intercultural Relations and the assignment to the US Embassy in Moscow of a Counselor for Cultural Affairs. These moves were rather administrative as they were not followed by the corresponding financial support. Some scholars were also to blame the lack of sophistication at the time of the US diplomacy towards the Communist regimes an attitude with considerable consequences towards the mutual exchanges of people and students which after all was in favor of the close regimes namely the Communist ones.

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick C. Barghoorn, *The Soviet cultural offensive: The role of cultural diplomacy in Soviet foreign policy*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976, c1960

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 1

In order to create the necessary ground for the subject whom is to be analyzed here we will start with few considerations regarding the international exchanges and cultural diplomacy as it was practiced by the most powerful state actors. France was the first great power to embark on an extensive program of officially organized cultural diplomacy. This program started under the direction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the second half of the nineteenth century in the near and Far East. The official efforts were supplemented by the activity of private agencies some of them still active such as the Alliance Francaise, which since 1883 has organized courses, schools, lectures, and gifts of books to encourage the teaching of the French language and to disseminate French culture beyond the frontiers of France.<sup>3</sup> At the time this kind of approach was or was seen rather ethnocentric and chauvinistic in tone as an article on the Alliance Francaise use to state in 1886 in the Grande Encyclopedia. The article stated that the best way of “conquering” the natives of French colonies was by inoculating them a love for the French language and culture. After the WWI this effort was intensified to cope with the German revancharde propaganda. Some German officials during the Hitler regime regarded French cultural diplomacy as a highly sophisticated weapon. A Nazi study (quoted by ....) talks of French academic exchange with Denmark referred to the “*universalism and at the same type imperialist*” character of French cultural pressure abroad. In exchange both before and after WWI, Germany carried vigorous programs of exchange of students and professors abroad, including Romania, and also attempted to utilize persons of German background resident abroad as instruments of German propaganda.

The United Kingdom initiated in an systematic way the field of cultural diplomacy in 1934 with the creation of British Council, which was incorporated by royal charter in 1940. The impressive budget increase in there years from 5000 GBP in 1935 to over 100000 GBP in 1938 tells everything about the importance granted to its activities and role. As of 1939 it was estimated that the Germans that the Germans, in seeking to counter the financially modest British effort, were spending some 4,000000 to 6,000000 GBP annually on propaganda abroad activities while France 1,200000 GBP and Italy nearly 1,000000<sup>4</sup>. By 1957 the British Council had at its disposal for the conduct of cultural propaganda an annual budget of over 3,000000 GBP, not a big budget as compared with USSR but one which reflected the growing significance attributed to this instrument of international politics.<sup>5</sup> However according to the American officials interviewed, the Council apparently has at its disposal much larger funds than do the corresponding American governmental units at that particular time for similar objectives and activities, namely the International Educational Exchange Service of the Department of State and the same department East –West Contacts Staff. At the time the British Council was able to enter vigorously into actual cooperation, particularly private and semiprivate fields, while the official US cultural agencies have been at the time kept with functions largely advisory and facilitative, except for the official Soviet-American exchanges in which they were directly involved. The US reports in the early 60’s are mentioned the remarkable success the British Council is having in the field of cultural diplomacy in the Commonwealth countries and in particular India.

The increasing interest and attention showed by the Soviets for propaganda and cultural diplomacy as the way to transmit it abroad, received some answers in US. In 1958 the Governmental Affairs Institute of Washington , D.C, established an Information Center for American Travelers to Russia, “*in response*” to the need and interest of the American public for essential background information on Soviet affairs and on the opportunities and limitations of tourist travel in Russia. There was also mentioned as a significant gesture the publication of a Russian-language guidebook to New York, for the benefit, reported the New

<sup>3</sup> Ruth Emily Mc Murry and Muna Lee, *The Cultural Approach*, Chapel Hill 1947, pp, 9-38

<sup>4</sup> Harold Nicolson, *Diplomacy*, New York, 1939, p. 173

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 174

York Times of July 17, 1959 of Russians in the city for the Soviet exhibition, or of literature for American travelers published by the East European Student and Youth Service in New York. By mid 1959 the East –West exchanges had been beneficial to Western in particular American knowledge of conditions behind the Iron Curtain. At the time started a mutually beneficial graduate – student exchange between US, France and USSR.<sup>6</sup> This program began in 1954-1955 in the case of France and 1959 in the case of US. A political observer at the time noticed the irregular and financially mediocre US response to the streamlined centralized Soviet cultural diplomacy program. Henry L. Roberts the director of the Russian Institute of Columbia University, pointed out in an address at Harvard University in January 1958 “...the maximization of democratic values in a relationship which cannot be truly reciprocal is an immensely difficult task. It is however a task that should not be shirked; for it is evident that as the communist world becomes richer and more powerful and achieves a gradually rising level of civilization, it will display in a carefully controlled an increasingly ingratiating fashion, more and more of its achievements to growing numbers of foreigners.”<sup>7</sup> There was within the academic community in debate the attitude of the US press and officials towards the Soviet exhibition in the New York Coliseum on July 1959, the exposure of “consumer goods” together with another technical equipment was treated with irony as someone “caring gadgets to Gadget-land”. Some political scientists were accusing the counterproductive effects of irony; nevertheless the motivation is by no means condemnable. Is enough to quote: “...it also expresses a pride of achievements on the part of Russian scientists, engineers, and workmen that we shall do to appreciate if we wish to get on as friendly terms as possible with the people still suffering from the consequences of a century – old inferiority complex, and consequently inclined at times toward a touchy exaggeration of the significance of their achievements and quick express indignation against those display condescension regarding them or ignorance of the Russian cultural heritage of which they are increasingly proud”.<sup>8</sup> The commentator can be brutal but true. At the time many analysts doubted if the US has any cultural diplomacy at all as compared to the “cultural propaganda” machinery of the USSR but we think that is rather an assertion regarding the sense those analysts were using the term “cultural diplomacy” or “propaganda”. The reports at the time “central” to communist cultural diplomacy’s: “the systematic utilization of information, artistic, scientific, and other cultural materials, symbols and personnel, and ideas, as instruments of foreign policy”.<sup>9</sup>

While Lenin’s and Stalin’s propaganda and foreign policies were rather defensive, dominated by rudeness, secrecy and violence, Post Stalin foreign policy was less defensive in cultural and ideological terms as a result of the enormous increase in absolute power, industrial development and acquisition of mass destruction weapons, for instance it could afford to pursue a more confident policy than in the past. Also the very existence of nuclear weapons and danger of mutual destruction imposed a more subtle diplomatic policy. It was a time of chaos and turbulence, the process of decolonization at least for a while, putted many new governments in the situation to look for alternatives of social, economic and cultural fast development, as opposed to those of the former rulers. In this context at the time Moscow had strong incentives to play the card of the alternative world center of progress, civilization, spiritual cultivation and enlightenment easy accessible to the ordinary people and above all the “new liberated ones”. In order to understand the Soviet strategies the US political scientists at the time were trying to understand the content and significance of the “cultural revolution” in Soviet terms. According with the Soviet Great Encyclopedia the *cultural revolution* is an integral part of the socialist revolution and it is directed by the

<sup>6</sup> Frederick C. Barghoorn, *The Soviet cultural offensive: The role of cultural diplomacy in Soviet foreign policy*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976, c1960, p,10-11

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p, 10

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p, 9

<sup>9</sup> Lindlay Fraser, *Propaganda*, London 1957, p. 1

socialist party. The concept as such was developed systematically for foreign audiences in a book entitled *On Soviet Culture and the Cultural Revolution in the USSR*, published in 1954 by G.G Karpov head of the government agency which supervised the activity of the Russian Orthodox Church. In the book the Soviet Union is declared the most advanced citadel of culture civilization while the bourgeois culture the main obstacle to the progressive development of the mankind. According to Karpov the Russian culture was always superior to the other cultures but only under Leninist principles guidance it reached its full flowering. Anyway the US diplomats publishing their memories founded difficult to assess the real impact of this propaganda having in mind the afflux of ordinary people showing rather curiosity towards anything Westerner as often as they could. Even today the opinions about the deepness and dimension of this propaganda results into the mind of ordinary Soviet citizens are unconcludent and a matter of debate. There were quoted the visits in Leningrad of the Dutch and British fleet in 1955 and 1956.<sup>10</sup> To our understanding most of American and Western scholars at the time didn't realize the dimension and vulnerability of Soviet society to foreign culture penetration. And also the American scholars even after 89' did not make the necessary distinction between the great diversity different societies within the Eastern bloc use to develop and live. There is a significant degree and difference between the amounts of information about the west different societies in the Eastern bloc use to have. While in the Soviet Union the availability of information through Radio such as Radio Free Europe of Voice of America was scarce, it was a daily source of information for other Western bloc countries at all levels of the society. However the Kremlin's expectation of gaining prestige among foreigners is not entirely unfounded. Evidences collected as early as 1956 prove the impact of Soviet showmanship even to wealthy American businessman. Partly because they use to carry in their minds grotesque images of Soviet underdevelopment and poverty propagated by the CIA's propaganda, and partly because they were carefully showed only the best Moscow has to offer. This custom was carefully kept until the late 80-es even for groups of Eastern bloc tourists. The richest reward of Soviet cultural diplomacy surprisingly enough came from foreign intellectuals, artists and scientists, not by display of own achievements but by courteous and sympathetic appreciation of those of other countries. Soviet leaders including the not very polished Khrushchev have demonstrated considerable sensitivity to the self image of almost every kind of national and cultural group. They seem to realize more clearly than the Americans that one of the most effective ways of flattering an individual is to express appreciation of his national language, literature and art. This strategy is explained by some American scholars as being the result of governing a big multinational state. However in our opinion the Soviets didn't show the same kind of respect and carefulness towards the native cultures of different Soviet Union republics, in contrary most native traditions if were saved and preserved it was thanks to the isolation and backwardness and not necessary thanks to the carefulness' of the Soviet system towards them. One of the major differences between post Stalin strategy and that of the late Stalin era was the realization in the Kremlin that an appeal to nationalism and anti -Americanism might pay bigger political dividends into the pos-colonial world, than an attempt at early overthrow of "*bourgeois*" governments, such as those of Nehru, Sukarno or Nasser. The narrowly political aspects of Soviet cultural diplomacy, in so far as it is concerned with Asia and Africa were revealed in an anonymous leading article in the journal of Institute of Orientalogy. The editorial urged the study of the ancient and modern history of Asian and African countries in order to dispel the "*myth.. of the civilized mission of the Western nations*".<sup>11</sup> It praised Soviet scholars for producing literary and linguistic studies which "*strengthened the position s of the people of the East in struggle against imperialism*" and asserted that such studies had already struck a shattering blow against "*reactionary theories of Europacentrism*".

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p, 22

On both sides Soviet non-Soviet exchanges have involved relatively few “workers and peasants” and a heavy proportion of executives and celebrities. Famous authors like H.G.Wells, press moguls like the head of the Associated Press. Roy Howard both received by Stalin in Kremlin. Is less know the fact that the Soviet propaganda made few thousands American workers and Westerners to move into the USSR during the 30-es, they returned home tempered by their experience and what they have experienced during the years as manual workers in the “workers’ paradise”. Among them for example was John Scott, who as a young college graduate, learned welding in order to do useful work in USSR and recorded his experience in a useful account who became a classic of its kind *Behind the Urals* and Walter Reuther who worked for more than a year in the first big Soviet automobile plant at Gorki.<sup>12</sup> However travel to Russia was as the basic rule was not a matter of tourism but rather a cultural diplomacy exercise for Kremlin, performed in large part by opinion leaders from the upper strata of their professional branch. And above all always under official guidance and supervision. Most visits were done during the 30-es within the INTOURIST auspices. Both before and since the WWII, very few persons who traveled into the USSR whether alone (under supervision) or in delegations, have had either the background knowledge or the linguistic equipment necessary to look well behind the official version of Soviet Society. Some interesting material in Russia both before and after the establishment of Intourist is contained in the Soviet Union Review described by American scientists as a rather objective magazine published in the 20-es and 30’s by Amtorg a Soviet trading organization which has operated in US since 1923. It uses to keep an account of foreign tourists who visited Soviet Union. For example in 1928 we know that there were 1600 foreign tourists who visited Moscow during the summer months (the daily visits of an average size French or Italian museum). There has been marked quantitative growth in some major categories of exchanges. In 1953 only forty-two private travelers to USSR were recorded by the US analysts. 1955 and 1956 saw the first startling expansion of the Soviet cultural exchange program, although even as late as 1959 this program remained rather symbolic in comparison with travel and exchanges among the Western countries and continued to be dominated (as would be till 1990) by “guided tours” pat. However the records shows a considerable increase in the number of persons. In each of the years 1956 and 1957, it appears between 2500 and 3000 Americans visited the Soviet Union, and according to some reports an astonishing number of 14000 in 1959.<sup>13</sup> By the summer of 1958 American tourists had to wait only about two weeks for Soviet visas a considerable improvement over the situation in 1956. From the other side before 1956 hardly any Soviet citizens traveled as tourists to countries not under communist rule. By 1956 about 2000 distinguished, highly placed, and highly paid Soviet citizens in that year enjoyed a trip abroad. Also in 1959 at Odessa, foreign cruise ships again began to visit the Soviet Union. The year 1958 came with new surprises with an astonishing 10 000 Soviet tourists visiting the Brussels World’s Fair, and the first Soviet private tourists visiting the US. For the US commentators was suspicious the fact that for example the Soviet visitors of World Fair in Brussels were hosted by their own cruise ship. We rather thing that it was a choice favored by the tourists as such having in mind the high cost of accommodation at the time for a Soviet citizen pocket. In 1958 four groups of Soviet citizens visited the US for two weeks organized trips. Not surprisingly the first one was led by Vladimir Babkin an Intourist official the group consisting mostly in highly ranked engineers. Is significant the fact that the cost of the trip on most cases was partially or totally supported by different organizations mainly the union organizations.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew Smith, *I was a Soviet worker*, New York, 1936

<sup>13</sup> Accounts provided by Frederick C. Barghoorn, (*The Soviet cultural offensive: The role of cultural diplomacy in Soviet foreign policy*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976, c1960, p,78-81), without specifying the source.

Soviet travel to noncommunist countries has, at least until recent times on a much smaller scale than travel by bourgeois foreigners to Russia. However, the sending of cultural, scientific and athletic groups abroad did play an important part in Soviet foreign relations even before WWII.

Of particular interests to Americans and perhaps second in significance to the Soviet show at Brussels as a device for telling the world about Soviet achievements was the 1959 Soviet Exhibition of Science and Technology and Culture at the New York Coliseum. The proportions of the exhibition devoted to culture were overshadowed by its overwhelming emphasis on scientific achievement and industrial development, they also offered a generous sampling of the best contemporary Soviet art, books, and even fashion. The response exhibition organized in Moscow one year later in June and July 1959 was a considerable success although it adopted a different strategy. It was the strategy of emphasizing American everyday life rather than machinery and technology. According with diverse American reports the "technomania" of some segments of Soviet engineering and administrative elite was not entirely satisfied by the American exponents. Attendance at the American pavilion was twice as big as at the Soviet one however is hard to attribute this success to the quality and impressiveness of the exponents but rather to the natural curiosity for such a display of American products, for many ordinary citizens the first and only encounter with the eternal enemy and technological challenger. Most of the visitors were different ranks officials as the available tickets were scarce and limited. The reports show that the non-communists Soviet citizens were not allowed to attend the exhibition. With the same occasion the most famous TV Show set in US by Ed Sullivan was recording a full variety show speculating the potential high interest of the American public for a Russian reportage been filmed on the spot. The difficulties encountered by Ed Sullivan in connection with the Soviet bureaucracy and secrecy obsession in Moscow and Leningrad were later described in an article in Mc Call's magazine for November 1959. The Sullivan show made for the Soviet public was appreciated as rather a failure by the critics as for the ordinary Soviet citizen it proved to be incomprehensible.

Most probably the best results were obtained by the Soviets in cultural diplomacy terms in Asia Africa and Latin America.. Here they proved to be more experienced and skilled and with an discourse and strategy witch cope the best with the political environment at the time, within the process of decolonization. It is the underdeveloped world the place where the Stalin message achieved its greatest success proving once again the George Kennan theory. It is the place where the Americans have had at the time the biggest failures in propaganda and cultural diplomacy terms. By not understanding the momentum, the local cultures and mentalities the US cultural diplomacy in the underdeveloped world paved the way to diplomatic disasters as those in the Middle East, Indochina, Central and South America whose traces can be noticed even today. Although in terms of number of exchanges, Soviet contacts with Asia or Africa and Latin America have not bulked as large as those with US or Western Europe the Soviet press and propaganda devoted more space and attention to exchanges with the less developed countries. For example between 1954-1957, 196 Indian delegations visited the Soviet Union compared to 348 from France, 360 from Great Britain.<sup>14</sup> It proved the significances of those areas in the Kremlin's calculations. It also according to the American analysts reflect's the fact that Soviet Union was capable to make a more impressive figure in the unindustrialized world (as an industrial advanced power\_ than in the developed western industrial countries. Also ideologically the Soviet intellectuals feel less constrained about expressing admiration for the culture and folk of India, Iraq or Indonesia than for Western culture. There was not an

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<sup>14</sup> The accounts were published in *Pravda* and are quoted by Frederick C. Barghoorn, in *The Soviet Cultural offensive: The role of cultural diplomacy in Soviet foreign policy*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976, c1960, p, 188

ideological fear that Brazilian, Burmese, of Indian culture and individuals could subvert Soviet students or intellectuals. For instance within the USSR at the time for the ordinary or the official intellectual was both ideologically safe and also profitable to display interest and enthusiasm for those cultures and in response it was a potent instrument for winning the affection of those peoples coming from such backgrounds. The sense of inferiority and the resentments against the Western Imperialism gave a buster to these feelings.. The Soviet wooing of Asia and Africa is as old as Leninism an attempt to realize with other weapons and means what the Russian tsars were unable to do. Although the ultimate goal of Soviet propaganda towards the underdeveloped world was the eventual accession of communists to power under the Soviet control and influence, there were short-run objectives, among them the undermining Western influence. Another major purpose was to present to the people and in particular to the intellectuals an appealing picture of Soviet style domestic and foreign policy, achievements and models of fast development towards and industrial society. A related purpose is the establishment of personal and organizational links between Soviet artistic, scientific, and academic community in target areas. Soviet scholars were to demonstrate how the “*republics of the Soviet East*” had with the active help of the Great Russian people overcome their former backwardness in the shortest possible time.

Two major techniques are quoted by the American analysts as characterizing the Soviet propaganda. One of these was to utilize exchange visits as occasions to publicizing these Soviet achievements most calculated to convince Asians, Africans or Latin Americans of Soviet solicitude towards them, and above all the most needed think, the respect. The other and closely related technique consisted in the careful cultivation of the predisposition and susceptibilities of peoples whose traditions, aspirations, and grievances have been carefully studied. An attempt was even made to camouflage the unfavorable impression made on African, Asian and above all Moslems by traditional Soviet antireligious propaganda. Much publicity was given to such events as the 1954 visit of a group of Indonesian women to a Muslim seminary in Soviet Central Asia or the pilgrimage in 1957 of Soviet Moslems to Mecca and Medina and Cairo.<sup>15</sup> Another typical gesture of religious sentiments was the interview with the imam of the Moscow on its Near Eastern Service in Turkish of May 24, 1958. The Imam criticized Western denial that there was freedom of religion in the USSR. All religions, he declared including the Moslem faith was separate from the state.

Numerous reports were published in the Soviet press on scientific atheistic parties in houses of cultures. Also antireligious museums were being reopened during the very same years. A technique which is characterized by American reports as “*collective flattering*” by which Moscow attempts to cultivate particular ethnic religious political or other groups is also applied on a national level in efforts to win the good will of entire peoples. The mass deportation of the Moslem Chechens and other small peoples during the WWII for alleged collaboration with the Germans were carefully hidden, or even if those experiences were known at the time many countries were looking for a model of rapid industrialization and development a third way an alternative form those offered by the former colonial powers. Another approach was to blame the US “*imperialism*” and “*cosmopolitanism*” threatening to destroy native cultures and to substitute for cherished folk values “*the decadence of Hollywood*”.

We had already mentioned the impressive number of Indian delegations to visit Soviet Union between 1953-1957 this number been facilitated by a highly sophisticated infrastructure of agreements between different ministries, cultural associations, friendship associations, days of Indian culture, Soviet, Indian film co productions, campaigns in of

<sup>15</sup> *Pravda*, August 13, 1954 and *Isvestyia*, July 2, 1957 quoted by Frederick C. Barghoorn, *The Soviet cultural offensive: The role of cultural diplomacy in Soviet foreign policy*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976, c1960, p, 192. The issue was also commented by Richard. E Pipes, “*The Soviet Impact in Central Asia*” in “*The problems of Communism*”, Vol. VI, no.2, March-April 1957

popularization and flattering of Indian culture in *Pravda* or *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, and the not negligible preferential treatment as compared to the Western delegations. Reports are mentioning the presence of luxury goods at the table of Indian delegations (such as oranges).

The Soviets have trained, or exported technologies, and not invested capital in local industrial enterprises and therefore escaped some of the criticism leveled at Western private firms, which could be accused of seeking to gain control of Asian industries. The Soviets and their communist partners also were able according to many reports to foster the appearance of nonintervention into the economic life of developing countries by requiring their technical personnel employed in those countries to live modestly and to limit their social contacts with the local population. Also we may say that most of the technicians coming from the Communist block were rather interested to save some money than to expose any sigh of consumerism or wealth toward the locals.

In contrast the very high standard of living by local criteria of Americans and their often obtrusive display of wealth has reportedly aroused resentment.

Egypt offers a striking example of the eagerness and ability of the Kremlin to pour cultural resources into areas where poverty, economic underdevelopment, and anti-Western feeling could partly because of Western arrogance be exploited to Soviet political advantage. Soviet exploitation of Israeli-Arab differences since 1948 are well known. The corrupt monarchy of King Farouk supported by the British and the efflorescence of Egyptian nationalism which followed offered a fertile land for Soviet cultural penetration. The campaign began rather modestly with favorable Egyptian articles on Egyptian history, culture and the publication of scholarly works or holding of exhibitions. The articles on Egypt and not only by different ideologues used to combine classical archeology with Marxist social analysis. The poor human conditions in the midst of potentially rich natural resources, the sharp contrast between peasant huts and the palatial villas of the wealthy businessman, most of them allegedly connected with foreign capital, as well as symbols of the "*American way of life*" furnished the ideologist with incendiary texts. There were basic economic reasons for the Egyptian choice over Russian assistance but also the general Western Imperialism played a high role. Soviet cultural diplomacy was carefully calculated to play upon Egyptian grievances against the West and Israel as well as upon Egyptian national pride and President Nasser's personal ambitions. A flood of high tech gifts consisting usually in jet planes offered to the rulers of the underdeveloped countries was also a common custom practiced by the Soviets at the time. In countries where the regime is signified by the desire of a single person or a few ruling elite the Soviets knew how to court them. In strict cultural terms some analysts support the idea that the neo-classicism of Soviet painting and architecture and music was easier to understand and master than Western modernism.<sup>16</sup>

In 1957 a wave of African trade union delegations flooded Moscow as a clear sign that the Kremlin started a vigorous campaign toward that part of the world namely sub-Saharan Africa. Soviet trade increased consistently even with potentially hostile countries such as Pakistan and Turkey. The signs of respect toward revolutionary Algeria, collection of food and other signs of friendship were exponents of even further sympathy all over the third world.

As a general conclusion of this brief account for the Cultural Diplomacy and its techniques at the peak of the Cold War we can remember the general flattering of the subjects, the exploitation of their resentments and animosities, the use of political momentum and above all the conquest of the ruling elite. For us it is difficult to assess the success or failure of those attempts or the extent to which the relative success or in success

<sup>16</sup> Walter, Z., Laqueur, *The Soviet Union and The Middle East*, New York, 1959, p.292. This book contains in its second part an interesting chapter for the issue: "*Soviet cultural policy and the Intellectual Climate in the Arab World*".



of the Soviet propaganda is to be attributed to the political momentum, the geopolitical situation or to the real skills of the Soviets propagandists. The cultural diplomacy was rather an attribute, an ingredient which has insured relative advantages to the Soviet Union within the geopolitical arena of the Cold War.

## **CONTRIBUȚII PRIVIND DIPLOMAȚIA CULTURALĂ SOVIETICĂ (1953-1959)**

### **Rezumat**

Dacă propaganda și diplomația culturală Sovietică în perioada Stalin a avut un caracter defensiv, fiind simplă și nesofisticată, politica externă sovietică post Stalin în pas cu contextul geopolitic postbelic a avut un caracter ofensiv în termeni ideologici. Existența însăși a armamentului nuclear de distrugere în masă a determinat acțiuni de politică externă (diplomație cultural/propagandă) mai elaborate, mai subtile. Într-o perioadă de haos și turbulențe în sistemul internațional datorate procesului de decolonizare multe guverne s-au văzut în situația de a apela la alternative de dezvoltare diferite de cele ale foștilor stăpânitori, alternative care promiteau o dezvoltare economică și socială în ritm accelerat. În aceste condiții regimul de la Kremlin era motivat să joace rolul de opțiune alternativă de dezvoltare, ca centru mondial reprezentând o lume nouă a progresului.

