CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN REPRESENTATIONS OF RUSSIANS

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Abstract

Cultural differences have been shown to be social phenomena, arising in a complex reciprocal relationship between social actors and historical context. National character descriptions have also been shown to do ideological work. Language plays a crucial role in the construction of perceived reality, including perceived differences, and in the support of power structures. This study uses critical language analysis to uncover ideological frameworks behind cultural descriptions Americans have constructed of Russians. First, I will argue that American images of Russians became reified during the Cold War forming crucial building blocks in the ideological war between communism and anti-communism. I will show that linguistic strategies known to be used to gain symbolic control over the Other shaped these descriptions. I will then turn to the post-Cold War era and examine whether the change in ideological climate is reflected in current descriptions. The analysis shows the old descriptions and their familiar vocabulary to persist. Underlying reasons for the continued acceptance of the old descriptions are explored.

Keywords: National character descriptions, Ideology, Critical language analysis, Cold War, Post-Cold War, Russia, America

1. Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the Russian abandonment of its communist system have brought an end to the antagonistic Cold War relationship between Russia and the United States. Given the sensitivity of national character descriptions to the historical context, this study uses critical language analysis to examine whether this significant change in the political climate has been followed by an analogous transformation of American representations of Russians.

To answer this question I will first look at the American description of Russians that emerged during the Cold War. Its form, as initially delineated by a team of scientists headed by Geoffrey Gorer, and its subsequent reification during this period will be examined. I will argue that this description was a social construction that acted as a building block in the ideological war between communism and anti-communism. I will then turn to

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1 This paper is based on my Masters Thesis “Linguistic and Cultural Anthropology”. The first version of this paper was presented at the 6th International Pragmatics Conference, Reims, July 1998.
the present post-Cold War situation. Given the increase in business contacts between Russians and Americans, I will analyse descriptions of Russians appearing in North-American business publications. As will be shown, the Cold War inspired representations are still in use even though they can be argued as being of little value in analysing situations encountered in the new Russia. The reasons for their continued use will be speculated upon.

2. Ideology, language and ‘national character’

Three theoretical assumptions underlie the analysis presented in this paper. The first concerns the nature of national character descriptions. Recent studies on ethnicity and nationalism have demonstrated ethnicity to be a social phenomenon, "an aspect of a relationship, not a property of a group" (Eriksen 1993: 12). Being social constructions ethnic/national character descriptions are mutable, contingent on local and larger historical context (e.g. Okamura 1981; Verdery 1983, 1995). As stated by Eller and Coughlan (1993: 188), ethnicity is a "variable definition of self and other, whose existence and meaning is continuously negotiated, revised and revitalised."

The second assumption concerns the relationship between national character descriptions and ideology. Ideological environment has been shown to affect descriptions we construct of each other (e.g. Said 1979; Fabian 1983; Wolff 1994; Verdery 1995). Studies on nationalism have also demonstrated the use of national character descriptions as ideological tools to gain or maintain power or status vis-à-vis other groups (Verdery 1995). In fact, Verdery (1995: xxv) calls them "ideological forms."

The third assumption concerns the relationship between ideology and discourse. This relationship is considered to be a dynamic one: Ideology is both reflected in discourse and operates through it (Shi-xu 1994). What is said or written about the Other can do real ideological work in establishing, maintaining and justifying particular relations of power between classes, cultures, political systems (Said 1979; Fabian 1983; Fairclough 1989). Ideologically motivated discourse does this by "mobilising assumptions, presuppositions, and background knowledge in such a way that specific social, cultural structures and relationships ensue" (Shi-xu 1994: 646). Since ideology is most effective when it is least visible, ideological standpoints are seldom explicitly expressed in speech (Fairclough 1989). Rather, they can be detected as the underlying frameworks or "common-sense assumptions" that structure our statements (Fairclough 1989: 84). It is further assumed that ideological frameworks can be revealed through critical language analysis (Fairclough 1989, 1995).

Certain linguistic strategies have been shown to organise representations of the Other over whom the describer wants to gain control. Common among them are (1) denial of the similarity and coevality of the Other, (2) reification of stereotypes of the Other, and (3) use of the author's culture as the universal standard (Fabian 1983; Urla 1993; Shi-xu 1994).

Based on the above assumptions I will analyse cultural characteristics that Americans have considered Russians to possess, to determine whether and how their

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2 To emphasise that the concept 'national character' is a social construct, it shall henceforth appear between single quotation marks.
linguistic forms have been influenced by the political climate. It should be noted that it is not argued that historically contingent (temporal) differences do not exist between groups. The argument rather is that which ones are ignored, which ones emphasised, which made up, and how they are interpreted, depends on the interactants and the historical context.

3. Cold war representations of Russians

...I consider that Russia, or rather the Russian government, is an expanding proselytising force with a system of values and methods of imposing them which shock and revolt me, and which stand in opposition to the values and methods which we honour in theory, however much we may betray them in practice. As such, Russia and its government are a potential danger to our values and our security . . . I think war is more likely to come through mistakes and misunderstandings than through evil intent on either side. In an attempt to lessen the occasions for unnecessary misunderstandings and mis-interpretations, I am publishing this preliminary study on Russian psychology . . . (Gorer in Gorer and Rickman 1949: 20)

The Cold War was a war between two ideologies: Communism and anti-communism. It was a struggle for the "right way of life" (Hinds and Windt 1991: xiii). The United States and the Soviet Union started their transformation into ardent Cold War enemies shortly after World War II. In the United States this transformation was completed by 1950 and the "all-pervasive new consensus of anti-communism" was established well enough for people to even yield to McCarthy's witch hunts (Hinds and Windt 1991: xvi-xix). Hinds and Windt (1991: 5) call the years of 1946 and 1947 the critical years "when the rhetoric dimensions and arguments that established the political reality of succeeding years was set." This was also when the first scientific US study on Russian 'national character' was conducted. It was a part of a larger undertaking entitled the Columbia University Research Project on Contemporary Cultures that started in 1947. This project, directed by Ruth Benedict and funded by the US Navy, employed hundreds of social scientists and delineated 'characters' of numerous national groups (Ihanus and Karlsson 1991: 4).

Drawing on the work of Christer Jonsson (1982), Hinds and Windt (1991: 3-4) point out the similar histories of the United States and the Soviet Union that added to the intensity of the Cold War. Both countries shared a "missionary sense of uniqueness and moral superiority" since "each nation, being dramatically declared into existence by revolution rather than slowly evolving, regarded itself as unique, different from older nations in the established international system" (Hinds and Windt 1991: 4).

Some of the American "rhetorical stockpile" used in the Cold War had already been formulated during earlier American adverse reactions to Soviet politics - especially to the October revolution (Hinds and Windt 1991: 31-60).

Scientists involved in the project emphasised the role of shared early childhood experiences and education in determining 'national characteristics' (Barnouw 1979: 398-399). Cultures were believed to be projections of personalities, which were determined early in childhood with little room for later changes. Such explanations, even though culturally based, are in their effect no different from genetic or environmental explanations. In ignoring the larger historic context and interactional factors, they, like genetic explanations, assume characteristics to be immutable (cf. Verdery 1995: xvii). Further, by projecting ideas from the psychology of individual personality development onto an entire nation, they in effect subscribed to the belief of a nation as a "collective individual" (Handler 1988: 39). That is, they . . .
The group on Russia was directed by anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer and included such influential scientists as Margaret Mead (Gorer in Gorer and Rickman 1949: 9). The result, the pre-Revolutionary "Great Russian character", was outlined by Gorer in *The People of Great Russia* (Gorer in Gorer and Rickman 1949: 93-193). Although his hypothesis on the root of Russian 'national character' was criticised, his general description of it was clearly espoused. After Gorer, his findings were 're-discovered' or re-presented by subsequent students of Russia, e.g. by Mead (1951), Inkeles, Hanfmann and Beier (1958), Miller (1960), Smith (1976).

3.1. Gorer's description of the Russian character

We can fit Gorer's description of Russian 'national characteristics' under three themes that have subsequently reached the status of clichés when discussing Russians:

1) Russians are collective:
   - They tend to oscillate between unconscious fears of isolation and loneliness and an absence of feelings of individuality so that self is, as it were, merged with its peers in a 'soul-collective'. They have deep warmth and sympathy for all whom they (at a given time) consider as 'the same as' themselves...(Gorer in Gorer and Rickman 1949: 189).

2) Russians depend on authority:
   - They submit unwillingly but resignedly to firm authority imposed on them from above, and merge themselves willingly with an idealised figure or leader (Gorer in Gorer and Rickman 1949: 190).

3) Russians are impulsive and emotional:
   - They tend to oscillate suddenly and unpredictably from one attitude to its contrary, especially from violence to gentleness, from excessive activity to passivity, from orgiastic indulgence to ascetic abstemiousness ... They pay little attention to order, efficiency, punctuality (Gorer in Gorer and Rickman 1949: 189-190).

believed that cultures, like individuals, had personalities that could be discovered (Ihanus and Karlsson 1991: 3). Today's anthropologists [including representatives of the culture-and-personality field (Barnouw 1979: 398-404)], reject such explanations.

6 With the exception of two short trips to Russia in 1932 and 1936, most of Gorer's data came from interviews with Russians living in the United States and with non-Russians who "had good opportunities of observing Russian behaviour..." (Gorer in Gorer and Rickman 1949: 13-14). Among the latter was his co-author, Rickman, who had worked in Russia as a country doctor 1916-18. Rickman's sketches on Russian life are included in *The People of Great Russia*. Gorer also used documentary evidence but did not include a list of sources as they were used "unsystematically" (1949: 15).

7 Gorer developed a so-called swaddling hypothesis according to which the restraint Russians were subjected to by being tightly swaddled as babies led to the characteristics observed (Gorer in Gorer and Rickman 1949: 197-222).

8 Mead as well as Inkeles, Hanfmann and Beier developed their outlines on the 'Russian character' without visiting Russia. Miller and Smith did have direct experience with Russian culture and the Soviet system.
These characteristics can be exposed to be, not reflections of significant behavioural
traits, but ideological constructions that accorded with the anti-Communist world-view.
This entailed the presentation of Russians as serious enough enemies to "justify expanding
the nation's commitment abroad and stifling dissident at home" (Hinds and Windt 1991:
3). It also entailed portraying them, not only as different, but also as less than equal in
order to reduce inhibitions against possible hostile acts against them. As observed, a hostile
act against a people considered equal is next to impossible (Kelman 1973; Chalk and
Jonassohn 1990: 27-28). Finally it entailed discrediting their worldview - communism. As
will be shown, this was achieved by employing the aforementioned three linguistic
strategies used to achieve control over the Other. This is not to say, however, that this was
done consciously. Few people, including academics, are aware of the ideological positions
assumptions and interests as well as social conditions can direct the work of scientists, in
terms of which questions are asked, how findings are interpreted, and how they are
presented and explained (e.g. Marcuse 1964; Habermas 1971; Handler 1988; Trigger

3.2. Emphasising differences

Groups that do not wish to associate with each other tend to discover characteristics in each
other that underline their separateness (Elias 1978; Pal Pach 1995). Not surprisingly, the
characteristics Americans found in Russians were the very opposite of those they found in
themselves (Roberts 1970: 254). To this effect, a study by Inkeles, Hanfmann and Beier,
who in 1958 're-discovered' basically the same characteristics in Russians as Gorer and
contrasted them to those discovered in an American comparison group, is revealing.

According to Inkeles, Hanfmann and Beier (1958: 6-7) Russian culture was based
on the basic needs of "affiliation" and "dependency", which led to the aforementioned
characteristics of dependency on group and authority. Russians also had a 'greater strength
of oral needs' which led to "preoccupation with getting and consuming food and drink, in
great volubility, and in emphasis on singing" (Inkeles, Hanfmann and Beier 1958: 7). This

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9 Notably, Gorer (1949) also offered political advice based on his ideas of the 'Russian
character'. he gave his in the form of "political maxims" and concluded that Russia can be contained only
if "faced with permanent strength, firmness, and consistency" (Gorer in Gorer and Rickman 1949: 194).
His political advice, such as: "Great Russians will expand their boundaries like a flooded lake, and this
flood will only be contained by the political equivalent of a firm solid dike" (Gorer and Rickmann 1949:
192) echoes George Kennan's 'doctrine of containment' developed in 1946 based on Kennan's belief in the

10 Marcuse and Habermas represent the tradition of the Frankfurt School whose critical theorists
have questioned social scientists' faith in empiricism.

11 Interestingly, many of the researchers that were defining Russian characteristics were at the
same time defining their own 'national characteristics'. Both Mead and Gorer published studies on
American character: Mead in 1942 and *Keep your Powder Dry: An Anthropologist Looks at America*;
Gorer in 1948 *The American People: A Study in National Character*.
orality was associated with their noted lack of impulse control since it led them to "freely accept ...their impulses or basic dispositions - such as oral gratification, sex, aggression, or dependence" (Inkeles, Hanfmann and Beier 1958: 7-8).

In contrast, American culture was described to be based on need for "achievement", "approval" and "autonomy" (Inkeles, Hanfmann and Beier 1958: 7). This led Americans to regulate the power of authority over them, avoid close associations with groups and control their emotions. Inkeles, Hanfmann and Beier (1958: 7) noted that Americans fear close affiliations "as potentially limiting freedom and individual action, and [are] therefore inclined above all to insure their independence from or autonomy within the group." Further, they "vigorously affirm their ability for self-control, and seem to assume that the possession of such an ability and its exercise legitimates their desire to be free from the overt control of authority and the group" (Inkeles, Hanfmann and Beier 1958: 8).

3.3. Denying the coevality of Russians

Co-operative social interaction requires intersubjectivity, "which...is inconceivable without assuming that the participants involved are coeval, i.e. share the same Time" (Fabian 1983: 30). It follows that when subjugation and containment of the Other are motivating group interaction, coevality is routinely denied. The Other is presented as being then and there, instead of being here and now as the author's group and culture (Fabian 1983: 27). It can be shown that the descriptions formulated denied the Soviets coevality, and thus equality, both in the terms of individual human development and in the terms of ‘progression’ as a people.

In the terms of individual development, the descriptions of Russians as unable to distinguish themselves from their "soul-collective", willing to "merge themselves ...with an idealised ...leader", and oscillating "unpredictably from one attitude to its contrary" (Gorer in Gorer and Rickman 1949: 189-190) makes them appear akin to child-like adults whose development has been arrested. Lexical choice adds to the effect. For example, we are told that they want their authority figures to be "warm, nurturant," and also "stern, demanding, even scolding and nagging" (Inkeles, Hanfmann and Beier 1958: 9-10). They are also said to be "lacking well-developed and stabilised defences with which to counteract and modify threatening impulses and feelings" (Inkeles, Hanfmann and Beier 1958: 12, italics mine). Given also that one of the hallmarks of 'civilised' behaviour is considered to be the ability to control impulses and feelings, Russians come across less 'civilised' (cf. Elias 1978; Wolff 1994).

Some descriptions move the Russians beyond human scale. For example, we are told that their inherent animosity towards anybody different is so strong that they don't pay much "attention to which figure is momentarily the focus of their hostility" (Gorer in Gorer and Rickman 1949: 189), and that they lack normal feelings: "They endure physical suffering with great stoicism and are indifferent to the sufferings of others" (Gorer in Gorer and Rickman 1949: 189).

Russian coevality was also denied along the historic scale by presenting them as being more closely linked to the past and traditional world than were Americans (cf. Urla 1993: 102). Such a temporal distancing is based on the Western conception of history where "different points in time have different meanings: The past means backwardness and
the present means progress" (Shi-xu 1994: 655). Modernity is equated with Western secular industrialised countries, with "Anglo-European bourgeois values and practices" (Urla 1993: 102). This effect was achieved through the persistent and increasing emphasis on the connection between the Russians' 'character' and their peasant past. In his analysis on 'Russian character' Gorer (1949) draws repeatedly upon the (assumed) habits and worldview of the Russian peasant and the organisation of the mir, the old Russian peasant commune, even though the Russians he interviewed were far removed from that way of life. In the works of later authors, the peasant past was often presented, not only as an example of an earlier manifestation of the 'Russian character', but as an explanation or cause for the 'Russian character.' And at some point, the mere mention of the word 'peasant' seemed to have come to imply all the characteristics of collectivism, dependency on authority and impulsiveness.

3.4. Reifying stereotypes of Russians

Said (1979) has noted that the power to define the Other also implies controlling the Other. Such a control is increased by fixing stereotypes we create of the Other through time, allowing us to keep the Other "clearly definable and distinguished for 'us'" (Shi-xu 1994: 658-659). It also denies the Other the possibility for change, or if allowed, the factors affecting change are determined by 'us'. Factors considered inconsequential - like, for example, the period of communism in Russian history – can be ignored. It appears that the noted 're-discovery' of the same Russian traditional characteristics during the Cold War by researcher after researcher conveniently served a dual purpose - to control the Russian Other and also to discredit their world-view.

The claimed stability of the pre-Revolutionary 'Russian character', from the distant peasant past to the present, allowed Americans to assert that the Soviet attempt to develop a new society, and along with it a 'new Soviet man', was failing, that the Soviet System was incongruous with the 'Russian character' (see, e.g. Inkeles, Hanfmann and Beier 1958: 16; Smith 1976: 112-113; Peabody 1985: 16,155). Witness, Smith (1976: 112-113; italics mine):

If sentimentality is the counterpoint to Russian stoicism, then the folksy, traditional, peasant ways of Russians are the antithesis to the inflated rhetoric of Marxism-Leninism about the new Soviet Man. Not only are Russians easy-going, indolent, and disorganised rather than scientific, rational and efficient, but they are as simple and homespun in their leisure as their friendship. Martyrs of self-denial they may be in time of crisis, but otherwise they are lusty hedonists, devoted to such sensual pleasures as feasting, drinking and bathing. And in open contradiction to the strictures of scientific socialism, they are mystical, religious, superstitious people at heart.

Notably, a separation was often made between the regime and the people. It seems that the persistence of a traditional 'Russian character' came to symbolise the resistance of the

12 Related to this argument, is the claim that communism is against human nature (cf. Blommaert and Verschuuren 1992: 372-373).
people against their leadership. Also, the fact that the leaders were shown to oppress their people gave further justification for strong measures against the USSR.

3.5. Presenting American culture as the universal standard

Uncritical use of the describer's culture as the standard to which the Other is compared, and is expected to emulate, serves to emphasise the Other's difference and inferiority (Shi-xu 1994: 661-663). This involves framing the Other in our vocabulary and conceptual framework based on 'our' values and worldview. As the previous examples have demonstrated, the Cold War students of 'Russian character' showed strong reliance on American views and values, both in their methods and presentation of results. For example, Gorer (1949: 13-15) included among his informants "a considerable number of non-Russians" who had experience with Russian culture - including Rickman. Inkeles, Hanffmann and Beier (1958: 17) contrasted a Russian group against an American group, selecting characteristics that were "most important in distinguishing the Russians as a group from the Americans." It is also noteworthy that Russians studied by Gorer (1949: 14) as well as Inkeles, Hanffmann and Beier (1958: 4) were all refugees living in America, many with a strong "disaffection with the Soviet society". The effect of the emphasis on the Russian peasant past when viewed based on the Western notion of 'progress' has already been discussed. Previous examples have also shown how the presentation of the findings and the vocabulary used emphasised Americans' maturity as a people vis-à-vis Russians and the superiority of their way of life.

3.6. A few words about the process of character description construction

As shown, the descriptions Americans formed of Russians were well suited to combat both the Russians and communism. Was there any truth to them? Were these stereotypes entirely the product of American imagination? To answer these questions two points about the process of cultural description construction should be noted. The first is that ideology organises real evidence in a way that legitimates the beliefs it promotes, making them seem common sense. Effective ideologies, therefore, are always based on some amount of truth, or perceived truth (Eagleton 1991: 26). Researchers that outlined the 'Russian character' rationalised their findings by pointing out real differences between the two societies.

13 Yet, at the same time it was implied that Russians due to their peculiar characteristics, especially their dependency on leaders, brought communism onto themselves. The noted oppression of the Soviet people by their leaders then came to be viewed as an accident that was bound to happen. This is expressed by one of Gorer's informers who stated that "Stalin [was] the conscience of the Russian people, but in a very perverted way" (Gorer in Gorer and Rickman 1949: 167). By extension, such a view also implied that American character, being the opposite of that of Russians' was not suited for communism. Such contradictions are often found in ideologically motivated discourse and, as Shi-xu (1994) has shown, argumentative and explanatory discourses employed offer useful analytical units for the study of ideology. Here the explanation allows 'us' to blame the Other for having submitted to a deviant political system (cf. Shi-xu 1994: 661-663). Thus, conveniently, the Russian Other can be both blamed at personal level and their world-view discredited by the inability of their leaders to turn them into 'new Soviet men'.
However, they were selective vis-à-vis the kind of differences considered significant and the way they were interpreted (cf. Verdery 1995: xxii).

The second point of note is that cultural descriptions, being products of interaction, are created through dialogue, not monologue (cf. Bakhtin 1981; Eagleton 1991: 46). Therefore, Russians should not be considered passive targets of American descriptions. To do so would be to deny the complexity of their intellectual life. Understanding this also sensitises us to another manifestation of the selective use of evidence: The selective use of the Other's own discourse to support 'our' findings.

To illustrate both of these points I will briefly discuss one of the key concepts used to support the claims made about 'Russian character' - the Russian peasant commune. Gorer offered the mir as evidence on how the characteristics he outlined had long structured Russian life. According to him, communal spirit was in action in the mir with peasants "thinking alike and acting alike" bound together with "ties of love" (Gorer in Gorer and Rickman 1949: 24, 59). Also, the relationship between villagers and village elders was based on dependency where the villagers dedicated "all their energies, and easily their own lives, to the fulfilment of the [leader's] expressed commands, wishes or plans" (Gorer in Gorer and Rickman 1949: 168).

Similar descriptions of the mir by Russians were available as well. Notable among them were those influenced by the thinking of the ultra nationalistic Slavophiles. 14 Slavophiles, anxious to demarcate themselves from the West, had looked for their national essence in the Russian peasant. According to one Slavophile (Aksakov, quoted in Riasanovsky 1952: 135):

A commune [the mir] is a union of the people, who have renounced their egoism, their individuality, and who express their common accord; this is an act of love, a noble Christian act...there arises a brotherhood, a commune - a triumph of human spirit.

Besides the belief in the inherently collective nature of the peasant, Slavophiles also fostered the myth of a paternal relationship between peasants and their leaders and considered autocracy to be an "organic element of Russian history and life" (Aksakov, quoted in Riasanovsky 1952: 151). Peasants were viewed as living in harmony with their landlords, happily dedicating their lives to the country and to the Tsar (Rogger 1960: 60). The impulsiveness, naturalness and roughness of peasant behaviour was believed to set Russians apart from Western "petty" and "formalistic" ways (Rogger 1960: 173, also, 71,126).

Recent studies on the mir, however, do not support such portraits. They show that it was not a kind of spontaneous outer manifestation of Russian collective inner spirit. Rather, it came into existence as a result of concrete geographical, historical and economic conditions (Male 1971: 53- 56; Grant 1976; Lewin 1968: 21, 27; Kingston-Mann 1991). According to Male (1971: 56),

It would be fallacious to interpret this [the origin of mir] in terms of some kind of primitive communism. A more realistic approach would be to view the commune as an institution, which

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14 Inspired like others by German idealism and romanticism, Russian intellectuals of the 18th century started to entertain nationalistic ideas. Ultra nationalistic thinking crystallised in the Slavophile ideology (Rogger 1960: 66, 126).
probably grew in most areas to reconcile conflict over peasant land holding. The equalisation tendency was in part a result of the individualism of individual peasant households, each striving for the best land, not of any utopian striving for equality...  

Nor is there evidence to support the view of peasants as being any more or less anti-individualistic, reverent of authority or emotional than any other group would have been in the same situation. For example, studies show that rather than respecting the authorities, peasants used the little power they had to resist them (Bohac 1991: 236-260). They used "dissimulation, petty theft, work slowdowns, and fight to counter the demands of their owners and overseers" (Bohac 1991: 236). Even though lacking in political sophistication, this was resistance nevertheless. It should also be noted that, besides those inspired by the Slavophiles, other views of peasants existed in Russia, including views of peasants possessing "animal-like individualism" (Gorgy, quoted in Lewin 1968: 22).

Thus, the key supporting evidence for the American portrayal of Russians, their views on the mir, was not grounded in fact. But since many depictions of the mir and Russian peasants, even by Russians, conveniently fitted the goals of the ideology of the time, they were not verified. Manipulation of facts and probably of Russian discourse evidently helped American social scientists to legitimate their ideologically motivated descriptions of Russians (and, by extension, the ideology of anti-communism) so effectively that these depictions went unquestioned for years. As noted by Handler, the discourse of social scientists and that of ideologues are not only dependent of each other, but "feed off of each other" (1988: 9). With this in mind I will now turn to see how this legacy is affecting post-Cold War descriptions of Russians.

4. Post-Cold War representations of Russians

A new entrant has abruptly and dramatically appeared on the international business scene. Hibernating for most part of this century in a long winter's sleep induced by the communist regime, the Russian bear has awakened and is now dancing to the beat of capitalism. The bear is looking for a willing Western partner, and many North-Americans are eager to be asked for a dance. With the hope that they will

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15 Communal arrangement was also enforced by landlords who found the mir and its elders a convenient way of collecting taxes and enforcing military and other obligations (Kingston-Mann 1991: 88).

16 Lewin (1968: 21) notes that few accurate descriptions of Russian peasants exist: "Literature abounds in descriptions [of peasants] but these tend to be both arbitrary and inconsistent." It seems that depending on circumstance peasants were easy target for indiscriminate blame or praise. Especially when the utopian plans of the intelligentsia went wrong, the peasants were invariably singled out for blame. For example, Russian pre-Revolutionary Westernisers considered the peasant “backwardness" and “indolence" as the key hindrance to their effort to modernise Russian agriculture (Kingston-Mann 1991: 90). Similarly when the Bolsheviks' arrangements with the peasants went awry, the peasants were isolated for blame - notably the rich peasants, kulaks. A myth of innate egalitarian nature was conveniently again emphasised and was claimed to have made all the other peasants to hate the kulaks (Lewin 1968: 76).

17 Gorer, for example, would have been exposed to the Russian views of themselves through his informants as well as through the documentary material reviewed by him. For example, he notes how books on the "the organisation of the village commune (mir) and folk-tales were read with care" (Gorer in Gorer and Rickman 1949: 14).
have a smooth pas de deux and avoid stepping on each other's toes, what follows is a portrait of their potential Russian partners (Puffer 1994: 41)

American businesses have been eager to take an advantage of the newly opened Russian market. Some of the difficulties that have riddled dealings with their new partner are believed to stem from cultural factors. This has led American business professionals to address Russian cultural characteristics in business journals and magazines. All such articles published between 1990 and 1997 and listed in the database called American Business Index were reviewed to examine how Americans depict Russians in the post-Cold War era. Since there is no longer a need to depict Russians as enemies, some change in the portrayal of Russians was expected.

The five articles discussed here were selected to represent the body of the analysed material. They come from the following publications: Academy of Management Executive (Puffer 1994, Understanding the Bear: A portrait of Russian business leaders); HRMagazine (Rubens 1995, Changes in Russia: A challenge for HR); Public Personnel Management (Tongren, Hecht and Kovach 1995, Recognising cultural differences: Key to successful US - Russian enterprises); Business Horizons (Veiga, Yanouzas and Buchholtz 1995, Emerging cultural values among Russian managers: What will tomorrow bring?); Harvard Business Review (Vlachoutsicos and Lawrence 1990, What we don't know about Soviet management).

It should be noted that all the articles shared a bias peculiar to the American approach to business that affected their structure. Due to the importance placed on management by American business practices they were written from the point of view of management (cf. Hofstede 1994). Thus, most examine Russian managers only. When the worker is discussed it is done from the point of view of management.

4.1. Adherence to the old stereotypes

All the articles took the stereotypes inherited from the Cold War for granted, especially those more relevant to a business environment, namely collectivism and reverence for authority. In fact, they were accepted as givens with little need to justify or explain them. Further, their unquestioned acceptance directed lexical choice in discussing anything Russian. For example, the word "collective" was commonly selected when describing Russian work teams (e.g. Vlachoutsicos and Lawrence 1990: 50). In describing Russian managers the use of words like "paternalistic" (e.g. Rubens 1995: 77), or "parent figures" (e.g. Vlachoutsicos and Lawrence, 1990: 52) seemed to be almost reflexive.

Again, as the following excerpt demonstrates, Russian traditional characteristics were assumed to have ordered behaviour already in the old peasant communes. Such references to the mir seem to serve two purposes: They present characteristics as permanent and prove them authentic. Notably, the author listed Mead and Gorer as her sources:

18 The articles can be divided based on the amount of bias they display, from extreme (Tongren, Hecht and Kovach 1995) to medium (Puffer 1994; Veiga, Yanouzas and Buchholtz 1995) to small (Vlachoutsicos and Lawrence 1990; Rubens 1995). Bias refers to the use of American standard as a starting point for authors' analysis and to their adherence to old stereotypes.
Centralization of authority and responsibility in Russia has a long history. In the peasant's village communes of medieval Russia, the board of village elders were entrusted to "find the common will." Villagers would discuss issues ... in such a way that suggestions and criticisms ...could not be pinned on any individual. Group members believed that it was not possible to anticipate elder's wishes, and would wait to be told what to do rather than initiate action themselves. In sum, village elders wielded unchallenged power and bore full responsibility for the welfare of the group. In addition, they behaved patronally toward the members of the community, and were addressed as batiushka (little father) . . . In the communal living and farming conditions of traditional Russian society, the well-being of the collective was highly valued, and individuals who showed signs of making themselves better than the group were viewed with suspicion and contempt. Consequently, such individualistic traits as achievement striving, ambition, and initiative were considered to be socially undesirable . . . (Puffer 1994: 43-44).

As the above quote demonstrates, besides stereotypes, also taken for granted were corollaries of these beliefs, such as Russian jealousy toward anybody doing better. This jealousy is believed to stall people's achievements for years to come. As noted by one author, "psychological or social 'winner's curse' may linger on for many years in a society that operated so singularly on egalitarian principle"(Veiga, Yanouzas and Buchholtz 1995; 25).

4.2. Coequality/equality of managers versus workers

A more detailed look at the usage of stereotypes reveals a new partiality in their application. Managers were portrayed as more equal to Americans than were workers who were the main recipient of stereotypical portrayals. At best, the worker was described as a dependent, "unconditionally obedient" child-like figure (Vlachoutsicos and Lawrence 1990). The relationship between manager and worker was made to be analogous to that between child and parent where workers "must obey the leader's instructions, and the leader must protect them from outsiders at all times and in every way" (Vlachoutsicos and Lawrence 1990: 58). This view was maintained even when the evidence contradicted it. For example, one set of authors who maintained that workers prefer strong leaders, also reported that in the factory under their study, workers, when given a chance to select their own manager, selected a weak one, one that made their life easy, not a strong authoritarian one (Vlachoutsicos and Lawrence 1990: 59-63).

At worst, the worker was portrayed as a self-interested brute, who show achievement "aimed primarily toward their own profit rather than toward benefiting the organisation where they work" (Tongren, Hecht and Kovach 1995: 7). Here self-interest seems to be taken as a perverted manifestation of collectivism where one cares only about oneself and his/her immediate close ones (cf. Gorer's "soul collective").19 The problems that many Western enterprises experience were attributed to the mentality of the Russian worker (and to the Soviet system) - to "seventy years of worker indifference and centralized

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19 The noted 'bad' habits of the workers are portrayed as permanent dispositions even when contextual factors that may have played a role in their creation are acknowledged. For example, the same author who depicts the workers as inherently self-interested, also notes that the many 'bad' attitudes Russians harbour toward work "were the only way that they and their families have been able to survive in the Communist culture" (Tongren, Hecht and Kovach 1995: 7).
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control" (Tongren, Hecht and Kovach 1995: 2), and it is the worker who is expected to cause problems for the foreign companies:

It is a basic cultural concept that a man's first duty is to himself and his family, not to the central authority. And most certainly, the executive staff and managers of foreign enterprises constitute such a central authority (Tongren, Hecht and Kovach 1995: 3).

Furthermore, the worker was portrayed based on the official discourses – Russian and Western - about the Soviet system. We were told that "during Soviet Era there has been virtually a total absence of pride in achievement despite all Communist Party effort to instil a work ethic" (Tongren, Hecht and Kovach 1995: 6). Achievement and energy shown outside the official system was not even considered, nor was the fact that previous 'bad' habits might have been signs of resistance. 20

Managers were depicted as a more complex group differing in their attitudes according to age and experience (e.g. Veiga, Yanouzas, and Buchholtz 1995). They were also described as hardworking and quick to learn (e.g. Vlachoutsicos and Lawrence 1990: 58; Rubens 1995: 74). Managers' ingenuity in dealing with the Soviet system was also often recognised. It was common to acknowledge that "behind the scenes, many managers showed exceptional initiative in creativity by finessing problems in order to meet planned targets," and that "effective managers persevered and fulfilled their enterprise's plans in spite of shortages and bureaucratic obstacles" (Puffer 1994: 45). 21 Russian managers were then infrequently portrayed as having opposed both the Soviet system and their workers. One author noted how

the ingenuity [of managers] exerted during the communist era to circumvent restrictive and stifling rules, supply and equipment shortages, and unmotivated workers - which often thwarted the accomplishments of party-set production goals - can now be directed toward the undoing of chaos created by the conversion from socialism (Veiga, Yanouzas, Buchholtz 1995: 25; italics mine).

It seems that different standard and expectations apply to managers as well. For example, one set of authors, worried about the future of entrepreneurialism in Russia, lamented how "the vagaries of the centralised economy thwarted the budding of individualism" in the case of Russian managers (Veiga, Yanouzas, Buchholtz 1995: 25). They seemed to be regretting that, as stated by one Russian manager, "the number of managers who are only interested in advancing their own self interests are rare" (Veiga, Yanouzas, Buchholtz 1995: 25). It appears that from the American point of view self-interest is a desirable attribute for managers but not for workers.

Looking at Russian society this way echoes the Cold War scholars' separation of

20 It appears that like the peasant, who was often singled out for blame in the past, today's worker is singled out for blame for hindering plans to 'modernise' Russia. Also, as in the case of the peasant, no impartial representation of the worker is provided.

21 Note, however, that the same authors can, when concentrating in defaming the Soviet system, describe Soviet managers as having been "micro managers and macro puppets" (Puffer 1994: 43), or "guided by basic tenet of following the rules of the party line" (Veiga, Yanouzas and Buchholtz 1995: 22).
Russians into leaders and lay people. However, this time the leaders are capitalists and Americans seem to be willing to allow some narrowing of cultural distance between themselves and these new leaders.

4.3. American standard

Traditional stereotypes about Americans themselves and views about the superiority of American ways were taken for granted by most. However, the degree of bias varied greatly. In some articles it was restricted to the above-mentioned emphasis on management. Whereas in some it structured the whole analysis with heavy reliance on Western concepts. One of the least ethnocentric ones presented results of a comparative study of Soviet and American styles of management based on a detailed observation of two enterprises, one American and one Soviet (this study was performed just prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union). By looking at the enterprises on their own terms they concluded that even though Soviet management practices seem alien to Western managers, they may not have served them as badly as Western business people assume. Given the economic realities of peremptory centralized planning, state monopoly, and constant shortage, a remarkable number of Soviet enterprises produce usable, sophisticated products and care for their workers as well (Vlachoutsicos and Lawrence 1990: 51).

The most ethnocentric article compared Russians and Americans based on the eight most "relevant values that appear to be held in common by most Americans" (Tongren, Hecht and Kovach 1995: 6). The Authors called these "core values" and categorised them as follows:

Achievement and Success; Materialism and Progress; Time Orientation and Efficiency; Humanistic and Egalitarian; Youth, Health and Physical Well-being; Evaluative and Legalistic; Human Mastery Over Nature and Human Perfectibility (Tongren, Hecht and Kovach 1995: 6-14).

In their article descriptions of American attitudes were presented first. Thus, the order of presentation emphasised who was compared to whom. Witness:

US Core Value: Time Orientation and Efficiency:
US culture lives by the clock. Being prompt is considered virtue. There are time slots for work, time and play, "quality time," and "interact-with-children-time." Time is often equated with money, and is also viewed as "linear separable" which means that we think in terms of past, present, future . . . (Tongren, Hecht and Kovach 1995: 9).

Russian View: Time Orientation and Efficiency:
...worker's activity, loyalty and involvement to an organization, enterprise is extremely rare. Time is mainly a period to be filled by various activities, few of which require promptness . . . For the Russian, time spent at work is simply the boring and mandatory period between breakfast and supper when one need to keep an eye out for objects and services that could be acquired illegally and diverted to one's own benefit. Self-interest is the unwritten law of the Russians. Everything is viewed from that perspective, i.e., "How will this action benefit me." Little else matters . . . (Tongren, Hecht and Kovach 1995: 9).

Such a framing of the Russian Other in American vocabulary and conceptual framework
subordinates Russians to American standard (cf. Shi-xu 1994: 663). Furthermore, the uncritical use of American values and concepts serves to stress the Russian Other's inferiority and eccentricity as well as induce contempt for them (cf. Shi-xu 1994: 661).

Many articles also generated contempt for Russians by turning differences into questions of morality. For example, the examination of rampant corruption in Russia frequently turned into a simple discussion on morals along the line, Americans have them, and Russians don't. Russia was described as a place "difficult for ethically-minded business people to function" (Puffer 1994: 49). Westerners were portrayed as teachers of better ways, and advised to uphold the highest standards of business practice . . . to demonstrate how standard Western business procedures eliminate the need to use connections and underhanded methods of doing business (Puffer 1994: 52).

Notably, such a view was maintained even though the same author recognised that, in the past "such deception was often a matter of survival, and was viewed as necessity" (Puffer 1994: 48). To succeed then, Russians were expected to become more like the Americans:

If the Russians expect their new market economy to succeed at home and in the world environment, over time there will undoubtedly be radical changes in their core values relating to personal ethics, loyalties, attitudes toward the workplace, and economics in general (Tongren, Hecht and Kovach 1995: 4).

4.4. Reification of stereotypes

As mentioned earlier the reification of stereotypes gives the describer control over the Other and over factors affecting change. As noted, the articles assumed the traditional 'Russian characteristics' to have a long history – and thus durability. Witness the following excerpt underlying the permanence of Russian disposition toward leaders:

for centuries the Russian people have looked up to great leaders - czars, bishops, revolutionary heros, Politburos - and revered national symbols, such as icons and axes and hammers and sickles (Veiga, Yanouzas and Buchhotz 1995: 23).

Their durability through the Soviet period was especially assumed: "Traditional Russian attitudes toward power and responsibility found their way into organisations in the communist period and resulted in practices that hampered the effectiveness of enterprise managers and their subordinates" (Puffer 1994: 43).

The combination of reified stereotypes and American concepts serves to increase control over Russian 'progress'. A pertinent example of this is found in an article by one author who examined Russian managers based on the "leadership traits that researchers have identified in effective leaders in the US" (Puffer 1994: 42). To start with, she acknowledged that Russians "posses the same hard-driving ambition, boundless energy, and keen ability that are associated with the successful business leaders in the United States." However, she then noted: "Yet, by probing a little deeper, some important differences emerge that, if not well understood, could interfere with Russian and US managers' efforts to work effectively together" (Puffer 1994: 41). Relying heavily on the old stereotypes she
then listed leadership traits and practices first in the "traditional Russian society," then in the case of "red executive", and then in the case of today's "market-oriented manager"-posing them against traits identified in effective U.S. managers (Puffer 1994). Based on this she went on to predict Russian entrepreneurs' future. Through such a presentation, today's Russian entrepreneur becomes framed, not only by American concepts, but also by the characteristics of their predecessors as defined by the researcher. American concepts and old stereotypes combined with the order of arguments thus imprison the Russians inside an American framework, giving the author the power to judge the depth of the behavioural change and predict the future.

Not surprisingly, most authors had also taken to heart claims that the Soviet system had no effect on people's behaviour. It was often described as a period of 'hibernation'. Only after the kiss of capitalism is "the long hibernating Russian bear . . . coming out of its extended sleep" (Veiga, Yanouzas and Buchholtz 1995: 20; also Puffer 1994: 41).22

4.5. Support from the Russian discourse

As in the past, Western and Russian discourses gain convenient reinforcement from each other. Many Russians support the Western view that the Soviet system did not fit their nature, nor change it. Shlapentokh (1984: 48) observes that Russians have a tendency to emphasise biological and psychological causes for differences between people as a response to an ideology that

emphasized the determinant role of a social milieu ...Over the entire period of the 1960's, during the period of liberalization, some Soviet scholars criticized the official concept of humanity that completely ignored the role of biological factors in human behaviour and reduced everything to the influence of a social milieu.

Therefore, it is not difficult to find Russians who support some of the American authors' stereotypical views. For example, Russian supporters were found for statements attesting to the collective nature of Russians (e.g. Veiga, Yanouzas and Buchholtz 1995: 22). Revealingly, one Russian author, in supporting views about Russian low ethical and moral values, attributed this to the fact that "traditional Russian culture was shown disrespect and even destroyed by the Communists" (Puffer 1994: 48).

Further, many American authors conveniently took for granted, not only their own ideological constructions of the Soviet System, but those of the Soviet government as well. Official Soviet propaganda of the way the system was supposed to have been functioning was accepted at face value - when it supported the author's description.

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22 References to the 'Russian bear' go far back. According to Marquis De Custine (1843; 1991 reprint: 119) they go back to Napoleon. They are used to refer to the Russian 'uncivilized' nature. To quote De Custine: "...many of these parvenus of civilization have kept a bearskin beneath their modern elegance, simply turning it inside out: You have only to scratch the surface for the fur to appear and bristle." (1843; 1991 reprint: 119).
4.6. Breaking the use of stereotypical representations as explanatory tools

Even though all the authors showed unquestioning acceptance of the old images of Russians, not all relied on them or American concepts equally in explaining situations encountered in Russia. Those who strictly adhered to them commonly ended up with forced reasoning and blatant contradictions - e.g. workers are 'self-interested' and 'obedient'; managers are 'puppets' and 'ingenious'. Many findings that did not support these authors' stereotypical thinking could only be described as "unexpected", "surprising" or "paradoxical" (e.g. Veiga, Yanouzas and Buchholtz 1995: 24-25).

A small minority, however, gave causes other than character considerations weight beyond anecdotal mention. These authors also tended to give the legacy of the Soviet system a realistic consideration. Representative of them is one author, who by looking carefully at the life of Russians under the Soviet system as well as in the present transformation period, was able to give insightful reasons as to why Russians may not always be enthusiastic toward capitalism and working for foreign enterprises. Rather than calling them lazy and self-interested, he appreciated the enormous hardships that many Russians have experienced and continue to experience during their transformation into a market economy. He noted, "today, the average Russian seems understandably disappointed with the results of the changes that have taken place" (Rubens 1995: 72). He observed that this may explain why, for example, the concept of 'strategic planning' is often objected to by Russians: They "prefer a tactical short-term orientation to business and career" because "the turbulence and unpredictability in their environment make it difficult to trust long-term plans" (Rubens 1995: 79). He also acknowledged that people who may have not worked hard during the Soviet era might have done so, not because they were lazy, but because they were ingenious. Previously "the clever people were the ones who turned the situation to their advantage and avoided work required by the master." Unfortunately, even this author then went on to call this a "cultural trait" rather than a tactic (Rubens 1995: 72).

Also acknowledged is the fact that the Russian worker may have other than character reasons for not being happy working for some Western companies. Russian workers "quickly realise that the benefits and salaries they receive are typically well below the level of the company's expatriate and home-based employees" (Rubens 1995: 73). In the case of ethical standards he succeeded to point out that Russians in turn have "concerns about the ethics of US managers' (Rubens 1995: 77). Interestingly, in probing Russian resistance to some Western management training he noted the similarities between typical Western management terms and slogans of the Soviet leaders, such as 'exceeding goals'. Russians tune out in hearing this since "for 70 years, people worked under slogans about surpassing Five Year Plan" (Rubens 1995: 79). Thus, it is understandable that people would be sceptical "about adopting social concepts by foreign business people posited by foreign business people . . .when the terminology...so clearly resembles the Communist slogans they recently jettisoned" (Rubens 1995: 80).

By looking at the actual context of peoples' lives, past and present, and by taking a critical look at American business practices, this author was able to gain some useful insights - more useful than those who relied solely on old stereotypes about Russians and the Soviet system.
5. Conclusions

The Cold War played a significant role in formulating conceptions of Russians that are still widely accepted today. In fact, it appears that over the years these stereotypes have become so accepted that for those professing to know Russian society, knowledge of them has become akin to a badge of expertise. Like references to the 'Russian bear', their application demonstrates the author's knowledge and familiarity with the area of Russian studies to members of academia and to lay readers alike.

The lack of serious questioning of these beliefs may largely be due to the fact that most Americans are oblivious to their having been influenced by the ideology of anti-communism. Besides, one underlying assumption that such descriptions are based on Western superiority - is still uncritically believed by many today, with or without Cold War. Also, the open embrace by many Russians of capitalism has given additional impetus to the belief that the Western way of life and its economic system are better suited to 'human nature'. It can also be speculated that the old beliefs of Russians are adhered to as they implicitly serve to promote Western control over the Russian market. The Russian economy, should it take off, has the potential to offer powerful competition to the West. Thus, we may be witnessing the convenient transfer of old beliefs formulated for defence purposes to the service of economic advantage.

A slightly new twist to looking at Russian society is emerging from the marriage of old beliefs and the American approach to business. There are indications that the so-called traditional characteristics are applied more to the Russian worker than to manager. The manager is frequently presented as a hard-working father figure, whereas the worker is presented as an erratic and dependent child-figure. It also appears that the Russian managerial class is embracing American models and together with Americans laments the nature of the Russian worker. As in the case of peasants, the true nature and circumstances of workers' lives are ignored. This is partially due to the simplistic acceptance of official versions of how life in the Soviet Union was lived. Russians are believed to have been obedient puppets of their system, reverent toward their government and its symbols. Missed is the complexity of Soviet society and the multitude of ways in which people resisted. Importantly, the role of a massive shadow economy that involved everyone in the Soviet Union is consistently overlooked. Therefore, the ingenuity and energy that people showed in their unofficial dealings is left unconsidered.

Further study is required to fully understand the motives behind the adherence to the old stereotypes. What we do know is that the old images of Russians are not neutral. Formulated during the height of the Cold War they came not only to accord with the ideology of anti-communism, but also became an important part of its arsenal. Today this old stockpile of images is still in use and offers neither help in explaining difficulties encountered in the complex new reality of post-communist Russia, nor in bridging cultural differences. Rather, like the missiles we forgot to defuse they carry the Cold War mentality within themselves into the new collaborative environment.
References


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