



1995

## The Duality of Soviet Culture: Manufactured and Organic Cultures

Mark Thomas Fletcher '95  
*Illinois Wesleyan University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/russian\\_honproj](https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/russian_honproj)



Part of the [Other Languages, Societies, and Cultures Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Fletcher '95, Mark Thomas, "The Duality of Soviet Culture: Manufactured and Organic Cultures" (1995). *Honors Projects*. 1.

[https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/russian\\_honproj/1](https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/russian_honproj/1)

This Article is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@iwu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@iwu.edu).

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

**THE DUALITY OF SOVIET CULTURE:**

Manufactured And Organic Cultures

Mark Thomas Fletcher  
Research Honors Project  
Prof. Marina Balina, Advisor

In place of what actually existed - a still industrializing country with very many workers living in privation, a peasantry in a new enserfment, a huge caste of slave laborers in concentration camps, a privileged service nobility living in relative luxury minus security of tenure, a similarly insecure court circle at the top functioning at the pleasure of a new tsar-autocrat, a heavily terrorized society honeycombed with police informers, in which an overheard careless word or anecdote was a potential ticket to hell - Stalinist culture depicted a democratic Soviet Russia whose nonantagonistic classes of workers and peasants and intelligentsia "stratum" lived in amity, a socialist Russia moving toward the further stage of full communism under an adored Stalin's leadership. (Robert C. Tucker, Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1928 - 1941)

## I) Introduction

### a) Definition of Culture

To better understand any societal system - why or how it works, what drives it on - it is imperative to understand its culture. Some common definitions of culture are:

Culture is learned rather than transmitted by the genes. Members of the human species are trained to behave in ways that are conventional and fixed by tradition. So, the response of human beings is always a response to the stimulus, or to the total situation, as it is somewhat arbitrarily defined and as it is interpreted in terms of the various conventions that may be observed by members of a particular culture. [Collier's Encyclopedia](2)

Culture refers to the behavioral contents of (a) society... Culture is heterogeneous. (It does not) refer to a single item of reality, but to innumerable items at different levels of generality: ideas, values, objects, actions, tendencies, and accumulations. [Encyclopedia Americana](3)

Culture is the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behaviour. Culture, thus defined, consists of language, ideas, beliefs, customs, taboos, codes, institutions, works of art, rituals, ceremonies, and other related components. The development of culture depends upon humans' capacity to learn and to transmit knowledge to succeeding generations. [The Encyclopedia Britannica](4)

None of the definitions given above could be applicable to the subject of my discussion. This subject demanded a different consideration. My own definition of culture is: a society's intercourse with itself is its culture - whatever that might be. In other words, how a society communicates with itself is its culture. Culture, in such a case, is dictated by its society, and not the other way around. I feel that the entire idea of "culture" is very personal and individual and changes from person to person. Thereby, it is difficult, if not impossible, to arrive at any sort of all-encompassing definition of culture.

The act of defining automatically places restrictions on what can be considered a part of the greater whole. That can become dangerous when one attempts to define a concept, such as culture, as opposed to a physical object, which is more concrete, such as a tree or a dog, or a science, which is more specific, such as geometry or physics. A culture does not inherently impose restrictions or boundaries upon itself; however, a society can impose restrictions upon its own culture. Nature itself has no boundaries - societies impose them. Nature is limitless as to what is considered nature, so, too, culture is limitless in the same way. It is only from one society's interaction, or encounter, with another society when definitions on what is considered culture are imposed. Invariably, these restrictions come from the outside. If any sort of boundaries are imposed on a culture, there will always be a part of that culture which challenges that definition. Therefore, culture can not be defined as any one thing. When a part of a culture does not fit into the defined cultured, there is a strain on the society because such a society can no longer communicate with itself and ultimately will not survive.

b & c) Definition of Manufactured and Organic Cultures

Culture is produced, in my opinion, by a society to be consumed by that society. There is never any established reason or purpose for it - it simply exists, for whatever reason. I feel that norms are nothing more than individual views or values

that have been accepted by more and more people, until the majority of people agree with those views or values. Anything considered to be abnormal or unconventional are labels given by the majority to those not in the majority. They also constitute a default category as soon as a norm is established.

It is my firm belief that Soviet culture, in all practical analyses, consisted of two distinct, and not at all separate, parts: a 'manufactured' and an 'organic', culture. There was, in essence, a duality of culture, which reflected a dual society. The 'manufactured culture' was sponsored by the State and was imposed upon every Soviet citizen. It can be considered artificial because it imposed boundaries on what culture could be - in the same way that countries' borders are artificial and are not actually carved into the Earth. It was very structured and was particular as to what was allowed or not allowed. It had an established purpose, which was to promote the Bolshevik Party Line. The primary function of the 'manufactured culture' was to instruct and educate the masses in that Party Line. It was considered to be the norm, even though it was dictated by the minority. The 'manufactured culture' of the Bolsheviks can be considered an interruption of the culture that existed before it, because the majority did not support it. Most importantly, the 'manufactured culture' was exclusively the 'manufactured culture'.

The 'organic culture', I contend, was whatever the 'manufactured culture' was not. It existed only because the 'manufactured culture' existed, and because the Bolsheviks were

very specific as to what was considered 'manufactured culture'. The 'organic culture' was considered abnormal by the select few in power - the Bolsheviks, whose name, ironically, means "the majority".

Such a dual culture reflects a dual society. In my opinion, each society has a use for its own culture but not for another society's culture, because the same values are not applied. Culture is not produced for consumption by another society, even though a culture can be consumed outside of itself. Therefore, Bolshevik culture, by its very design, was doomed for failure from the very moment of its conception, because all of Soviet society could not communicate with itself.

## II) Manufactured Culture of the 5 Periods of Soviet History

### a) Manufactured Culture of the NEP Period

Despite the Bolsheviks' desire to completely be rid of the old social order, Lenin was compelled to allow certain aspects of privatization to exist in the fledgling Soviet State for its very survival and for the survival of its new government. The New Economic Policy was only maintained for as long as it had to be, but while it was in place, middle-class entrepreneurs - called Nepmen - were allowed to flourish. Their most immediate and important function was to stabilize the country economically. They also provided a replacement to the no-longer-present bourgeoisie, and they became an officially sanctioned class enemy, which helped fuel the Bolsheviks' ideological campaign.

With society and culture being so inextricably linked, the advent of the NEP brought with it bits of the old culture as well as appeal to popular tastes - as opposed to constant and complete Party indoctrination. During this period, both the 'manufactured' and 'organic' cultures were neither completely in place nor destroyed. A sort of cultural detente existed - at least until the year 1928, when Stalin began his purges and the Great Terror that went with it.

Immediately after the creation of the Soviet State, it became necessary to redefine all aspects of the former, "bourgeois" society, and the quickest and most complete manner of doing just that was to manipulate all facets of the culture. The subsequent 'manufactured culture', which was to fill the void that was left when the previous culture was thrown out, was already conceived long before the Revolution by the first Bolshevik Party Congress on March 1-3, 1898, in Minsk.(5) What would become its function and purpose in the new Soviet society was clearly established by Lenin, who, in 1905, said, (in particular of literature):

"In sharp contrast to bourgeois customs, to the profit making, commercialized bourgeois press, to bourgeois literary careerism and individualism, "artistic anarchism" and pursuit of profit, the socialist proletariat must promote the principle of Party literature."(6)

For these reasons and more, the Bolsheviks envisioned "the human being as a function."

The simplification and reduction of the view of the human being, the devaluation and depersonalization of the individual, the externalization of the hero, the primacy of the world that is external to the hero - all of this is produced by a distorted, sociocentric vision of the individual's place in society and history.(7)



In what would become characteristic of Soviet culture throughout its history, the norm was always changing with each major political upheaval due mostly to the fact that the past was constantly being redefined. Even more importantly, it was not only being redefined but changed - there was a constant revision of history that was taking place. "Although ostensibly the society is future oriented, in fact the greatest care has been taken to define the past, to establish the society's genealogy."(8) Every new power would change the focus on the past to suit their future needs. In such a case, the working class itself (the proletariat), which was previously marked by the old, bourgeois social order, was the same, but their role in society had changed. The subsequent new working class culture itself - the new class identity, the new shared class culture and where they now belonged in society - had ultimately changed from the previous one. The former working class culture was replaced by something completely artificial and foreign to the workers, who were expected to accept this new culture as their own and identify themselves only by it.

The proletariat of the Revolution had developed under the old bourgeois system. To change that system by re-defining it, and what it was, ultimately meant that the proletariat was forced to change as well because it, too, was being re-defined along with the past. Thus, the battle to communicate even the simplest ideas of identity started causing the rift within Soviet culture.

Intermediaries were used in popular performances to build bridges between the "correct" culture (the 'manufactured

culture') and the "unprepared" masses. They appeared at concerts, unveilings of statues and staged events (such as mock trials) to explain the inner significance of everything before any actual entertainment was allowed. In literature, revolutionary writers responded to popular taste with revolutionary adventures and 'red detective' stories - which were produced to mimic Western style and yet maintain Bolshevik qualities. All of which were politically correct thought written in the popular style, and so they received some measure of success.

At the same time, in the music and dance of the period, both 'manufactured' and 'organic' cultures existed simultaneously. The return of jazz (after a hiatus around the time of the Revolution) brought with it popular dance steps such as the foxtrot and the tango - "foxtrotism" and "tangoism" were seen as harmful elements by the stricter Party members.(9) Folk songs, and other light melodies that were fun to sing, were preferred by many - including proletarians - over the heavily politicized songs of the Party. Some of the elements of the Party culture of the time that was meant to counteract some of the popular culture, included the 'mass song' and the 'mass dance'. Naturally meant to educate the masses and cultivate Bolshevik policies and ideologies, almost all the 'mass songs' were so stagnant that nobody would sing them. Such songs, about the new socialist life, were characteristically entitled "The Brick Factory" (or "Little Bricks").(10) To quell fascination in such dancing as was called "the Tango of Death", the 'mass dance' was "the first of many unsuccessful attempts to head

off the spontaneous and near universal Russian passion for shaking the body to the sound of music".(11)

The circus continued to be popular during the NEP period and it tried to be 'organic', although it, too, was by no means immune from the Bolshevik Party policy, and, in 1919, it was both nationalized and politicized.(12) It tried to hold on to the things that traditionally made it so popular, but the Party intellectuals attacked such circus staples as: magic acts - were seen as being superstitious; animal acts - were cruel; clowning - was vulgar; and stunts - were inhumane and demeaning. In the end, stress on the ideological abstractions of the 'manufactured' culture weakened the true dynamic of the circus. All that made the shows too stale for the crowds to enjoy - ridicule, for instance, could only be directed against the enemy, and not the Party.

The Bolsheviks, during the NEP period (as well as most of its history), didn't accept the harmlessness of popular culture. As a testament to Bolshevik logic, "(they) feared that the 'dark forces' dormant among the lower classes could be evoked by sitting in the darkened chamber of the commercial cinema."(13) Even Bolshevik filmmakers, who promoted Party values, yet still wanted self-expression and aesthetic innovations in their work, were unable to reach the masses with their revolutionary spectacles, documentary "truths" and cinematic poems. Such films, as Sergei Eisenstein's Battleship Potemkin, were extremely well made and artistic, but the masses didn't respond so enthusiastically to them because of conceptual and stylistic

difficulties.(14) Political leaders would then likely berate the filmmakers for the lack of public success, and the end result would instead be produced - with certainly less artistic quality than before. Artists of the 'manufactured culture' tried to be innovative ('organic') as well as do their jobs and be informative. The "lower classes", to be blunt, just didn't get it, and, what's more, they just didn't want it because this culture was all foreign to them - it was nothing they could relate to or identify themselves with.

The 'manufactured culture' was incorporated on all levels, and that included how the Soviet society communicated everyday information with itself. In the spirit of the times, Bolshevik journalists did try to incorporate popular values into the mass press with titles like: the Poor, the Workingman's Newspaper, Worker's Moscow, and the Peasant's Newspaper. In 1925, these papers collectively had a circulation of 4.6 million copies in Moscow and Leningrad alone and only 3.4 million copies for the rest of the country - showing that the focus of change was always on the capital.(15) Which was probably just as well, because, even though the Bolsheviks pumped their publications into villages and provinces in the name of "good reading", most peasants couldn't comprehend the heavily politicized language - if they could read at all.

As much as the 'manufactured culture' of the Party was fundamentally against such popular 'organic culture', the two did exist side by side for a time - as long as the New Economic Policy was the dominating force in Soviet life. There certainly

were artists of the period who did all they could to satisfy both sides, but, as it gradually became apparent, 'organic culture' had no place in the new social order because it was outside the established boundaries of the 'manufactured culture'.

b) Manufactured Culture of the Stalinist Period

While the NEP was in place, Soviet culture was fairly diverse, but once Stalin began to implement his purges, the 'manufactured culture' was the only one allowed. Literature, music, mass media, and the theatre and cinema were nothing to speak of separately because they were all dictated by the Party - there was absolutely no room for alternative methods. If a writer, for example, was refused the opportunity to be published, one of the only options left was to be published abroad - such as Boris Pasternak or Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

Essentially what occurred during the Stalin Era was that the only culture readily available was now exclusively 'manufactured'. Any and all elements of 'organic culture' were not only disallowed but were also sought out and destroyed - sometimes quite literally. The dominating view of the Party at that time, which was naturally implemented through all forms of the official culture, was printed in the children's magazine, the Pioneer, in 1937 in an article by Trofim Lysenko:

"In our Soviet Union people will not be born; organisms will be born, and here people will be made, as tractor drivers, motorists, mechanics, academicians. I was not born a person and ... feel more than happy in such a context."(16)

One thing that the regime recognized as being a fundamental part of any culture, and necessary to secure its place in a society, is tradition, and so new Soviet traditions needed to be added, or created, to take the place of the old ones. Soviet mass culture became "folklorized" and was woven around heroic workers and their idealized biographies. Such workers became giant figures in the new culture and were consequently meant to replace the image and status of the heroes of medieval history. This artificial folklore included pious homilies on sobriety and a socialist work ethic, and it was only really allowed to go back as far as the Revolution (or maybe slightly before) to get its heroes. There was not a complete revision of history taking place but a selective one. Many Stalinist fairy tales were about real life figures that were turned into living legends or martyred saints - with some basic facts holding true and the rest being highly slanted details. One such well known legend, according to the mythical official account, was about a 13 year old boy, named Pavlik Morozov, who denounced his father as a kulak (an enemy of the State), and, shortly after, he and his younger brother were murdered by their grandfather and an accomplice.(17)

To serve the leader cult of Stalin, the visual arts were reduced to iconology - which is, according to Erwin Panofsky, "the values and attitudes beneath images"(18) - became a virtual industry - mass producing Stalin portraits and busts to hang or stand alongside those of Lenin. One very big ideological and iconological measure that happened was the embalming of

Lenin's corpse to be displayed in a mausoleum on Red Square - in the name of creating traditions and icons of the Soviet State. To the true Russian Orthodox believers, this was all very alien and completely unlike anything in their Christian heritage. It is rather ironic that this occurred in the same State that denounced religion because it transformed the image of Lenin into a virtual god-like figure. Of course, this was all done at the behest of Stalin because he wanted to be constantly compared to Lenin and to have it seem like he was carrying on Lenin's ideological torch. Other key social imagery was also deepened and emblazened into everyday life - such as the symbolic roles of men and women in Soviet society. "One facet of gender construction, that was born with the Revolution, remained unaltered and was even deepened: the identification of women with the countryside, and thus subliminally with backwardness, passivity, and nurturing; and the man with the city, industry and power."(19)

Such imagery was widely used by the Bolshevik regime to 'candy-coat' everything that the masses were to hear, read or talk about. The basic logic there was that if the Party kept telling everybody how well things were going with building the communist society, and how much better things would still become in the future, then people would eventually believe it - since there would be no one telling them otherwise. Yet the suffering in the Soviet Union (in terms of human loss) during the Stalinist period, through domestic and foreign means, was colossal: about 40 times greater than that of Britain, and around 70 times

---

greater than that of the United States.(20) No person or family was left completely untouched by these tragedies, and yet the official culture would not allow anything negative - like mourning or pessimism - to be expressed, much less even acknowledgment of the existence of such tragedies (because to admit that would be to admit its own weakness).

The horrors of collectivization, the great famine, the recurring waves of purge and killings, the vast network of slave and death camps were not only totally absent from popular culture; their possibility was culturally denied by visions of rural prosperity, urban harmony and success, and a new dawn of freedom. A web of fantasy and a giant political coverup deflected dissatisfaction of the masses against alleged enemies of the people.(21)

There is even evidence suggesting that Stalin himself was not fully aware of the reality of the situation in the Soviet Union. Nikita Khrushchev, who eventually would come to succeed Stalin by the year (1956), said of him, at the Twentieth Party Congress that:

Stalin, never traveling anywhere in the provinces and speaking with workers or collective farmers, "knew the country and agriculture only from films. And these films had dressed up and beautified the existing situation in agriculture. Many films so pictured kolkhoz life that the tables were bending from the weight of turkeys and geese. Evidently, Stalin thought that it was actually so."(22)

This Stalinist, official cultural system encouraged people to have "fun" within a context of order, morality and labor, without any frivolty or vice. The culture that was readily available to the masses was heavily politicized and functioned at the level of direct political communication. It also allowed for controlled spontaneity - which would be used as the safety valve to hold public desires in check. Anything like genuine public satire was not allowed, and so no counter-culture could



be built around it - creating a void for such things.

World War II (in Russia it is known as the Great Patriotic War) provided a much needed boost for the official culture in the sense that, again in the name of survival, the regime permitted (and promoted) the use of nationalist fervor to protect the motherland. Subsequently, there was a revitalization of history. Heroism and love of country were popularized, as well as hate and ridicule of the enemy. Classic novels even reappeared such as Tolstoy's "War and Peace", which, at that time, was read for its parallels and promises. After the War, this nationalism led into a revival of anti-semitism, which had been brought on by nationalism and cut through all aspects of Soviet entertainment and popular culture, and once again there was a crackdown on cultural freedoms once they were no longer needed. The end of World War II and the start of the Cold War was reason enough to maintain that crackdown of what was officially allowed in the culture.

c) Manufactured Culture of 'the Thaw' Period

The period of Nikita Khrushchev, after the repression of the Stalinist years, came to be known as the cultural Thaw - which, I see as representing the ongoing historical two-step of the regime between being more conservative or more liberal. The Thaw mainly grew out of the general need and desire to make some sense out of, and deal with, all that occurred during the previous period under Stalin - everyone was tired of the Terror

and the Purges. Much of the blame for what happened in the Stalin Era was placed on the deceased Stalin himself. In addition, the popular desire for Western music and movies in the late '40s and early '50s was still prevalent at this time, and the regime felt that it was wise to use its safety valve (controlled spontaneity) to quell such unrest.

The Bolshevik government tried to label all of the rock-and-roll and jazz music and dance styles that were prevalent as "alien primitivism", and jazz groups of their own were employed to parody the rock - but audiences were loving what they were supposed to laugh at. The restless youth (the stilyagi) were not so numerous, but their threat came with public rejection of official values, which was, ironically enough, the same way the Bolshevik 'manufactured culture' started in its rebellion against the culture of Imperialist Russia. The regime basically feared the 'infection' of the masses by the few. So, many were sent off to assist with the industrial expansion into the yet rural areas of the Soviet Union, which itself has created a new myth and a new image.

Other aspects that were allowed to surface, were such things as the "discovery" in the 1950s of the drinking problem in the USSR - since social inquiry was legal again. Prison camps were releasing priests, who came out with burning faith, and criminals, who brought with them the songs and toughness and 'tribal bravado' of their sub-culture. Yet Khrushchev would eventually be removed from power for allowing too much, doing too little and promising what even the staunchest Bolshevik

knew was impossible - such as a completely communist state in the USSR by the year 1980.

d) Manufactured Culture of 'the Stagnation' Period

The hallmarks of the period of Leonid Brezhnev included: a peaceful, stable society; material growth; full employment - although much underemployment; and 2/3 of the population living in urban areas, but the 'manufactured' culture, however, wasn't doing anything at all. The public's hunger for more was being satisfied by various 'organic' cultures, and with the economic, political, and cultural systems remaining so rigid in the period, which is known as the Stagnation, it was the best time for counter-cultures to arise. In answer to the problems of the day, which gave way to such counter-cultures, such as agricultural decay, low efficiency in the workplace, technical lagging, corruption and low Slavic birthrates, the regime only responded with smug slogans about progress.

During the Stagnation, Soviet culture included both 'manufactured' and 'organic' elements, although they were quite separate. In all aspects of culture, when given a choice, people were not as willing to run out and be choked by the political messages of the 'manufactured culture', and, to be certain, there were always other options in lieu of the fact there were so many available sub-cultures.

e) Manufactured Culture of the Period of Glasnost

---

When Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985, he ushered in the period of Glasnost, which was yet again done with the intentions to secure the State and bolster the power of the Bolshevik regime. Unprecedented freedoms of expression were allowed, as was spontaneously generated culture from below (which was legitimized by authorities), all within the preconceived notion of controlled spontaneity and the new Gorbachev innovation of controlled opposition. It was at this point when the 'manufactured' and 'organic' cultures were inched together by the will of the State, and not exclusively from the desire of the masses.

During Glasnost, there was, in essence, a conscious pullout of the government from much of the arts, and therefore 'organic culture' was allowed to take its place; 'manufactured culture' existed only in the sense that the government still monitored what went on in the cultural landscape - albeit they were allowing more and more than ever before. The limitations on the official, 'manufactured culture' were gradually being broadened more and more.

Changes of ideological significance took place on the TV as when, in 1986, the news program "Time" replaced its logo of the old Kremlin tower with a global symbol. Disasters, violent crimes, and civil disorders, all once hidden vices of society, were now reported. Commercials arrived with semi-privitization and joint-ventures with foreign companies. Religious leaders regularly appeared on TV, but it was only the phenomenon of pseudo-medical faith healing that won millions of viewers.(23)

Independent radio stations appeared in 1991. Rock-and-roll music was fully recognized, legitimized and flourished in this period. Many old forms of culture that didn't enjoy enormous popularity - such as mass song, folk music, jazz and pop music - were all kept very much alive by: radio, TV, records and lingering public affection.

### III) Organic Culture of the 5 Periods of Soviet History

#### a) Organic Culture of the NEP Period

In early Soviet culture, there was a total rejection of the culture of Imperialist Russia. In its place, only the 'manufactured culture' of the Bolsheviks was offered - with its highly politicized language, Bolshevik ideals were promoted in all the arts. 'Organic culture', immediately after the creation of the Soviet Union - in the early days of the new country, was practically non-existent, but only until the government began its New Economic Policy. At that time, the 'manufactured culture' was being promoted by the Party and the State, but since culture and economics were linked, 'organic culture' - both foreign and domestic - was tolerated and enjoyed some measures of success.

With the middle-class entrepreneurs of the New Economic Policy, the Nepmen, came bits of the old culture, which were incorporated into the 'manufactured' culture, and, consequently, there was an explosion of spontaneous, uncontrolled creativeness. This, in turn, created an atmosphere where the culture of the

---

State was allowed to appeal to popular tastes in order to hold the interest of the masses. The official culture did offer what the people wanted, but it also made certain to always teach and "promote the principle(s) of the Party." The general Party line was still the same - censorship from above, but because of the economical situation there were also many freedoms within the 'manufactured' culture. Many ended up taking advantage of the liberality of the times to enjoy Western culture as an outlet for their desires.

What the masses wanted was not to be educated, but rather to be entertained for entertainment's sake. Not everything had to have some grandiose socialist purpose or comment to be enjoyed. The newly-formed Soviet people loved pure, unadulterated adventure in films and literature - such as Tarzan.(24) Many preferred European and American films because they didn't want any didactics; they craved zany comedies, crime stories, action, surprise, romance, intrigue and exotic settings. In fact, some of the most popular film stars in Soviet Russia at the time were American actors: Charlie Chaplin - for his portrayal of the little man's lot in life; Mary Pickford - for her perky personality; and Douglas Fairbanks - primarily for his athletic prowess.(25)

In music, jazz returned after a hiatus immediately following the Revolution because the political climate allowed it and the social climate sustained it. Eventually, new Soviet jazz bands replaced the visiting Negro bands. With the return of jazz came popular dance steps such as the foxtrot and the tango.

Folk songs, and other light melodies that were fun to sing, were preferred by many over the heavily politicized songs of the Party.

The circus continued to be popular during the NEP period, although it was by no means immune to Bolshevik Party policy. It seemed to try to hold on to the things that traditionally made it so popular, but many of the staples of the circus were attacked by Party intellectuals - such as magic, animal acts, clowning, and stunts. In the end, stress on ideological abstractions weakened the true dynamic of the circus. All that made the shows too stale for the crowds to enjoy - ridicule could only be directed against the enemy and not the Party.

In what amounted to a mid-way point between many different kinds of popular culture, there cropped up "beerhall estradas" - which were basically unlicensed stages in cafes or restaurants.(26) A big reason for their existence was due to the fact that revolutionary-political idioms weren't so appealing to the mass population, and that such dialects didn't fill the hunger for general entertainment. Such "beerhall estradas" were clear examples of the 'organic culture' trying to fit in, trying to find its place, in the new social order. Another example of this could be the affor mentioned filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, who, like many directors, was pushed to promote Party principles and educate the masses while at the same time still trying to be artistic about everything.

Most of the masses didn't get what they had been meant to get from either the 'manufactured' or the 'organic' cultures

- essentially it was a lost culture. That was probably because most of them were 'uncultured' peasants, and they were lost within the culture. These were people who couldn't understand the overly politicized language used in the newspapers - if they could read at all. As the Bolsheviks pumped their publications into various villages and provinces in the name of "good reading", a 1922 inquiry in a region of central Russia revealed that Soviet newspapers were being used as cigarette paper by the peasants there.(27)

b) Organic Culture of the Stalinist Period

The only 'organic culture' that had not been eliminated under the cultural crackdown by Stalin was transferred, and was able to thrive, in the soldier camps and jails. During World War II (the Great Patriotic War), there was a bit more to Soviet culture in the sense that classic literature was read (and other parts of Imperialistic Russian culture was used) in the name of nationalism. 'Organic culture' was driven underground, and it consisted of such sub-cultures as those of: the streets, the school-corridors, the barracks, the prison camps, and the like, where the government was unable to fully control and dictate what to do or how to think. 'Organic' culture could not exist very homogenously, and, during the Stalinist period, it survived by splitting into many different sub-cultures.

The void of not having public counter-cultures (i.e., 'organic cultures') to respond to, or against, the 'manufactured



culture' was filled in by outcast and underground collectives, such as gangs, orphan homes, and prison camps, where counter-cultures flourished. They were complete with customs, jokes, songs, violent cult figures and martyrs of their own. "Gulag jazz" flourished at the same time jazz itself ceased to exist in Soviet society; certain convicts would be turned into feifs by the camp administrators for their own amusement.(28) During the Stalinist purges, large segments of criminals, homeless children and prostitutes were swept off the streets during the early '30s, the "blatnaya kultura" of the Russian urban underground was relocated en masse into jails and camps.(29) Once there, it would join with the culture of the older inmates to create a very large and rich cultural system which would last for 30+ years and sustain most of the 'organic culture' in the Soviet Union at that time.

c) Organic Culture of 'the Thaw' Period

The reign of Nikita Khrushchev was the first step on the long road back from the darkness of the Stalinist years, which would end up having such an adverse affect on the rest of Soviet history that the society itself would never fully recover from it. During this period, the 'organic' culture was once again tolerated and was given a place in the official culture.

Rock-and-roll first arrived in the 1950s over Voice of America radio, and that, in turn, generated an industry of smuggled records and homemade recordings - done on x-ray plates

- that was sustained by a large underground market. Cowboy films were popular, and such characters as Tarzan were viewed as being much more genuine than the Stalin myth, because Tarzan represented a retreat from technical civilization - the same technical civilization that they were being force fed.(30)

Around 1950, the sub-culture of young urbanites attuned to Western style was divided into the "shtatniki" - the 'Americans', who adhered to the zoot suit and big band music, and the "bitniki" - proto-hypies in jeans and sweaters, who preferred "beat" or rock music.(31) "Beatlemania" arrived as well and added another overlying division. The foxtrot, waltz and tango mixed freely with the jitterbug and the boogie and turned Soviet dance floors into museums of dance history.

During this period there were really no forbidden subjects; it was the era of political anecdotes. As an example to what popular sentiment of Khrushchev was, a joke of the time goes:

A Soviet man ran along the Kremlin wall screaming "Khrushchev - durak!" ("Khrushchev is an idiot!"), for which he received six months for disturbing the peace and nineteen and a half years for revealing a state secret.(32)

d) Organic Culture of 'the Stagnation' Period

During the Stagnation period, music would end up playing a very significant part of the 'organic culture' of the time in the sense that it was widely and frequently consumed - people were not as willing to run out and be choked by the political messages of the 'manufactured culture'. Several sub-cultures (also a part of 'organic culture') ingrained themselves into the cultural landscape as well - including the soldiers' culture

of the Afghan War and such groups as the hippies. The sub-culture of the Afghan War that rose up included spontaneous soldiers' songs (which is again parallel to the culture that existed right after the Revolution), and ambivalence, to downright opposition, to the war itself. 'Organic culture' of this period was not at all endorsed or promoted by the government; instead it all developed from the people's will.

Some counter-cultures that arose included a second economy of black and gray markets and a dissident intellectual and political underground. Popular focus during the period was on indigenous song and dance, and, in literature, rural prose was preferred because it focused on the disappearing peasant way of life, which (after collectivization and anti-religion drives) was seen as "the last refuge of real Russian values." (33) It was a serene and dignified sadness and it stressed a 'radiant past', which was much better than the folklore and synthetic, official 'radiant future'.

In the mid- to late-1960s, guitar poetry was in its heyday as a kind of alternative culture - with the likes of Okudzhava, Galich, and Vladimir Vysotsky. The 1970s was the age of Vysotsky. His work has been called an "encyclopedia of Soviet life", and he poked fun at all of the ridiculous little idiosyncrisms of the 'manufactured culture' of the Bolsheviks - such as revolutionary traditions, Soviet heroes, and morning excercises on TV. He also sang about inequality, official hypocrisy, the harshness of urban life and the joys and blues of liquor and sex. The candor of his songs was enhanced by the language of

the streets, the army, the tent cities, and the camps. He was attacked in the press for lyrics that "disfigured the Russian language", and "for singing in the name of, and on behalf of, alcoholics, soldiers in disciplinary units and criminals." (34) There were certainly numerous comparisons between Vysotsky's songs and those of the prison camp cultures of the Stalin Era - which supports the notion of the back and forth nature of Soviet culture throughout its history. Vysotsky was first an actor (working at the Taganka Theatre in Moscow), but his work there was eclipsed by his songwriting. His popularity was huge - with thousands of underground tapes being produced as well as a few official recordings. His early death in 1980 unleashed a national mourning; by 1984, the regime recognized Vysotsky's stature by showing all 26 of his films - in which he usually played the tough guy role (which was similar to his image as a songwriter). Vysotsky's image did a lot to create a cult-of-personality of his own - which returned culture to what the people made of instead of what the Party dictated it should be.

TV came to be a normal part of life and played a part in the decline of attendance at clubs and other places of entertainment. The leisure culture that existed in the Brezhnev period was still dominated by visiting friends and "going out". (35) Popular 'hangouts' were such places as street corners, parks, and hotel entrances - to talk, tell jokes, flirt, neck, play cards, dance, and so on, by choice, because any officially acceptable 'place of leisure' was not as desirable. Still, at

this time, men had much more leisure time than women because of old Bolshevik images that were being kept alive - that show the image of the woman is to be passive and stay at home, and the image of the man is to have strength and power.

e) Organic Culture of the Period of Glasnost

After 'manufactured' culture had been waning throughout the Stagnation period, it died practically overnight during the period of Glasnost. The government exercised little-to-no control over what was allowed, and the freedoms that arose were the kind that were never before heard of.

Among some of the groups of the 'organic culture' included the rebirth of the hippie movement, fascist groups and street gangs - pretty much, it was anything goes. Criticism was allowed, but by this point there was such a backlog that it soon overwhelmed and overtook the same government that devised it.

Street culture was a chosen leisure form that was complete with daring outdoor art and a whole marketplace of cultural forms - such as rock bands, poets, sellers of little trinkets with bold and topical slogans. All of which was the same visual and theatrical elements that linked hippie hangouts of America and Europe into a single culture. The hippie movement, which had slumbered for two decades, returned in 1985 and combined social non-conformity with religious sensibility. Their main goal was to withdraw from Soviet society. They had their own jargon, hangouts and values (much like the old prison camp

cultures) and they were very sexually active - even for Russians. They systematically ridiculed every Soviet icon and tradition: the medals, war movies, the flag, cult heroes, and even Lenin himself was not exempt.

Even after the Afghan War, military veterans of that war continued to contribute to the general culture in the Soviet Union. Alienation from civilian society added to the trouble for some of readjusting to peacetime life, and all that led to the creation of veteran groups, military-patriotic societies and benefit associations, the type of which had never existed before.

The gang phenomenon ingrained itself into everyday Soviet life during the Glasnost Era. Some members melted into criminal syndicates; juvenile violence increased among working-class and vocational school youth; many city gangs became vigilantes. Neo-nazi youths, around in one form or another since the 1960s, resurfaced in the 1980s in urban gangs. The mafioso maintained strong control over the black markets, which were still prevalent. The crime, vice, and gang cultures were the most publicized during Glasnost than at any other point in all of Soviet history.

#### IV) Conclusion

At the 1945 Kremlin reception in honor of the participants of the Victory parade, Stalin gave a toast and said:

"Do not think I want to say something extraordinary. I have the simplest of common toasts. I would like to drink

to people who are considered "screws" of the great state mechanism, but without whom we, the marshals and commanders of fronts and armies, are, to put it bluntly, not worth a darn. Some "screw" is out of order - and all's finished. I raise a toast to people who are common, ordinary, modest - for "screws" that keep our large state mechanisms in a state of readiness in all areas of science, economics and the military. These are modest people. No one writes anything about them, they have no titles, no great ranks, but these are the people who hold us up, as the base holds up the peak."(36)

According to Stalin, if any one person was causing problems, the answer was to simply replace him or her with a less problematic "screw". People were denied their very humanity - including those who created this monster known as "the Bolshevik experiment". A quote that is commonly attributed to Stalin goes, "If you have a man, and you have a problem, get rid of the man, and you get rid of the problem." This view of human beings allowed not only for the creation of a 'manufactured' culture, but also for its flourishing and long-term existence.

Throughout Soviet history, the 'manufactured' culture of the Bolshevik Party was always dominant, as was the government's involvement in culture, until the period of Glasnost. At that time, it disappeared completely to leave a place for the 'organic' culture. The reason for that is because the 'manufactured' culture was always an artificial construct - it was completely alien to the masses, and its survival depended on the government to constantly impose it upon the society.

'Organic' culture throughout Soviet history, in my opinion, is like the Phoenix Bird, which is constantly being reborn from the ashes. It was a form of counter-"revolutionary"-culture,

which, although at times the government would support it to grant the society illusory freedoms, it drew inspiration from itself and was adaptable to any political system. It constantly changed its location for its very survival because it could. This is also the reason why it continues to exist.

There were periods of obvious co-existence of both the 'manufactured' and the 'organic' cultures - such as the NEP and the Thaw, and there were periods when the 'organic' culture could only exist underground - such as during the Stalinist period, but there was always, in some form during every period, an 'organic' culture. This is because the 'organic' culture was always alive - it was breathing life into Soviet society, and it was communicating real life to whomever wanted to hear it. Once the government put 'manufactured' culture to the side during Glasnost, and let this "Phoenix Bird" take flight, there was no stopping it. The government couldn't undo what it had already done. This immortal nature of 'organic' culture is also the hope for another cultural rebirth for Russia in the future.



ENDNOTES

1. Tucker, Robert C., Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1928 - 1941, p. 567.
2. Kluckhohn, Clyde, "Culture." [Collier's Encyclopedial], p. 558.
3. Bennett, John W., "Culture". [The Encyclopedia Americana], vol. 8, p. 315.
4. "Culture". [The New Encyclopedia Britannica], vol. 3, p. 784.
5. Dziewonowski, M.K., A History of Soviet Russia, p. 407.
6. Struve, Gleb, Russian Literature under Lenin and Stalin 1917 - 1953, p. 261.
7. Dobrenko, Evgeny, "The Literature of the Zhdanov Era: Mentality, Mythology, Lexicon." [Late Soviet Culture], p. 123.
8. Clark, Katerina, "Changing Historical Paradigms." [Late Soviet Culture], p. 289.
9. Stites, Richard, Russian Popular Culture, p. 49.
10. Ibid, p. 48.
11. Ibid, p. 49.
12. Ibid, p. 51.
13. Ibid, p. 54.
14. Ibid, p. 55.
15. Ibid, p. 42.
16. Dobrenko, p. 135.
17. Stites, p. 68.
18. Ibid, p. 83.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid, p. 98.
21. Ibid, p. 95.

22. Tucker, p. 567.
23. Stites, p. 190.
24. Ibid, p. 42.
25. Ibid, p. 56.
26. Ibid, p. 52.
27. Ibid, p. 42.
28. Ibid, p. 122.
29. Ibid, p. 97.
30. Ibid, p. 126.
31. Ibid, p. 132.
32. Ibid, p. 146.
33. Ibid, p. 150.
34. Ibid, p. 158.
35. Ibid, p. 174.
36. Dobrenko, p. 119.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Brumberg, Abraham, ed., Chronicle of a Revolution - A Western Soviet Inquiry into Perestroika. Pantheon Books, 1990.
- Cummings, Mark, editor-in-chief; Lorimer, Lawrence T., editorial director, Encyclopedia Americana volume 8. Grolier, Inc., 1993.
- Dziewanowski, M.K., A History of Soviet Russia. Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1993.
- Esposito, Joseph J., President, Publishing Group; Norton, Peter B., President and C.E.O., The New Encyclopedia Britannica volume 3, 15th edition. Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1994.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila; Rabinowitch, Alexander; and Stites, Richard, eds., Russia in the Era of NEP - Exploration in Soviet Society and Culture. Indiana University Press, 1991.
- Friedberg, Maurice and Isham, Heyward, eds., Soviet Society Under Gorbachev - Current Trends and the Prospects for Reform. M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1987.
- Halsey, William D., editorial director; Johnston, Bernard, editor in chief, Collier's Encyclopedia volume 7. P.F. Collier, Inc., 1987.
- Jonson, Priscilla; Labedy, Leopold, Khrushchev and the Arts - The Politics of Soviet Culture 1962-1964. The M.I.T. Press, 1965.
- Lahusen, Thomas (with Kuperman, Gene), editor, Late Soviet Culture - From Perestroika to Novostroika. Duke University Press, 1993.
- Stites, Richard, Russian Popular Culture - Entertainment and Society since 1900. Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Struve, Gleb, Russian Literature under Lenin and Stalin 1917-1953. University of Oklahoma Press, 1971.
- Tucker, Robert C., Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1928 - 1941, 1st edition. Norton, Inc., 1990.
- Von Laue, Theodore H., Why Lenin? Why Stalin? Why Gorbachev? - The Rise and Fall of the Soviet System, 3rd edition. Harper Collins College Publishers, 1993.