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Unmasking the Wolf in Sheep's Clothing: Soviet and American Campaigns against the Enemy's Journalists, 1946 – 1953

Dina Fainberg

Harrison Salisbury arrived in Moscow in the early days of March 1949 as the newly appointed bureau chief and correspondent for the *New York Times*. This was Salisbury's second trip to the Soviet Union. In last visit, during the dramatic winter of 1943, he remained in the USSR for fifteen months, covering the Soviet war effort for the United Press. Several months into his new assignment, Salisbury wrote to his bosses in New York that there had been a sea change in Soviet treatment of American journalists and that he felt extremely unwelcome in the Soviet capital:

Serving as an American correspondent in Moscow in these times is very much like living under siege behind enemy lines. The idea is constantly hammered into the mind of the public that we are spies. Going to the theatre and the movies you get the impression that Russia is swarming with American correspondents, all of them equipped with camel's hair coats, snap-brim hats and leicas, peering through their dark glasses at "military secrets". I don't believe there is a single anti-American play on the boards here - and there are more than 20 on the repertoire - which hasn't got an American journalist spy in the cast of characters.¹

Borrowing images from American spy novels and film noir, Salisbury sought to recreate for his editors the atmosphere of tension and anxiety that accompanied his and his colleagues' experiences in Moscow. He reported that given these portrayals in Soviet mass media, American journalists feared that they might become unwilling protagonists in a future 'spy story' fabricated by the Soviet

¹ Harrison Salisbury to Edwin L. James, 22 September 1949. Harrison Salisbury Papers, Box 187. Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Columbia University.

secret police. 'Correspondents here feel quite literally as though they were living in a powder-house which may explode at any moment,' he concluded his letter.²

Salisbury's two assignments in Russia gave him a good vantage point on the changes in Soviet attitudes toward American journalists after the Second World War. As two increasingly hostile camps replaced the wartime alliances, Soviet leaders came to view American journalists as spearheads of enemy propaganda and the weapons of U.S. imperialism. Soviet authorities erected institutional barriers to international reporting and subjected American correspondents in Moscow to censorship, surveillance, travel restrictions, and expulsions. Mass media and popular cultural products, such as theatre and film, were mobilised to discredit the reporting of American correspondents. Aggravated by such treatment, Salisbury and his colleagues wrote extensively about the difficulties of foreign correspondents in the Soviet Union. By the late 1940s, pundits and readers in the U.S. came to identify Soviet censorship and maltreatment of American journalists as one of the defining traits of an oppressive Communist dictatorship.

It is less known that the correspondents for the Soviet news agency TASS (Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union) in the United States also felt the repercussions of the deteriorating relationship between the two superpowers. Shortly after the war, American officials and pundits began to argue that TASS correspondents gathered intelligence rather than news and therefore endangered national security. American efforts to curb TASS developed on several parallel fronts and often involved grassroots initiatives that united journalists, government

² Ibid.

agencies, businessmen, and anti-Communist zealots. The people who became involved in the anti-TASS campaign, however, did not consider their efforts as regulation of the foreign news media. The campaign attacked the premises of Soviet state-controlled reporting and questioned whether Soviet correspondents in the U.S. should be considered journalists. The resultant atmosphere of suspicion and hostility toward TASS had a long-lasting impact on the agency's work in the United States.

This article introduces a comparative framework to the study of Cold War journalism. Building on contemporary publications and archival sources from Russia and the United States, it examines the Soviet campaigns against American correspondents and American crusades against TASS. A comparative approach reveals that targeting of rivals' journalists was not an idiosyncratic feature of the Soviet political system, but a practice that transcended the Cold War divide. Mutual hostility led both superpowers to abandon their wartime agreements for information exchange and journalistic collaboration. The Cold War imagination transformed these foreign correspondents from symbols of wartime alliance into dangerous subversives. A comparative approach demonstrates that Soviet and American campaigns against the enemy's correspondents were deeply embedded in their respective, socialist or liberal, approaches to journalism, news-making, and press-government relationship. These different ideological injunctions underlined the dynamics of each campaign, determined the mechanisms that were available to the participants, and informed each side's responses to the attacks on its

journalists.³ Thus the main difference between the two campaigns, I contend, was not *whether* but *how* ideology informed the ideas and the actions on each side. As hostile references to enemy' s correspondents multiplied in the Soviet Union and in the United States, propagandists and pundits on both sides positioned journalism as the symbol of their respective social and political systems. As a result, the rhetoric of rights, duties, and freedom of the press in the Soviet Union and in the U.S. became entangled in the ideological rivalry of the two superpowers.

Soviet 'Policy of Fortitude' and American Foreign Correspondents

On the 7th of November 1945, the 27th anniversary of the October Revolution, Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, Viacheslav Molotov, hosted a banquet for the diplomatic corps in Moscow. As the festivities progressed, Molotov began to make rounds in the great ballroom accompanied by Andrey Vyshinskii and a wine bearer. Each time Molotov came by his favourite foreign Ambassador of the moment, he stopped and proposed a public toast. In one such round, Molotov halted in front of Eddy Gilmore, the Moscow correspondent for the Associated Press, and suggested a toast with the American journalist. This unexpected attention made Gilmore feel as if he was 'knocked over with the Kremlin.'⁴ After a brief exchange, through a loud and drunk translator, who slightly forgot his English during the celebration,

³ My definition of 'ideology' derives from what Terry Eagleton called the 'intersection between belief system and political power.' The advantage of this 'broad definition,' according to Eagleton, is that it reflects the 'common usage' of the word ideology and could describe both the confirmation and the challenging of a particular social order. Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991), 6-7.

⁴ Eddy Gilmore to Alan J. Gould, Assistant General Manager of the Associated Press, 10 November 1945. AP 2.1, The General Files: Foreign Bureau Files, The Archives of The Associated Press. (Hereafter APA).

Molotov made an unexpected move. The Minister asked Gilmore what he would say if the Soviet censorship of foreign correspondents in Moscow were to be abolished. Staggering and wondering if he had heard correctly, Gilmore answered that the removal of censorship would be a fine thing. Molotov then proposed a toast 'for better understanding of one another,' a toast that Gilmore insisted to drink in vodka, to show his respect for the Russian minister. When Molotov moved on to his next drinking fellow, U.S. Ambassador Harriman pulled Gilmore aside and said that he believed that the minister just indicated that censorship would be lifted. The following days showed that Molotov's promise was sincere. 'Not a word has been taken out of any story of mine and they've been passing political commentary without going through their always-up-to-now horrible process of referring us upstairs to Vyshinskii and Molotov,' wrote Gilmore several days after the banquet.⁵

The idyll was short-lived. One month later, in December 1945, foreign journalists became a source of a small scandal in the Soviet Politburo. While vacationing in Sochi, Stalin opened the most recent dossier on foreign press coverage of the Soviet Union and came upon two 'slanderous dispatches' authored by the Moscow correspondents of the *New York Times* and the *Daily Herald*.⁶ The first item proposed that the members of the Politburo disagreed in their assessment of the London Conference of Foreign Ministers. The second item reported rumours that Stalin was planning to resign his post as the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars. Stalin blamed the 'slanderous dispatches' on

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ TASS prepared these compendia in its foreign bureaus on a weekly basis.

the loosened censorship of foreign correspondents.⁷ He charged that Molotov's eagerness to appease Great Britain and the U.S. sapped his ideological vigilance. The 'slanderous dispatches' of foreign correspondents proved to Stalin that Molotov erred when he thought that relaxation of censorship would promote a better understanding between the USSR and its former allies. Molotov's 'liberal attitude' undermined Soviet foreign policy and presented the bourgeois press with an opportunity to depict the USSR as weak and prone to concessions.⁸ Stalin urged his comrades to understand that uncompromising treatment of foreign correspondents must be part and parcel of the Soviet 'policy of fortitude' vis-à-vis the United States and Great Britain.⁹

The new 'policy of fortitude' toward foreign correspondents went into effect in February 1946. It manifested itself first and foremost in the tightening of Soviet censorship. The domestic censoring body - The General Directorate for the Protection of Secrets of the State (Glavlit) – took over the Foreign Ministry's responsibility of censoring foreign correspondents.¹⁰ Under Glavlit the censorship of foreign correspondents was exacerbated and revamped. The censors had the power to alter the journalists' copy however they saw fit. The journalists received no indications as to why certain aspects of their reports, or sometimes the entire

⁷ O.V. Khlevniuk, et. al., ed. *Politburo Tsk Vkp(B) I Soviet Ministrov Sssr, 1945-1953* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2002), 195.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 195-202.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 201-202.

¹⁰ "Resolution of Politburo Tsk VKP(b) on censorship of outgoing information from the Soviet Union," 25.02.1946. RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 3. D. 1056. Ll. 25-26. Accessed via the Internet Archive of Alexander Yakovlev Foundation: <http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/69274>. Last accessed on 26.4.2012.

dispatches, were 'killed.'¹¹ Another set of rules prohibited foreign correspondents from filing analyses or assessments, especially concerning Soviet politics, the economy, or foreign relations. The new rules thus reduced the journalists' dispatches to contextualised quotes from TASS or the Soviet press. However, these too were sometimes censored without explanation and correspondents could not be confident that even a direct quote from Pravda would be cleared.¹² It soon transpired that the new rules applied only to "bourgeois correspondents" – journalists writing for non-communist foreign media. The Ministry of Foreign Relations instructed Glavlit "to pass" the telegrams of correspondents for British, American, and French communist newspapers without intervention.¹³

American correspondents soon learned that censorship was only one of the many obstacles to news-reporting from the Soviet Union. In November 1946 direct broadcasting from Moscow was banned, which led to the departure of CBS correspondent Richard Hottelet.¹⁴ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs began to deny

¹¹ Telegram to Secretary of State, 5 March 1946; Box 126, 1946:891; Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, U.S. Embassy Moscow; Classified General Records, 1941-1963; Records of the Foreign Service of the Department of State, RG 84; National Archives, College Park MD. (Hereafter: NACP, U.S. Embassy in Moscow).

The Politburo updated the rules in March 1946. The new additions permitted the correspondents to see the censors' interventions. RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 3. D. 1057. L. 18. Accessed via Internet archive of Alexander Yakovlev Foundation: <http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/69274>. Last accessed 26.4.2012.

¹² Whitman Bassow, *The Moscow Correspondents: Reporting on Russia from the Revolution to Glasnost* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1988), 123; Craig Thompson to Time Magazine, 26 November 1946; 1946:891, Box 126; NACP, U.S. Embassy in Moscow.

¹³ GARF (State Archive of Russian Federation), f. R-9425, op. 1, d. 759, ll. 1; 3; 5; 7.

¹⁴ The Acting Secretary of State to the Chargé in the Soviet Union (Durbrov), November 10, 1946, *FRUS 1946*, VI, 804.

journalists' requests to visit sites or to travel outside of Moscow and thus, made it all but impossible to report from anywhere other than the Soviet capital.¹⁵

American correspondents also found increasing difficulties in establishing contact with Soviet citizens and reporting about 'the man on the street.' U.S. embassy personnel and correspondents found that Russians eschewed any contact and regarded the foreigners with suspicion.¹⁶

The new rules brought foreign journalists under the jurisdiction of institutions and practices that developed during the 1930s in response to Soviet anxieties about foreign threat. The Bolsheviks abolished censorship when they came to power, but they reintroduced it in 1922 as a temporary measure to prevent enemies of the revolution from using the press against the new socialist regime.¹⁷ Glavlit began as a modest organisation that was charged with scanning the press for signs of anti-Soviet propaganda and state secrets.¹⁸ During the 1930s, as each wave of purges escalated the fear of foreign enemies and their domestic henchmen, Glavlit acquired new functions and expanded its staff. The Central

¹⁵ Foreigners were not allowed to travel by car further than 50 kilometres from Moscow, and even these trips were confined to ten specific roads. A trip outside of the city required an advance notification to the Soviet authorities. "Treatment of U.S. Personnel in the Soviet Union," 26 May 1950; Box 8: 1620; American Representation in the USSR, 1933-1967; Bureau of European Affairs, Office of Soviet Union Affairs; Bilateral Political Relations Subject Files, 1921-1977, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD. (Hereafter: NACP, Bilateral Political Relations).

¹⁶ Eddy Gilmore quoted in a letter from Lloyd Stratton (Assistant to AP General Manager) to John Lloyd. 8 September 1947. AP 01.4B, Box 38, Folder 101, Records of Board President Robert McLean, APA.

¹⁷ Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 4-14.

¹⁸ Zhirkov G.V., *Istoriia tsenzury v Rossii XIX-XX vv* (Moscow: Aspekt Press, 2001), online edition, Part II: Evoliutsiia sovetskoi tsenzury: glavlit – kak ee ofitsial' noe ucherezhdienie (1922-1927).

http://evartist.narod.ru/text9/38.htm#3_09

Committee urged Glavlit to emphasise vigilance, broadened the definition of a 'state secret,' and installed a censor in every newspaper.¹⁹ During the Second World War, Glavlit gained a powerful military arm and new functions. By 1945, it was a vast empire that employed thousands of censors throughout the Soviet Union. Glavlit decided what constituted a state secret and provided pre- and post-publication censorship of all printed matter. It monitored every Soviet broadcast for domestic and foreign audiences and screened literature departing and arriving through the Soviet borders. Glavlit employees also supervised the excision of 'politically harmful' literature from libraries and publishing houses.

The Cold War reintroduced anxieties about existential threat to the Soviet regime and these anxieties came to shape Soviet policies toward foreign journalists. The official approach to 'bourgeois correspondents' was influenced by an ideological postulate that mass media could not exist independently of class interests. While the correspondents of communist newspapers were regarded as the friendly voice of international socialism and faced almost no restrictions in their reporting, "bourgeois correspondents" were perceived as the agents of hostile governments, inevitably linked to the ruling elites of their countries and seeking to undermine the Soviet Union like their capitalist masters. The restrictions on foreign journalists, especially censorship, attempted to minimise the damage that these 'enemy agents' could cause and to regulate the production of the Soviet image overseas.

¹⁹ Zhirkov, *Istoriia tsenzury*, Part II. http://evartist.narod.ru/text9/38.htm#3_09; Vladimir A. Nvezhin, "Esl' zavtra v pokhod:" *podgotovka k voine i ideologicheskaia propaganda v 30kh – 40kh godax* (Moscow: Eksmo, 2007), 55-57.

American Journalist – a Hero of the anti-American Campaign

The new regulations on foreign correspondents failed to help the Soviet image abroad; in fact, the regulations made this image even worse. Throughout 1946, the dossiers of foreign press reports about the USSR grew thicker and their contents more acrimonious. American and British news media accused the Soviet Union of war mongering and of obstructing foreign correspondents in their efforts to report the truth about the USSR. In retaliation, the Soviet press launched a publicity campaign against 'bourgeois journalists,' especially those from the United States. The campaign facilitated a broader shift in postwar rhetoric and explicitly identified the American press with the worst excesses of capitalist mass media.

For example, the June 1947 issue of the popular satirical journal *Krokodil* featured a comic strip entitled, 'Illustrations to the notes of a foreign correspondent' s visit to Moscow.' The comic chronicled a 'bourgeois' correspondent' s travel throughout the USSR and derided his falsifying comments about his Soviet experience. While visiting a beach the journalist is seen scribbling in his notebook: 'I had an opportunity to observe that the people surrounding me had no clothes to wear.'²⁰ In the following months and years anti-American cartoons and derision of the 'bourgeois press' became more prominent and more sinister.²¹ *Krokodil* depicted the 'bourgeois press' as ugly men, spiders, or snakes who were seen labouring to construct lies about the Soviet Union. From

²⁰ *Krokodil*, 20 June 1947, p. 10.

²¹ In 1945, *Krokodil* carried three cartoons targeting the American press (July 6, September 10 and December 30). In 1946, three cartoons attacked the press (20 August, 10 September, 30 September). In 1947 six cartoons were dedicated to the American press.

1947 these images were reinforced in *Pravda* articles dedicated to 'warmongering bourgeois press' and its 'service to capitalist bosses.'²²

Other cultural products, especially theatre and film shared this preoccupation with 'capitalist press'. The most famous of these was Konstantin Simonov's play *The Russian Question*. The play was published in 1947 and received the prestigious Stalin Prize in Literature and the Arts. It centred around the American press, capitalist sponsorship of anti-Soviet propaganda, and a politically conscious journalist who seeks the truth. The protagonist of the play is an American journalist Harry Smith, whose capitalist bosses send him to the USSR, expecting a negative publication upon his return. Smith defies his bosses and sets out to write a book that will tell Americans that they have been misled about the Soviet Union, which is really a wonderful place. The media magnates are incensed; Smith loses his job, his girlfriend, and his house, but he sticks to his story. Stalin personally endorsed the play and instructed that it be widely publicised.²³ In 1948, Mikhail Romm's film adaptation of *The Russian Question* also received the Stalin Prize, another demonstration of the importance of its political message.

As they imagined American press, Soviet commentators emphasised both the persuasive power of individual journalists and the institutional patronage of those journalists' work. This picture was shaped by the projection of Soviet ideology and practices onto American journalism. *The Russian Question* depicted the politically

²² The 'bourgeois press' was the central topic of discussion in 3 articles that appeared in 1947, 10 articles in 1948, 15 articles in 1949, and 29 in 1950. By contrast, the term was used only once in 1945 and in 1946, and on both occasions in historical context.

²³ Konstantin Simonov, *Glazami cheloveka moego pokoleniia: razmyshleniia o I.V. Staline* (Moscow: Kniga, 1990), 103-104; 147-148.

conscious individual American reporter whose search for truth was confronted by the machinery of false consciousness propelled by the bourgeois press. In this sense, Simonov's play illustrated a distinctly Soviet belief in the dialectics of individual and collective, subjective and objective forces in history. The Soviet vision was motivated by a belief in the large institutional support and material payoffs awarded to American journalists for 'pleasing their capitalist bosses and defaming the USSR.' This Soviet tradition prided itself on ensuring the best possible material conditions for outstanding writers and correspondents.

While the fictional Harry Smith illustrated the honest and friendly foreign reporter, real-life American correspondents in Moscow were made to personify the dangers that journalists from overseas posed to Soviet security. In April 1948, Soviet newspaper *Izvestiia* accused the American journalist Robert Magidoff of espionage.²⁴ Magidoff, a Russian-born American, had worked in Moscow since 1935 as a correspondent for NBC, the British Exchange Telegraph Agency, and McGraw-Hill. *Izvestiia* published a letter from Magidoff's secretary (an American-born-now-Soviet citizen) accusing her boss of gathering intelligence for the U.S. and sending his reports via the diplomatic pouch.²⁵ U.S. Embassy and Magidoff denied the accusations, but he was instructed nonetheless to leave the Soviet Union within 48 hours.²⁶ Another espionage case involving an American journalist broke out in the early days of 1949. The Soviet authorities arrested Anna Louise

²⁴ Bassow, *Moscow Correspondents*, 124-125; "Pis'mo v Redaktsiiu," *Izvestiia*, 15 April 1948; "Expelled Reporter Quits Russia," *New York Times*, 19 April 1948.

²⁵ Bassow, *Moscow Correspondents*, 124-125; "Soviet Ousts NBC Reporter" *New York Times*, 16 April 1948.

²⁶ "Expelled Reporter Quits Russia," *New York Times*, 19 April 1948.

Strong, a member of the U.S. Communist Party and a staunch supporter of the Soviet regime. Strong, who spent several years in Moscow working for Soviet publications in foreign languages, was charged with espionage and deported.²⁷ Even communist correspondents from overseas, especially those who were friendly with Strong, began to feel not entirely welcome in Moscow.²⁸

During 1948 and 1949, the campaign against American correspondents merged into two larger propaganda initiatives: the attack on 'rootless cosmopolitans' and the anti-American propaganda campaign. The first initiative focused substantially, but not exclusively, on Jews (euphemistically referred to as 'cosmopolitans'). It sought to uproot 'Western' and Jewish influences from Soviet culture. It denigrated the West and the U.S., boosting instead Russian greatness and achievements in literature, arts, and sciences.²⁹ The second campaign, launched in 1949 by the Central Committee's Agitation and Propaganda Department (Agitprop), structured and coordinated the hitherto dispersed anti-American propaganda under one official umbrella. Agitprop's blueprint for the campaign instructed Soviet publishers, newspapers, and broadcasters 'to publish systematically materials, articles, and pamphlets

²⁷ Tracy B. Strong and Helene Keyssar, *Right in her Soul: the Life of Anna Louise Strong* (New York: Random House, 1983), 280.

²⁸ Salisbury reported to his editors that pro-Soviet Western correspondents became concerned after Strong's deportation. For example, Ralph Parker, a British communist journalist, was very nervous about his future in the USSR and attempted to leave the country. Harrison Salisbury to C. L. Sulzberger, 23 May 1949, Salisbury Papers, Box 187. Later on, when the *Daily Worker* correspondent Joseph Clark arrived in Moscow, he complained that he faces many obstructions in his reporting and that the Soviet officials were distant and unfriendly. Fisunov to Ivan Beglov, Undated 1951. GARF, f. R-4459, op. 38, d. 309, l. 48.

²⁹ Peter Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 182-183.

unmasking the aggressive plans of American imperialism and the inhuman character of the social and state order in the USA.’³⁰ The plan listed 29 topics that formed the thematic foundation of the campaign. Entry number 25, ‘Venal American Press,’ officially sanctioned the Soviet media to target American journalists.³¹ The campaign relied on the extensive Soviet apparatus of mass-media mobilization and proceeded swiftly and efficiently. Anti-American articles, books, films and plays spread like wildfire.

New cultural products eliminated the nuanced representations of American journalists featured in earlier works, such as Simonov’s *The Russian Question*. Plays, novels, and films now featured only two types of journalist-protagonists. The cast of characters in Nikolai Pogodin’s play *Missouri Waltz* included ‘Nick Clark – young, prostititionalised cynic, a newsy.’³² Clark was an example of the first Soviet prototype of American journalists: a nosy, alcoholic reporter for a small local paper, morally unscrupulous in his search for sensationalism and ready to switch political allegiances at his convenience. The second type was crystalised in a 1949 Stalin-Prize-winning play-turned-blockbuster, *Meeting at the Elbe*, which featured Janet Sherwood – a femme fatale CIA agent, who used journalistic work as her cover while conspiring with ex-Nazis against the people’s government in the Soviet-controlled German zone. Whereas in the 1947 play version Sherwood’s was merely a spy, the film added journalism to her list of credentials. Several scenes in the film depicted Sherwood masking her intelligence-gathering under the pretence

³⁰ “The Central Committee’s Agitation and Propaganda Department’s (Agitprop) Plan of Activities for Increasing Anti-American Propaganda.” RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 132. D. 224. L. 48.

³¹ *Ibid.*, L. 52.

³² Nikolai Pogodin, *P’ esy. Missuriiskii val’ s* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel’ , 1952), 245.

of reporting.³³ *Meeting at the Elbe* and other popular cultural products reiterated the dangers surrounding the Soviet state, carrying within them a restated call for vigilance. At the same time, these representations identified 'bourgeois journalists' with the mechanisms of American oppression at home and abroad and used journalists to showcase the essential faults of the capitalist system.

Taking advantage of the newly available materials from Russian archives, several scholars have shown that in the early days of the Cold War Soviet leaders were preoccupied with fear of losing the international propaganda battle to the United States.³⁴ Indeed, the campaign against foreign correspondents coincided with a thorough reshuffling of the Soviet information establishment, which focused on finding new paths for promoting the Soviet message abroad.³⁵ The campaign against American journalists suggests that Soviet anxieties about the state of its international propaganda were closely linked to Soviet imagination of U.S. news media. That imagination in turn derived from a projection of Soviet ideology and practices on American journalists and mass media.

The anti-American campaign and official treatment of foreign correspondents rejected the American liberal model of independent press as an instance of false consciousness. As we have seen, one of the themes in the anti-American campaign was 'unmasking' the alliance between the U.S. news media

³³ Similarly, a film adaptation of Nikolai Virda's 1949 play *The Conspiracy of the Doomed* presented a new character: Kira Rachel, a journalist from Chicago and an agent of imperialism.

³⁴ Vladimir Pechatnov, "Exercise in Frustration: Soviet Foreign Propaganda in the Early Cold War, 1945-1947." *Cold War History* 1 (January 2001): 1-27; Dzhahangir G. Nadzhafov, "The Beginging of the Cold War between East and West: The Aggravation of Ideological Confrontation." *Cold War History* 4, no. 2 (January 2004): 140-74.

³⁵ Pechatnov, "Exercise in Frustration."

and capitalist interests. The 'bourgeois journalists' who dominated the campaign always acted on behalf of larger capitalist or imperialist structures and thereby reinforced the idea that mass media could not exist independently of class interests. Nick Clark puts his pen in the service of a local industrialist, who paves his way to political office with corruption and intimidation. Janet Sherwood blindly obeys the orders of her imperialist masters in the CIA.

The close attention that Soviet propagandists paid to American journalists reflected the towering reputation of writers and the written word in Soviet culture. The pedagogical role of the press was central to the foundation of what Peter Kenez called the Soviet 'Propaganda State' – a state that made indoctrination central to its formation and policies.³⁶ Soviet culture did not put a sharp distinction between writers and journalists. Like Soviet writers, Soviet journalists were to provide the images and the information that would help their readers to overcome their 'subjective' selves, infuse themselves with the 'objective' forces of history, and join in the construction of socialist society.³⁷ The Second World War only reinforced the Soviet faith in the power of the written word to change hearts and minds. Writers and war correspondents played a central role in mobilizing the population to unprecedented sacrifices for the war effort.³⁸ Journalists, writers, and editors who took part in the production of Soviet news media during and after the

³⁶ Kenez, *Propaganda State*, 8.

³⁷ Thomas C. Wolfe, *Governing Soviet Journalism. The Press and the Socialist Person after Stalin*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 2; Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on my Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006), 1-6, 288-291.

³⁸ Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 164-184; Louise McReynolds, "Dateline Stalingrad: Newspaper Correspondents at the Front," in: *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia*, ed. Richard Stites (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 28-43.

Second World War differed in their opinions, writing styles, and approaches to certain themes and topics. Nevertheless, they shared in the collectivist ethos of a mobilised press, which sought to carry the voice of the state and help the state in its project of educating the masses. In the Soviet eyes, American correspondents personified the mighty weapon of written words in the wrong hands. As writers, they had attained superior levels of political consciousness; nevertheless, they knowingly put themselves in the service of 'reaction' and in opposition to the historical progress. Herein lay the threat of American journalists and their prominent place in Soviet anxieties about losing the propaganda war: conscious and willing, they were some of the deadliest weapons of enemy ideology.

As the campaign against American journalists escalated in the Soviet Union, most U.S. publishers withdrew their Moscow correspondents. Several editors decided that the amount and quality of material that they were getting did not justify the expenses of maintaining a foreign post. Others were forced to close their bureaus because the Soviet authorities refused new visas for returning and new correspondents.³⁹ Between 1945 and 1949, the number of American correspondents in Moscow went from nineteen to five. The remaining five journalists comprised the entire American press corps in the Soviet Union until 1953.

American publishers and government officials interpreted Soviet limitations on foreign correspondents as calculated attempts to manipulate international public

³⁹ Bassow, *Moscow Correspondents*, 125, 133.

opinion and to help Communist propaganda infiltrate the United States.⁴⁰ Current and former Moscow correspondents supported this interpretation.⁴¹ When State Department officials learned that it was impossible to resolve the censorship issue through diplomatic channels, they suggested that the publishers attach an indication 'passed through censor' to every news item with a Moscow byline.⁴² However, the Associated Press and the *New York Times* – both major players in the Moscow press corps – resisted these proposals. The AP Board President Robert McLean and Arthur Hays Sulzberger of the *Times* agreed that if they were to follow the State Department's suggestions, they would have to attach the censorship caveat to roughly half of the dispatches from their overseas bureaus.⁴³ United States government did not try to reciprocate by censoring the dispatches of Soviet correspondents, first and foremost because it lacked the appropriate institutions to do so. The First Amendment, which protected the press from government

⁴⁰ The Chargé in the Soviet Union (Kennan) to the Secretary of State, 4 March 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1946*, Volume VI: *Eastern Europe, The Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), 711.

⁴¹ Joseph Newman, "Russians Isolate Reporters, But Can't Hide Facts Censorship Was Meant to Conceal," *Washington Post*, 2 Nov 1949; Edmund Stevens, "Triple Squeeze Ousts Foreign Reporters," *Christian Science Monitor*, 24 January 1950.

⁴² Confidential to George V. Allen, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, Jul. 8, 1949; Box 2: 1181; NACP, Bilateral Political Relations.

⁴³ Robert McLean to Arthur Hays Sulzberger, 21 June 1949. AP01.4B, Box 21, Records of Board President Robert McLean, APA.

intervention, precluded the establishment of any organisation that would resemble the Soviet Glavlit.⁴⁴

The campaign against Soviet journalists in the United States developed on several parallel fronts; it often involved grassroots initiatives, and brought together government agencies, elected officials, journalists, businessmen and anti-Communists. These actors often differed in their agendas, their understanding of the threats that Soviet news agencies posed to American security, and their visions of the ideal American response to Soviet information policies. Nevertheless, the participants in the campaign united around the premise that TASS was not a proper news service, but an agent of enemy propaganda. Like their Soviet counterparts, American commentators saw the press as one of the central symbols representing the differences between Soviet communism and American liberal capitalism. The rhetoric surrounding the attacks on TASS identified it with state monopoly on information, repression of free speech, manipulation of public opinion, and subversion and espionage. The struggle against TASS became therefore an assertion of American liberal values vis-à-vis the Communist enemy.

First Attention to TASS: Spies or Newsmen?

In September 1945 Igor Gouzenko, a cipher clerk in the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa, defected to the Canadian authorities. Gouzenko revealed that the Soviet Union ran an extensive spy ring, which involved the Soviet Embassy and the

⁴⁴ During World War II censorship was voluntary: the press willingly opt in and the censors came from the ranks of professional journalists that volunteered for the task. The Office of Censorship was dismantled after Japan surrendered in August 1945. See: Michael S. Sweeney, *Secrets of Victory: The Office of Censorship and the American Press and Radio in World War II* (University of North Carolina Press, 2001), pp. 7-39.

Communist Party of Canada and that Soviet spies penetrated the innermost depths of the Canadian establishment and its civil service. In July 1946, a Royal Commission of Inquiry, which was appointed to investigate Gouzenko's allegations, found, among other things, that the head of TASS in Ottawa played a central role in the spy ring.⁴⁵ The Gouzenko affair dominated the headlines across North America and U.S. press closely followed the revelations. The Canadian spy scandal fed the escalating fear of Communist infiltration and attracted attention to Soviet representatives in the United States.⁴⁶ The most visible of these representatives, who also enjoyed a great degree of access to information and government institutions were the employees of the news service TASS.

TASS operations in the United States were split between New York City and Washington DC and were closely coordinated with the Soviet Embassy and Soviet mission in the United Nations. The New York bureau was the centre of TASS activity and consisted of twenty people, most of whom were local American employees. It conducted general reporting, covered the U.N., and prepared 'special information bulletins' – compendia of American publications on particular subjects, such as agriculture, the U.S. budget, or nuclear energy. The compendia included information that was in public domain – newspapers, magazines, trade press, and open reports published by the U.S. government. The 'bulletins' were distributed among the members of Politburo and senior officials in the relevant ministries. Another special compendium, which collected every publication, broadcast, or speech related to the Soviet Union, went to senior Politburo members on a weekly

⁴⁵ "Two Russian Envoys are Leaving after Spy Report," *New York Times*, 17 July 1946.

⁴⁶ See for example: "TASS," *Time Magazine*, 29 July 1946.

basis. The Washington bureau covered Congress, the State Department, and the White House. Three out of four Washington bureau employees were U.S. citizens. In addition to its reporting and information gathering duties, TASS functioned as the official voice of the Soviet Union. An announcement from TASS carried the same authority as an official statement emanating from the state itself.

TASS' s links to the Soviet government prompted U.S. officials to scrutinise the agency' s activities more closely. In 1946 President Truman revoked a wartime directive, which exempted news media of the Allied countries from registering as agents of foreign governments under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA). The act was introduced in 1938 and required individuals and organisations 'acting as agents of foreign principals in a political or quasi-political capacity' to disclose the nature of their relationship with foreign governments and to account for their activities on behalf of foreign powers.⁴⁷ While the lawmakers' original concern was Nazi propaganda, the postwar anxiety about Communist subversion led to a renewed use of the act.⁴⁸ TASS officially registered as an agent of a foreign government with the Justice Department in 1947.⁴⁹ FARA provisions required that the agency keep copies of all its announcements, accounts, and letter exchanges with Moscow and organisations and individuals in the United States. The Justice Department had the right to examine these records at any time, and the FBI

⁴⁷ Martin Manning, "Impact of Propaganda Materials in Free World Countries," in: *Pressing the Fight: Print, Propaganda, and the Cold War*, ed. Greg Barnhisel and Catherine Turner (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 146.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁴⁹ Memo to Nikolai Pal' gunov (TASS Director), 2 March 1953, GARF, f. R-4459, op. 38, d. 531, l. 28-29.

conducted routine inspections of TASS offices.⁵⁰ The agency's American and Soviet employees had to report their salaries, other incomes, and addresses to the Justice Department. Soviet correspondents in Washington, DC, were forbidden to reside outside of a forty miles radius from the site, in this case the White House, of their professional activities. The correspondents in New York enjoyed a slightly wider radius because of their work for the UN. To travel anywhere beyond their permitted residence boundaries, Soviet correspondents were required to submit their proposed itinerary in advance to the Justice Department and await its approval.⁵¹

FARA provisions reflected the liberal media ideology that emphasised the importance of separating the government and the press. News services were not exempt from registration and U.S. government scrutiny if their activities were 'performed for or directed by any foreign government or foreign political party,' or if they were 'owned or subsidised by' political entities from overseas.⁵² FARA established that news services were entitled to protection from government intervention, and they would be given the rights and privileges of the press only if they met the American liberal definition of news media. TASS registration under FARA was consistent with these principles. In 1951, an internal State Department memo on Foreign Correspondents explained that FARA regulations applied first

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² "Memo on Foreign Correspondents under Foreign Agents Registration Act," 27 July 1951; Box 7: Soviet Correspondents, 1951-1960; Special Collection Subject Files, 1950-1982, NACP, Bilateral Political Relations.

and foremost to 'all correspondents from Communist countries.'⁵³ U.S. officials did not consider the restrictions on TASS as attempts to regulate foreign news media because they believed that TASS was an agent of international Communism rather than a proper news service. Thus, government officials on both sides considered the adversary's correspondents as the weapons of hostile propaganda and dismissed the rivals' practices of news making as illegitimate.

Despite FARA regulations, TASS's ties with the Soviet government continued to generate antagonism toward the agency. Several pundits remained unconvinced that FARA provided an adequate degree of control over TASS's activities in the United States. For example, in May 1948, an editorial in the *New York Times* suggested that TASS was a convenient cover up for Russian spies in the U.S. and therefore should be monitored more closely:

Perhaps [...] there could be a check-up on the number of words Tass [sic] sends to Moscow and the number of words printed in the newspapers. What are the other words for? And who signs the long telegrams sent from Moscow every day to the Western Hemisphere? That is, that could be done if we wished a tight check.⁵⁴

In the absence of tighter government regulations, individual officials began to take matters into their own hands. In 1948, Aleksander Aleksandrov, TASS bureau chief in New York, reported to the agency's directors in Moscow that several government ministries refused to supply TASS with standard reports that previously had been in the public domain and available to the press. In each case, Aleksandrov appealed to the press

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Edwin L. James, "Watch is Kept on Role of Local Communists," *New York Times*, 23 May 1948.

secretary of the ministry in question but usually to no avail. After querying colleagues from other foreign news services, Aleksandrov learned that TASS was the only agency that could no longer receive the reports.⁵⁵ Another, and more significant, case of official discrimination occurred in 1950 when TASS was the only foreign news service barred from the Pentagon's press briefings on the Korean War. Even though on that occasion the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued an official statement of objection, the Department of Defence ignored it and continued to bar TASS from its press conferences.⁵⁶

Although TASS offices in the U.S. seldom made headlines, the agency's employees felt that the American press missed 'no opportunity to pin-prick us in its reports.'⁵⁷ Media coverage usually questioned the nature of the agency's ties to the Soviet government and explored the isolation and the demeanour of TASS correspondents.⁵⁸ Occasionally, pundits suggested that the U.S. should retaliate against the Soviet treatment of American correspondents and impose an equally strict set of limitations on TASS.⁵⁹ In January 1951, *The Saturday Evening Post* ran the longest, most acerbic feature about TASS to date. Titled 'Stalin's American Snoops,' the article reiterated the assertion that TASS was 'in no sense an honest news agency' but a combined Soviet propaganda service and intelligence

⁵⁵ Aleksandr Aleksandrov to Nikolai Pal'gunov and Ambassador Paniushkin, 5 February 1948. GARF, f. R-4459, op. 38, d. 192, ll. 10-12.

⁵⁶ GARF, f. R-4459, op. 38, d. 251, ll. 110-111.

⁵⁷ Vladislav Morev to Pal'gunov, December 17, 1949. GARF, f. R-4459, op. 38, d. 251, ll. 69-71.

⁵⁸ Robert K. Bingham, "The Man from TASS," *The Reporter*, 10 October 1950, p. 39; "Freedom to Libel," *Time Magazine*, 11 July 1949; "Moscow's Pen Pall," *Time Magazine*, 15 May 1950.

⁵⁹ Cyrus L. Sulzberger, "Soviet Censorship Thins Press Corps," *New York Times*, 6 November 1949.

operation.⁶⁰ The author, Paul Healey, was particularly interested in TASS' s American employees and explored how the pathology of dissent led these sons and daughters of good American families to betray their country and work for the Soviets. In conclusion, Healey argued that the U.S. government should demand from Soviet leaders 'a quid pro quo' in access to information and press coverage and that 'many Washington officials' feel the same way.⁶¹ The basic premise of the article – that TASS was not a real news agency – repeated ideas that had been floating in the American press since 1946. However, the feature introduced several new aspects to anti-TASS rhetoric. First, the article cited U.S. Congressmen and senior officials and thus conveyed the impression that the establishment shared Healey' s view that TASS was engaged in suspicious activities. Second, the piece explicitly labeled TASS' s American employees as traitors and Soviet henchmen, an accusation that could have had serious social and legal repercussions in the context of the Red Scare.

Ivan Beglov, the new bureau chief in New York, was convinced that the article in the *Saturday Evening Post* inspired several American firms to take independent action against TASS. Beglov sent a distressed letter to Moscow and reported that after the article appeared, several private companies refused to honour their contracts with TASS and declined the agency' s requests to subscribe to their publications.⁶² Each company articulated its refusal of services in explicit political

⁶⁰ Paul F. Healy, "Stalin' s American Snoops," *The Saturday Evening Post*, 20 January 1951, p. 47.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁶² Ivan Beglov to Pal' gunov, 19 January 1951. GARF, f. R-4459, op. 38, d. 309, ll. 11-13.

terms. For example, Georgia Webbing & Tape Company, from Columbus, GA, responded to Beglov' s request with the following letter:

It came as a surprise to us that the Soviet Union is still able to make purchases in this country. We do not often have an opportunity to take direct action in International affairs. In our own small way we feel that one of the greatest contributions we can make at this time is a firm refusal to sell or even quote to a country, which has been responsible for so much bloodshed. We can only hope that our action could be endorsed by all business concerns the world over.⁶³

The letter demonstrates how individual actors internalised the popular rhetoric, which equated TASS with the Soviet government. Unlike media pundits or government officials, the representatives of Georgia Webbing & Tape Company were not preoccupied with the questions of TASS' s legitimacy as a news service. Similarly, other businessmen that decided to terminate their contracts with TASS believed they were imposing economic sanctions on the Soviet Union. Vendors and publishers sacrificed business interests for the opportunity to curb a Soviet agent and situated their actions in a larger context of America' s fight against Communism.

'TASS is not a bona fide New Agency, but a Soviet Propaganda Bureau'

In April 1951 William B. Oatis, Associated Press bureau chief in Prague, was arrested on charges of espionage and later confessed under duress. Ignoring U.S. objections, Czechoslovakia held a show trial of Oatis and two local employees of the AP. In July 1951, Oatis was convicted of espionage and sentenced to ten years in prison. For many Americans, Oatis case became the ultimate symbol of the

⁶³ Georgia Webbing and Tape Company to Beglov, 8 January 1951. GARF, f. R-4459, op. 38, d. 309, l. 14.

differences between the liberal and communist presses. Editorials explained that Oatis was imprisoned for doing his job as an honest reporter in the American tradition. Popular interpretations of the case contrasted the 'truthful' and 'free' press in America with the 'deceptive' and 'heavily controlled' press in the Soviet Union.⁶⁴

The Associated Press, The American Society for Newspaper Editors (ASNE), and other leading journalistic organisations in the U.S. pressured the White House and the State Department to strike Czechoslovakia with harsh measures. The proposals of the media lobby found support in both houses of the Congress.⁶⁵ However, the administration refused to heed the media's demand to cut diplomatic ties with Czechoslovakia or to impose a trade embargo. When it became apparent that extreme measures against Czechoslovakia would not be implemented, the media lobby turned against TASS. The agency was singled out because at the time it was the largest and the most visible Communist bloc news service operating in the U.S. and the only one to have a Washington bureau and accreditation with the State Department.⁶⁶ The indignation at Oatis's

⁶⁴ "Communists Imprison 4 AP Men in Prague as Spies," *Editor and Publisher*, 7 July 1951, p. 7; "Reporter Vanishes," *Time Magazine*, 7 July 1951; "Oatis Trial Report Shows False Cause," *New York Times*, 22 July 1951; William L. Ryan, "Bill Oatis Is Unconvincing 'Spy' to His Hoosier Friends," *Washington Post*, 15 July 1951.

⁶⁵ "Senators Bid U.S. Hit Back for Oatis," *New York Times*, 18 July 1951; "House Asks Rebuff To Czechs On Oatis," *New York Times*, 15 August 1951; "'Deal' To Free Oatis Opposed by O'Connor," *New York Times*, 27 September 1951.

⁶⁶ In July 1951 eleven citizens of socialist countries served as resident correspondents in the United States. In addition to seven TASS correspondents, Pravda and Soviet Radio had one correspondent each. The other two correspondents worked for the Polish Press Agency. Memo on Communist Correspondents in the U.S., 26 July 1951, Box 7: Soviet Correspondents, 1951-1960; Special Collection Subject Files, 1950-1982; NACP, Bilateral Political Relations.

imprisonment mixed with long-term frustrations with Soviet treatment of American correspondents and with the general atmosphere of anxiety about Communist subversion. These sentiments reinforced one another and set the campaign against TASS in motion. Although the Oatis case figured prominently in the attacks on TASS, equally ubiquitous were references to the dire lot of all American correspondents behind the Iron Curtain and discussions of the dangers that Red journalists posed to American security.

Shortly after the Oatis verdict was delivered, Alexander F. Jones, the President of the American Society for Newspaper Editors (ASNE), publicly demanded a government investigation of Mikhail Fedorov, TASS bureau chief in Washington, DC.⁶⁷ American press had paid attention to Fedorov ever since he arrived in Washington to replace the American Laurence Todd as the head of TASS bureau. It was well known among the capital's journalists (and frequently reported in the press) that during the war and prior to becoming a correspondent for TASS, Fedorov served as an aeronautic engineer in the Soviet military.⁶⁸ Alluding to this aspect of Fedorov's biography, Jones charged that Fedorov was not a newsman but a Politburo trainee and, as such, should not be allowed access to government's press briefings.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ "Tass Washington Bureau Chief No Newsman, Says ASNE Head," *Washington Post*, 25 July 1951; "TASS Correspondent Hit: Editor Charges Its Man in Washington Has No Training," *New York Times*, 25 July 1951.

⁶⁸ "Red Head," *Time Magazine*, 21 November 1949; "Moscow's Pen Pall," *Time Magazine*, 15 May 1950; Healy, "Stalin's American Snoops," p. 47.

⁶⁹ "TASS Correspondent Hit: Editor Charges Its Man in Washington Has No Training," *New York Times*, 25 July 1951.

While the government did not act on Jones' s proposal, the House Foreign Affairs Committee did. Representative Christian A. Herter sent a letter to the New York bureau chief, Ivan Beglov, and posed a series of 'frank questions' that aimed to learn the 'factual truth' about 'the status of TASS as a world news gathering agency.' ⁷⁰ Herter probed TASS' s ties to the Soviet government and to the Soviet Embassy; investigated the nature of the agency' s relationship with the Communist Party USA, the Communist press; and asked whether the *Daily Worker* was a branch of TASS. ⁷¹ Eager to forestall another attack on TASS, Beglov dispatched a cordial letter, which replied to Herter in 'the spirit of the questionnaires that TASS submitted to the Department of Justice.' ⁷²

In September 1951, ASNE President began another attack on TASS. Jones charged that TASS and Fedorov daily applied themselves to the task of destroying the U.S. and 'installing a Communist world domination.' ⁷³ He demanded that TASS correspondents be barred from the Congressional news galleries. Shortly after, the ASNE chapter in Washington, DC, presented a similar request to the Standing Committee of Congressional Correspondents – an elected body of five journalists that supervised Congressional press galleries and regulated the admission. The Standing Committee decided that no new correspondents from the Soviet Union would be admitted to the galleries until it was possible to establish whether TASS was an agent of Soviet propaganda and intelligence. Letters

⁷⁰ GARF, f. R-4459, op. 38, d. 309, ll. 67.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, d. 309, ll. 67-71.

⁷² *Ibid.*, d. 309, ll. 60, 69-71.

⁷³ "TASS Accreditation Halted During Official Spy Check," *Editor and Publisher*, 8 September 1951, pp. 7-8.

requesting the relevant information were submitted to the State and Justice Departments. While the Standing Committee was awaiting the government's assessment, ASNE pulled the entire weight of its influence and publicity against TASS, focusing particularly on the Washington bureau.

Editor and Publisher, an influential trade magazine closely associated with ASNE, seconded the motion on its editorial pages. The magazine printed the full text of Jones's statement and supported his assertion that the ban on TASS would be appropriate retaliation for the imprisonment of Oatis and for the maltreatment of American correspondents in Communist countries.⁷⁴ Moreover, *Editor and Publisher* situated the campaign against TASS within the broader premises of American liberal media ideology and used false information to justify the ban on TASS. Stating incorrectly that TASS correspondents in the U.S. hold diplomatic passports and that their registration as foreign agents with the Justice Department is 'voluntary,' the editors argued that TASS was not a news agency.⁷⁵ Since TASS was not a news service, continued the editors, the ban on the agency would not violate the First Amendment.⁷⁶

In the following days and weeks, the arguments made by Jones and *Editor and Publisher* were reiterated in the American press and in the statements of several public figures. Senator Robert O' Connor (D, MD) addressed his fellow representatives on the questions of Oatis and TASS. O' Connor argued that the Congress should expel TASS from its galleries and demanded that the agency's

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8, 36, 64.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36, 64.

credentials be withdrawn. All journalists from Communist countries, continued O' Connor, should be 'subjected to the same restrictions placed upon American correspondents on the other side of the Iron Curtain.'⁷⁷ A similar motion was introduced by O' Connor's colleague from the other side of the aisle, the Republican Senator Burdick (R, ND).⁷⁸ Several days later, Representative Emanuel Celler (D, NY) said that he would ask the House to bar TASS representatives from its galleries as well.⁷⁹

ASNE continued the campaign in *Editor and Publisher*. In a poll that the magazine conducted among American editors, 28 out of 40 respondents approved tough action on TASS.⁸⁰ Those in favour of the measures reiterated the basic premises of *Editor and Publisher*'s original call for action: they mentioned Soviet maltreatment of Oatis and other American journalists, stressed that TASS correspondents were dangerous agents of Communist espionage, and argued that TASS was not entitled to the rights and freedoms of the press because it was 'not a bona fide news agency.' For example, Palmer Hoyt, the influential editor of the *Denver Post* wrote that the time was ripe for action against TASS because 'it is a straight propaganda agency, dealing in distortion, smearing and deliberate falsification. [...] It is too much to ask that we let Oatis rot in jail on charges of espionage and permit communist espionage the freedom of our official sources of

⁷⁷ Sen. O' Connor (MD). "William M. Oatis," *Congressional Record* 97. Pt. 8, (5 Sept. 1951) p. 10958.

⁷⁸ "2 ask action on Reprisals in Oatis Case," *Washington Post*, 6 September 1951.

⁷⁹ "Celler to Ask Tass Ban," *New York Times*, 5 September 1951.

⁸⁰ "Editors (28 to 12) Endorse Barring Tass from Gallery," *Editor and Publisher*, 15 September 1951, p. 7.

information.’⁸¹ The more concise and less thoughtful William Randolph Hearst, Jr. wrote: ‘they are not deserving of the name ‘newspaperman’ or ‘press representative’ and I say throw them out. It gives me such pleasure to say this that I’m even paying for the wire.’⁸²

The campaign to bar TASS from the Congressional galleries did not proceed without opposition. Several respondents in *Editor and Publisher*’s poll objected to the measure on the grounds that it stood little chance of helping Oatis and could make things worse for American correspondents in Communist countries. Other dissenting voices stressed that the ban on TASS could endanger the freedom of the press in the United States. The editorial columns of the *Washington Post* and of the *New York Times* epitomised these respective approaches. The *Post* proposed that instead of barring TASS from the galleries, the State Department should declare Fedorov as *persona non grata* and thus ‘end the direct reports to Moscow by the diplomatic pouch.’⁸³ The *Times*, on the other hand, warned that the move against TASS would be detrimental to American freedoms and urged everyone to understand that ‘Our cause cannot be served by police-state restrictions.’⁸⁴ However, even those who warned that the ban on TASS could endanger the freedom of the press shared the view that TASS was not a real news agency. Expressions of concern about the ban were articulated mostly in terms of potential

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁸³ “Tass Men as Spies,” *Washington Post*, 7 September 1951.

⁸⁴ “Those Red Correspondents,” *New York Times*, 7 September 1951.

impact that the ban could have on American news media and did not suggest that TASS was entitled to enjoy the same freedoms.⁸⁵

All eyes were on the State and Justice Departments and their verdict as to whether TASS should be considered a bona fide news agency. Both ministries conducted themselves with extreme caution and did not rush to weigh in on the matter. The Attorney General explained that, for reasons of confidentiality, the Justice Department could not reveal any information it had on TASS beyond the fact that it was registered as an agent of foreign government. Assistant State Secretary Jack K. McFall said that representatives of the press should be the ones to determine TASS' s access to the Congressional galleries. Behind the scenes, State Department officials shared the popular conviction that 'TASS as a whole was not a news agency' and said as much to the agency' s American employees.⁸⁶ However, the same officials thought that banning TASS would jeopardise American correspondents and other U.S. interests across the Iron Curtain and will fail to help Oatis.⁸⁷

On September 21, 1951, the Standing Committee of Congressional Correspondents announced that it had decided against barring Fedorov or other TASS journalists from Congressional galleries. The resolution stated that 'the principles of a free press cannot be upheld by abridging them' and explained that the Committee did not wish to exceed its mandate and 'move into the field of

⁸⁵ "Editors (28 to 12) Endorse Barring Tass from Gallery," *Editor and Publisher*, 15 September 1951, pp. 10-11.

⁸⁶ Beglov to Pal' gunov, 12 September 1951. GARF, f. R-4459, op. 38, d. 309, ll. 75-76.

⁸⁷ Memorandum on "Communist Correspondents in the U.S.," 30 July 1951, Box 7: Soviet Correspondents, 1951-1960; Special Collection Subject Files, 1950-1982, NACP, Bilateral Political Relations.

international diplomacy.’⁸⁸ The President of the Associated Press Managing Editors Association said that the Standing Committee had ‘fumbled’ and proved ‘inefficient in handling the dispute on TASS.’⁸⁹ By contrast, an editorial column in the *Washington Post* praised the decision as serving ‘the best interests of the American press,’ adding that ‘American institutions cannot be preserved by distorting them in the Soviet image.’⁹⁰

It is not a coincidence that ASNE, the AP, and *Editor and Publisher* led the attacks. American publishers opposed government regulation of the press as strongly as they opposed communism, for both targeted the core of their interests: free flow of information and free markets.⁹¹ American news media embraced and took a great pride in the notion that it was their duty to educate the public about the world around them, to provide information that was essential for informed participation in government, and to protect the citizens and their freedoms from the powers that be.⁹² Nothing could pose a starker contradiction to these vaunted principles than TASS, a news agency that functioned as the official voice of the Soviet government and remained closely linked to its policies.

⁸⁸ “Newsmen bulk at move to ban red reporters,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 21 September 1951; “Capital Newsmen permit TASS in press galleries,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 21 September 1951.

⁸⁹ “Editors urged to Fight ‘Tightening Down of News Barriers,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 27 September 1951; Campbell Watson, “AP Editors Consider Oatis, Security Screen,” *Editor and Publisher*, 29 September 1951, p. 10.

⁹⁰ “Press Galleries,” *Washington Post*, 26 September 1951.

⁹¹ David R. Davies, *The Postwar Decline of American Newspapers, 1945-1965* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2006), 39-40.

⁹² David L. Hebert, *Freedom of the Press. Bill of Rights* (Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2005), 12-15; George Kennedy and Daryl R. Moen, *What Good Is Journalism?: How Reporters and Editors Are Saving America's Way of Life* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 1-3, 18-34.

Just as the campaign against TASS emphasised the American commitment to liberal ideals of separation between the press and the government, these ideals were changing and adapting to new realities of the national security state. After 1945 most American publishers aligned themselves with the government's anti-Communist agenda and supported America's standoff with the Soviet Union.⁹³ However, the Cold War introduced new tensions into this relationship as government officials began to stress the importance of secrecy in protection of national security and erected new barriers to the news media's access to information.⁹⁴ The publishers vehemently resisted these policies, which they criticised as detrimental to American democracy and freedom of speech.⁹⁵ The attacks on TASS provided publishers, journalists, and government officials with a platform where they could reiterate their commitment to the rights of the press while glossing over the contested and the changing meaning of these rights. In this increasingly complicated relationship between the government and the press, the consensus that Soviet state control undermined TASS's credibility as a news agency gained a symbolic significance.

The campaign against TASS took a heavy toll on its correspondents. New York bureau chief Ivan Beglov reported to his bosses in Moscow that American employees found it particularly difficult to cope: 'The systematic hunt of TASS in bourgeoisie press and open invasion of our New York and Washington offices by

⁹³ David Halberstam, *The Powers that Be*, (New York: Knopf, 1979), 343.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 33-40

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

the FBI led many of them to depression and even – in unique cases – panic.⁹⁶ For example, Jean Montgomery, a Washington bureau correspondent, told Beglov that since the campaign against TASS had begun, hooligans had smashed the windows of her apartment twice. Montgomery agreed to continue working for TASS only on the condition that she would be transferred to New York.⁹⁷ Another Washington correspondent, Laurence Todd, notified Beglov that ‘his health demands a lengthy, and maybe even permanent break from his work for TASS.’⁹⁸ Beglov reported that the campaign against the agency reached former employees as well. For example, Travis Hedrick, who no longer worked for the agency, was called to testify before the McCarran Committee (U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Internal Security). Beglov worried that other Americans on his staff would also be summoned.⁹⁹

Soviet leaders and TASS bosses in Moscow closely followed the campaign, but despite Beglov’s pleas, they decided to take no action. TASS director Nikolai Pal’gunov explained to Beglov that the campaign against the agency was the logical outcome of American capitalists’ fear of Soviet journalists and urged his people to preserve the ideological rigour of their reporting:

Explain to the comrades that we could expect similar, and perhaps, even more venomous and vicious attacks of American reactionary circles on TASS workers. Impress upon the Soviet comrades that we must retain complete self-control, must keep working as if nothing is happening, not to be afraid, and continue to attend press conferences, the Congress, and other places where they usually go.

⁹⁶ Beglov to Pal’gunov, 9 November 1951. GARF, f. R-4459, op. 38, d. 309, l. 90.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Beglov to Pal’gunov, 12 September 1951. GARF, f. R-4459, op. 38, d. 309, l. 76.

At the same time, particularly impress upon them that they must not allow others to provoke them for irresponsible words and actions and must not provide [the American press with reasons for] provocative opinions.¹⁰⁰

Pal' gunov made sense of the attacks on TASS through the prism of Soviet ideology. He was convinced that American 'reactionaries' attacked TASS because they were ordered to do so by the capitalist magnates, who controlled the press. Pal' gunov urged his people to carry on the duties of socialist journalists, a main part of which was the unmasking of the capitalist world order. Unlike many American publishers, who withdrew their journalists from Moscow in response to censorship and other limitations, Soviet leaders expanded their network of international correspondents and persisted in their efforts to indict the United States. Pal' gunov urged Beglov to transfer the most crucial aspects of the agency' s activity to the 'Soviet comrades' and promised to dispatch additional journalists from the Soviet Union in the near future.¹⁰¹

The echoes of the campaign persisted until the end of 1951, and occasional articles about TASS' s links to espionage and suspicious activity continued to appear in the American press after the campaign subsided. In November 1951 the *New York Times* ran a lengthy profile article on the agency' s operations in the U.S. and revisited the question of TASS' s threat to national security.¹⁰² The *Times* contended that while many questions about TASS' s activity remained open, shutting the agency down would not reduce the scope of Soviet espionage in the

¹⁰⁰ Pal' gunov to Beglov, 13 October 1951. GARF, f. R-4459, op. 38, d. 309, l. 85.

¹⁰¹ GARF, f. R-4459, op. 38, d. 381, l. 41.

¹⁰² A. H. Raskin, "Report on Moscow's Reporters in America," *New York Times*, 4 November 1951, pp. 15, 30-32, 34.

United States.¹⁰³ According to the *Times*, all the information that TASS sent to Moscow was already available in American newspapers, and making this information accessible to the public was a calculated risk that the U.S. ran as a free country.¹⁰⁴ At least on the surface, the profile in the *New York Times* drew the line under question of TASS. Pundits and government officials agreed that the agency served as a direct wire to the Kremlin, but they continued to accept TASS' s presence in the US as a tolerable evil.

Conclusion:

Comparative analysis of Soviet and American campaigns against the rival' s foreign correspondents sheds light on the dynamics of what David Engerman called the 'battle of ideas' at the heart of the Cold War.¹⁰⁵ Mass media played a central role in Soviet and American societies and in each side' s understanding of its political and cultural mission in the world. The campaigns against the rival' s journalists were steeped in the respective, socialist and liberal, understandings of the role of the press and its rights and duties vis-à-vis the government and fellow citizens. The different ideological injunctions shaped the dynamics of each campaign, determined the institutional mechanisms that they relied on, and influenced the responses of journalists, editors, and political figures on both sides.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ David C. Engerman, "Ideology and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917-1962," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War* Vol. 1, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 20.

Close collaboration between the state and mass media was central to the Soviet mission of enlightenment and creation of the New Man. Journalists and writers were to play the most important role in this process in their capacity as 'engineers of human souls.' In the 1930s, a sense of threat to the gains of the revolution propelled Soviet policy makers to build institutions that fine-tuned the message of the press and verified the 'political maturity' of those responsible for its contents. The Cold War reintroduced old existential anxieties about the security of the Soviet state and demanded extreme measures. By 1945 all the components of the campaign were in place: censorship, mobilised mass media, and the belief that journalists and writers could be dangerous weapons in the unfolding battle for 'hearts and minds.' In the Soviet campaign against American correspondents, ideology operated overtly: the actors openly and self-consciously applied class analysis of mass media to foreign journalists. Marxist-Leninist interpretation of the press prompted Soviet ideologues to reject the American liberal model of news (and American journalists' understanding of their own work), as false consciousness that aimed at concealing the bourgeois bias of Western press. Foreign correspondents were positioned in the narrative of class warfare and were seen as acting on behalf of the interests of the American bourgeoisie.

The American liberal ideal also stressed the educational role of mass media. However, the instructive potential of the American press sprang from a radically different premise. Soviet mass media fulfilled its educational role only in close collaboration with the state. By contrast, the educational capacity of the American press resided in its mandate to stand up to the powers that be and monitor their

actions. The principle of separation between the press and the government was central to the liberal ideology of American news media and to the campaign against TASS. The attacks on TASS had no coordinating structure and proceeded on several parallel fronts. In the process, pundits' and publishers' demands to take a hard line toward TASS often clashed with the agenda of government officials and their concern for American interests overseas. However, media professionals and the government agreed that TASS' s relationship with the Soviet state rendered it illegitimate as a news service. Soviet correspondents were perceived as dangerous not because they were journalists, but because they were *government-controlled journalists*, and therefore were expected to advance the interests of foreign power.

In the American campaign against TASS, ideology operated covertly. The participants in the campaign were not conscious of the ideological underpinnings of their actions. Convinced that the only way to report the news was the one practiced by the American liberal news media, they charged that Soviet-style reporting was not journalism at all. Although several leading voices in the journalistic profession did not support harsh measures against TASS, they shared the idea that it should not be considered a real news agency. The campaign against TASS thus naturalised the liberal ideology of news. At the same time, the campaign obscured the fissures in the journalistic profession and the disagreements between the press and the government over the rights and duties of the press vis-à-vis the national security state.

Approaching the campaigns against enemy correspondents from a comparative perspective reveals that the attacks on journalists were not only symptoms of Cold War propaganda or the new information policies that each superpower adopted as a result of the growing suspicion of the other. Observers on both sides regarded enemy correspondents with suspicion because of the broader symbolic meaning that journalism had in Soviet socialist and American liberal ideology. In the Soviet Union, journalism symbolised the hope in propaganda as a vehicle of enlightenment, which would help the New Men and Women of the socialist society to develop their proletarian consciousness and transform themselves into historical actors and builders of socialism. In the United States, journalism represented the foundational principles of American democracy: the freedom to express one's opinion, informed participation in the democratic process and the accountability of office holders to their electorate. These idealised notions of journalism remained unattainable in reality and were subjected to internal debates by practitioners who had their own prejudices. However, the ideal itself was never rejected on either side and lived on as a powerful symbol of Soviet socialist and American liberal capitalist modernity. As the respective campaigns against enemy correspondents unfolded, journalism became a symbol of the quintessential distinction between socialism and capitalism or liberalism and totalitarianism.