

# NYLON CURTAIN — TRANSNATIONAL AND TRANSSYSTEMIC TENDENCIES IN THE CULTURAL LIFE OF STATE-SOCIALIST RUSSIA AND EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE

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## *Nylon instead of Iron*

In the world before 1989, everybody was familiar with the origins of the metaphor 'Iron Curtain' that had been so powerful throughout the post-Second World War era. It is less common, however, to recognize Winston Churchill's speech (Fulton, 5 March 1946) as the very first occasion after 1945 when communism was depicted as a *global* challenge and threat to the *Christian Civilization*. Let us visit the text again:

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia; all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject, in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and in some cases increasing measure of control from Moscow. . . .

In a great number of countries, far from the Russian frontiers and throughout the world, Communist fifth columns are established and work in complete unity and absolute obedience to the directions they receive from the Communist centre. Except in the British Commonwealth and in the United States where Communism is in its infancy, the Communist parties or fifth columns constitute a growing challenge and peril to Christian civilization.<sup>1</sup>

This indeed is a powerful piece of 'mental mapping': it localizes in Soviet Russia the core and source of what it then describes implicitly as a new Barbarian menace, which the 'Christian World' had not been confronted by anything similar to ever since the Ottoman expansion into Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. By introducing the concept of 'Iron Curtain', Churchill also seems to have suggested that an insurmountable and impenetrable divide had arisen between the 'Christian' (capitalist) and the Moscow-controlled 'Barbarian' (communist) world. First to fall to the latter were the 'ancient [Christian] states of Central and Eastern Europe', ending up on the wrong side of Churchill's civilizational divide.<sup>2</sup> His suggestion implied an asymmetric closure brought about by the Curtain or, at least, a closure for influences flowing from West to East much tighter than the closure for influences flowing from East to West.

Considering the growing literature on economic, cultural, and political inter-penetration between East and West during the Cold War, it is time to 'deconstruct' this Iron Curtain or, rather, to re-construct it so that it resembles more what we now know about the actual nature of the systemic divide between East and West. Hence the suggestion, argued along many lines in the contributions of these two theme issues of *Slavonica*, that Nylon rather than Iron Curtain would be the appropriate metaphor to describe what was actually separating the worlds on the two sides of the Cold War front line.

Embeddedness in the global system, challenges from and responses to the global environment, and aspirations of global significance and impact were from the very beginning decisive features of the communist experiment. East Central Europe, Soviet Russia, and the other communist countries have all been part of the modern global experience, and this seems to have been the case not in spite of, but, rather, because of the *Sonderweg* that their modernizing communist elites often seemed so eager to develop and pursue. The *differentia specifica* of the state socialist modernization was constituted by four elements:<sup>3</sup> First, it aimed at a *sudden take-off* to modernity from a backward position in the global system of capitalism, at a time when the latter had already taken shape around a core that exhibited high dynamism and an overwhelming development potential. Second, it *accepted the economic and technological standards and terms of success prevailing in the advanced core area* of the global system, and expressly defined as its foremost objective to *catch up* with and beat the core societies. Third, the state socialist regimes proposed to achieve these ends by *redefining the rules of the game*, by replacing the internal driving forces of economic, technological, and scientific development in a market economy with administrative coercion and political mobilization. Indeed, at a certain stage, communist modernizing elites even tried to redefine the cultural-anthropological codes and expected an entirely new type of human behaviour to emerge, a new ethos described as 'the New Socialist Man' or, as Aleksandr Zinov'ev called it (and vociferously critiqued and ridiculed), a *Homo Sovieticus*. Fourth, the communist world constituted itself as a *rival model of global pretensions* that would gradually replace the 'decadent' capitalist regime all over the world.

It seems that when we address issues pertinent to global dimensions of societal development during and after the Cold War era, when we focus on what united the two systemic hemispheres, on interactions between, and histories shared by them, we are in fact concerned with what Fernand Braudel's path-breaking work identified as the intermediate (*conjunctures*) and secular (*histoire de la longue durée* or *structures*) levels of the historical process. These are the levels, under a surface of the immense variation of 'events', where common (shared) conditions, circumstances, enablements, and constraints inform human activities and development in a fundamental manner, and where the commonality (globality) of human drama becomes apparent.<sup>4</sup> Arguably, the communist experiment may be epitomized in the paradox of global ambitions, often going hand in hand with policies of national and systemic isolation which, in the end, yielded global defeat.

The term 'Nylon Curtain' has been chosen also to direct the reader's attention to a particular work of David Riesman, one of the few sober voices of the early Cold War era in the US. I have in mind his wonderful imaginary report from 1951, 'The Nylon War', staging a scenario where the US, within the framework of 'Operation Abundance', was for months bombing the Soviet Union with consumer goods. This highly instructive piece of fiction was originally published in *Common Cause* (Vol. 4, No. 6 (1951), 379–85), starting with the following words:

Today — August 1, 1951 — the Nylon War enters upon the third month since the United States began all-out bombing of the Soviet Union with consumers' goods [ . . . ] Behind the initial raid of June 1 were years of secret and complex preparations, and an idea of disarming simplicity: that *if allowed to sample the riches of America, the Russian people would not long tolerate masters who gave them tanks and spies instead of vacuum cleaners and beauty parlours*. The Russian rulers would thereupon be forced to turn out consumers' goods, or face mass discontent on an increasing scale.<sup>5</sup> (Emphasis added — G. P.)

Riesman's most amusing thought experiment bears witness to his impressive knowledge of Soviet society as it actually worked: of the economy of shortage, of the dominance of bureaucratic coordination and the absence or weakness of market mechanisms of adjustment between production and consumption, of elite privileges, and, last but not least, of (systematically and systemically frustrated) consumer desires among the inhabitants of the USSR. In this sense, Riesman's fiction, which led many Americans to believe that Operation Abundance was actually under way,<sup>6</sup> was an early reminder of the fundamental fact that even communist controlled societies were part of the global world. A 'Nylon War' appeared credible and could be believed to have been effective because it was generally understood that even 'simple people' behind the Nylon Curtain were knowledgeable about living standards, tendencies of consumption, available and accessible consumer goods, etc. in the West, and were also aware of and increasingly frustrated by the intolerably poor performance experienced in their home countries. As Gregory Castillo shows in a recent paper,<sup>7</sup> it was, indeed, part of the policies of US and West German authorities to make inhabitants of the 'Eastern Bloc' conscious of the systemic gap in consumer satisfaction, living conditions, and living standards. At the West-Berlin exhibition entitled *Wir bauen ein besseres Leben*, opened at the German Industrial Exhibition in 1952, the domestic life of an 'average skilled worker and his family' in the West was to be put on display. 'Attached to every household object was a tag indicating country of origin, retail price, and the number of hours of labour, as measured by a skilled worker's wage, needed to purchase the item.' For East German visitors it was probably not simply their Western counterparts' easy access to these goods that was upsetting — but also the fact that many of those items, could not be acquired in the GDR even if they had the right kind of incomes for them. The German-German experience applies to other communist countries too, although there the flow of information in the 1950s was certainly not as smooth as between the pre-Wall Germans.

The curtain was made of Nylon, not Iron. It was not only transparent but it also yielded to strong osmotic tendencies that were globalizing knowledge across the systemic divide about culture, goods, and services. These tendencies were not only fueling consumer desires and expectations of living standards but they also promoted in both directions the spreading of visions of 'good society', of 'humanism', as well as of civil, political, and social citizenship. Michael David-Fox's contribution, in our forthcoming second thematic issue, on Romain Rolland's special relationship to the USSR and to Soviet culture is highly relevant in this respect. David-Fox clearly shows that a reliable understanding of the phenomenon of fellow-travellers requires, among other things, the careful study of the historically and culturally contingent ways in which images of one another (of the social/cultural project of socialism and of the artistic-intellectual-political project of Rolland) were constructed in a transnational and transsystemic interaction and how these images gave rise to and sustained the relationship of bondage between fellow-travellers and Stalin's regime.

Finally, but just as emphatically, it needs to be made explicit that Nylon, as opposed to Iron, is the epitome of industrial modernity in the early post-war decades. Thus, the bombardment

of Soviet citizens with the products of Du Pont's tells also of the advantage the Western world had over state-socialist Russia and Eastern Europe, whose official regimes were still obsessed with counting the tons of iron and coal produced.<sup>8</sup>

### *Ambiguous globality*

Russian and East European societies have been characterized, both before and after the collapse of communist rule, by strong (and deliberately promoted) transnational tendencies: preceding the post-1989 scramble for entry into NATO and the EU, the Moscow-centred integration in the Comecon and the Warsaw Pact had often been thought of as the embryo of a future communist world order.

The idea goes back, of course, to the founders of 'scientific socialism'. Marx was well aware of the cosmopolitan tendency inherent in the capitalist economic order. In the Communist Manifesto he claimed this tendency would prevail not only in the economic but also in the ideological and cultural fields of societal life:

The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.

The bourgeoisie has, through its exploitation of the world market, given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of reactionaries, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. . . . In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature.<sup>9</sup>

The other side of this same coin was, in Marx, the idea of a transnationally oriented proletariat and the prophecy of a communist world revolution to be accomplished with their agency. The proletariat of this cosmopolitan capitalist world order 'had no homeland', as it was put in the Manifesto. It was the agent singled out by Marx for putting an end to the capitalist world order (and, thus, putting an end to history), and replacing it with a communist world order, based on and shaped by the free association of fully emancipated human individuals.

Thus, communists, who took over and monopolized government in Russia, and later, in East Central Europe, had the uneasy task of harmonizing this crucially important globalist legacy (providing their power with a mission and legitimacy) with a number of historical circumstances, which, from the point of view of systemic globalization, had a constraining and debilitating effect. I will only list a few of these that I think are most important:

- (a) Communist rule, to begin with, could only be established and consolidated in one country: Russia.
- (b) Soviet-Russian communism had developed by the mid-1930s a heavily nationalist, even ethnocentric orientation<sup>10</sup> and, even when it showed some appetite for expansion, its Soviet systemic, 'world-revolutionary' motives were hard to distinguish from motives of a Russian, imperial and revanchist nature.
- (c) When systemic-and-imperial expansion into East Central Europe actually took place in the second half of the 1940s, it created a core area of communist world-revolution that

was in itself very heterogeneous in terms of levels of economic, technological, and social development.<sup>11</sup> The 'socialist camp' was established mostly on the wrong side of the borderline between successful and unsuccessful modernization attempts in Europe of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It could be argued that state socialism originated from the European periphery of modern economic and societal development in the wake of failures and half-successes of modernization efforts, and/or as a response to the frustrating and humiliating experience of sustained underdevelopment or semi-development within the capitalist world system.

Nonetheless, the communist world system (a term used by the contemporaries!) resulting from the Second World War, was seen by Moscow as well as by the international network of communist parties in a long-term perspective, as the first phase of escalation into a global communist order. Indeed, considering the global pretensions of the state socialist system, we can safely claim that the communist project in Eastern Europe has been the largest deliberately designed experiment in globalization in modern history.<sup>12</sup>

These factors may help to explain the almost Janus-faced nature of the ways in which communist modernizing elites related to the outside world.

On the one hand, they were conscious of their world-revolutionary mission of globalizing what was claimed and believed to be possibly the most developed social formation. They were, indeed, cultivating and, at least in some early periods, even captivated by a mentalité characterized by 'the superimposition of a better "soon" on a still imperfect "now."' <sup>13</sup> This gave them certain hubris — an excessive feeling of superiority. This state of mind, however, was actually generated and sustained not only by what Sheila Fitzpatrick called 'the discourse of socialist realism' but also by what I propose to term *the discourse of systemic relativism*. Systemic relativism construed the social world of state socialism as something essentially different from that of capitalism or any other social formation. In this view, capitalism and socialism were just as incommensurable as the world of Newtonian physics is with the world of quantum mechanics. Systemic relativism may be said to have been especially influential and powerful in economic thought. It suggested that under state socialism economic activity obeyed other laws, than under capitalism. Behind seemingly similar phenomena, such as wage-labour, piece-rates, money and commodity relations, prices, markets, etc., a completely different world was hiding. The status of systemic relativism in state-socialist discourses is interestingly illustrated in the East German debate on architecture, where systemic relativist arguments were mobilized both on the part of the socialist realist ideologues, 'celebrating Prussian neoclassicism while denigrating its social and political context' and by Hermann Henselmann who, before he himself converted to socialist realism, tried to argue for 'transplanting ["formalist"] modernism into the healthy context of socialist patronage'.<sup>14</sup> Another instructive example is the transformations that film genres like the Western and the Musical underwent when the socialist Unterhaltungsindustrie of DEFA appropriated and domesticated them for use in the GDR — discussed in Jon Raundalen's article forthcoming in the next issue of *Slavonica* with other papers originating from our project. The formula applied by Hungarian communist composer András Mihály in 1950 to the contemporary Western reception of Bartók, so eloquently analysed by Danielle Fosler Lucier,<sup>15</sup> is a case in point too. Finally, the case of Witold Gombrowicz offers an altogether different perspective: as argued by Knut Andreas Grimstad, the Polish émigré writer challenges any discourse of systemic relativism by transposing onto it his own 'globalized' biography. Owing to his transatlantic strategies, he becomes free from the constricting environment of European nationalisms and

their totalizing demands by becoming a 'Witold Gombrowicz' who knows no bounds or allegiances whatsoever. The might of systemic-relativist discourse necessitated even the re-appropriation of the communist countries' own historical, cultural, and artistic heritage from the pre-communist era.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, discourses of superiority or systemic relativism notwithstanding, communist elites could only for short periods of time completely forget about the hard facts of their countries' economic, technological, and social-cultural backwardness. Nor could they entirely ignore long-standing intellectual-cultural traditions that had yielded self-images of relative backwardness ever since the first half of the nineteenth century. They could, of course, happily live with the fact that Soviet or Hungarian musical production was lagging behind Western contemporary music in terms of experimentation and the use of new twentieth century techniques.<sup>17</sup> But they were increasingly concerned about their regimes' poor economic and technological performance. It was not only about growth rates, and even less was it about such indicators of military-industrial might as tons of coal and steel per year, a typical obsession of the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. Nor was it only about low efficiency or the chronic problems with quality. It was just as importantly and alarmingly the failure of state socialism to appropriate and adopt the main tendencies of international technological development and their failure to pioneer such changes. Out of fifty major technical advances that were made during the post-war era and still shape our lives today, only three appeared first in a socialist country.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, two opposite states of mind, self-perceptions dominated by the feeling of superiority or inferiority, combined to form the mentality of the communist elite and their seemingly capricious oscillations between the extremes of offensive or defensive, integrationist or isolationist postures. Such fluctuations (cyclical movements) in self-perception and in discourses and policies shaping communist attitudes towards the systemic Other are clearly tangible in the development of the Russian-Soviet myth of childhood analysed by Catriona Kelly in her important study written within the framework of our project.<sup>19</sup> The first phase, until about 1932, is an era of 'suprematist internationalism' characterized by readiness to admit Russia's backwardness and an openness to learn internationally, but also by a confidence in Soviet 'leadership in some (many) areas'. There was a keen interest in Western trends as they manifested themselves in legislation, educational institutions, literature on education, theories of child psychology, etc. And even though there appears, in the 1920s, a certain amount of 'national triumphalism' over Soviet Russia's openness to change and the political leadership established in the international youth and children's 'movement', contemporary propaganda was still placing more emphasis upon 'the need to free children from backwardness than on the Soviet Union's ("exemplary") achievements in improving their lives'. During the mid-1930s, this internationalism began to be eroded and a new, 'patriotic' phase in representations of childhood commenced. 'The idea that children lived better in the Soviet Union than they did anywhere else was now trumpeted everywhere.' Soviet (Russian) patriotism went hand in hand with isolationism and xenophobia. Bringing the cycle to completion, a partial revival of internationalism can be observed from the post-Stalin Thaw onwards, even though with a great deal of 'patriotism' remaining in place.

Michael David-Fox has recently published an inspiring essay on Aleksandr Arosev, an old Bolshevik, head of the All-Union Society for Cultural Ties Abroad (VOKS), 1934-37.<sup>20</sup> The essay starts with a rather unexpected, even shocking image. On 4 June 1935, having escorted his wife to the border station, on her way to Prague, Arosev wrote this about the feelings and thoughts overwhelming him upon the train's departure:

For a long time I walked in the direction in which the train disappeared. . . Like a Scythian or a Mongol, I harbour inside me a great longing (*toska*) for the west and nothing acts on me like the evening sky or the setting sun. I adore the west and would like to follow the sun.<sup>21</sup>

The same Arosev, in his letters to Stalin from 1929 and 1931, triumphantly reported about Europe and America having been enfeebled and terrified by Soviet achievements and referred to Europe (the West) as 'the old prostitute', predicting her destruction. This dualism is not simply a result of different publics (a secret diary meant for an unspecified future reader on the one hand, and the letters to Stalin on the other); nor is it fully explained, to my mind, by reference to the dissonance or divergence between Arosev's cultural affinities and his political convictions, otherwise so skilfully analysed by David-Fox. Rather it reflects the inevitable oscillation between two diametrically opposite states of mind among the Leninist modernizing elite of a relatively backward country: the hubris of systemic superiority on the one hand, and the admission of the developmental (economic, social, and cultural) inferiority, implying the rejection of the 'really existing' social world under state socialism (*the painfully imperfect here and now*).<sup>22</sup> In accordance with what I tried to argue above, I think this dualism applies by necessity to communist elites in the whole Eastern European region. Indeed, it could be shown to have applied in Stalin's case as well. The two sides could, in fact, be present in one and the same text, as in Stalin's speech delivered to the first federal conference of the functionaries of socialist industry in 1931.<sup>23</sup> On the one hand, there is the claim of Soviet systemic superiority:

Crises, unemployment, waste, destitution among the masses — such are the incurable diseases of capitalism. Our system does not suffer from these diseases because power is in our hands, in the hands of the working class; because we are conducting a planned economy, systematically accumulating resources and properly distributing them among the different branches of the national economy. We are free from the incurable diseases of capitalism. That is what distinguishes us from capitalism; that is what constitutes our decisive superiority over capitalism. [. . .] our system, the Soviet system, affords us opportunities of rapid progress of which not a single bourgeois country can dream.'

On the other hand, this passage is followed by a stylized, educational review of Russian history and the Soviet present as one of military, technological, economic, and cultural backwardness concluding with the following words:

We are behind the developed countries by 50–100 years. We have to eliminate this gap in ten years' time. Either we succeed in eliminating the gap or they will trample us down.

It appears to me that there is a crucially important relationship between (Soviet, GDR, Hungarian, or other) communist self-perception and their ways of relating to the outside world. Perceptions of one's own position vis-à-vis the West moves between the two extreme points of superiority and inferiority, while the possible political attitudes can be placed on an axis stretching from a basically offensive to a basically defensive posture. In terms of actual results, combinations between various postures and self-perceptions give rise to at least two variants of isolationism and integrationism at the systemic level.

A state socialist regime is characterized by isolationism when its dominant discourses, policies, and institutions are geared to minimize interaction with the outside world, especially with their systemic Other. Depending on whether behind the isolationist posture there is a self-perception of superiority or inferiority in relation to the West, it should be meaningful to distinguish between offensive and defensive isolationism respectively. In terms of cultural interaction with the rest of the world, the period of Zhdanovschina until the early 1950s is

certainly characterized by offensive isolationism: discourses of Soviet systemic and Russian national superiority asserted themselves and combined with ferocious attacks on foreign influences, especially on patterns and ideas that were deemed 'alien' from a systemic point of view. Defensive isolationism is a rare bird in the history of state socialism and that is quite understandable: a regime that acts from a platform of perceived inferiority (i.e., a regime in which not even its major beneficiaries, its elites, believe) cannot but be a rather short-lived regime, however successful it may be in its isolationism. I think closest to this pattern were the communist elites in Hungary between 1973 and 1978, and in the USSR between 1968 and 1985: there was little bragging about systemic superiority, a great number of internal documents revealing growing concerns about the increasing gap to the disadvantage of the socialist camp in terms of economic performance and technological development, and an increased propensity to 'solve' problems through more regimentation.

Conversely, a state socialist regime is rightly described as integrationist when its dominant discourses, policies and institutions are geared to engaging in interaction with the outside world with a view to systemic expansion or/and to learning and catching up. Offensive integrationism is probably the right characterization of Soviet expansion into East Central Europe from 1947 to 1952, and it went hand in hand with an offensive isolationism manifest in their relation to the US and towards 'Marshallized' Western Europe. This is a period of aggressive efforts to propagate, in East Central Europe, Soviet patterns of institutionalizing and organizing cultural, social, and economic life, efforts based on and promoted by the assertion of the unquestionable superiority of Soviet Music, Soviet Literature, Soviet Architecture, Soviet Science, etc. An excellent empirical study of this pattern is Kiril Tomoff's contribution to this theme issue 'Prague Spring of 1948 and the Soviet Construction of a Cultural Sphere', or Greg Castillo's superb analysis of developments in East German architecture and interior design in the 1940s and 1950s, showing the active participation of Germany's Soviet Military Administration (SMAD) in the attacks in 1951 on 'modernist abstraction' and 'formalism' and the role of learning from the Soviet Union in 'the battle for a new German architecture'. Finally, defensive integrationism was the dominant pattern, for example, in Hungary's (but also Poland's and the USSR's) cultural and academic relations with the West during most of the 1960s. Deliberate efforts were made to import and 'domesticate' Western economic knowledge in such areas as business management, industrial and agricultural organization, statistical, econometric analysis, linear programming, etc. The communist cultural-political leadership allowed hundreds, perhaps even thousands of Hungarian, Polish, and Russian scholars in the social sciences to participate in the fellowships program of the Ford Foundation and spend a year or more at US institutions of higher learning. As this important episode of peaceful co-existence shows, there were periods when the discourses of socialist realism and systemic relativism were effectively kept at bay.

Having lived three decades in a communist country and having acquired personal experience from crossing GDR and USSR boundaries in the 1970s and 1980s, I would never blame anyone for using the concept of Iron Curtain for the division between the First and Second World in the pre-1989 era. Yet, it seems crucial for the intellectual well being and development of the historical and social study of state socialism to be able to see the complications and complexities of the East-West division and, of the communist project. These complications and complexities arose out of communism's ambiguous globality, from its self-defeating attempt to create an alternative civilization without ever being able to define genuinely new terms and standards of economic, social, and cultural progress. To the extent



there was an Iron Curtain it was required by the complete failure of communism's attempt at emancipating social progress from capitalism. This failure and the awareness about it, however, had generated alternating periods of increased isolation, regimentation, and terror, and periods of 'Thaw', increased openness, emulation, and the softening of Iron into Nylon.

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<sup>1</sup> W. Churchill's 'Sinews of Peace' speech is accessible at several web-sites. The section above was copied from <<http://www.hpol.org/churchill/>> on 30 May 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Churchill's Fulton speech was rightly considered by Larry Wolff as an indication of the strength of the Enlightenment tradition to conceive the Eastern parts of Europe as a region whose 'Europeanness' and belonging to 'the civilized world' is steadily questioned and, if at all, only partially admitted. Cf. Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 370.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. György Péteri, 'On the Legacy of State Socialism in Academia', in *Academia in Upheaval. Origins, Transfers and Transformations of the Communist Academic Regime in Russia and East Central Europe*, ed. by Michael David-Fox and György Péteri (Westport, CN and London: Bergin and Garvey, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, first published in 1949; a substantially revised version was published in English in 1966 by Fontana Press (Glasgow), in 2 vols. Later elaborations on the 'divisions of time' can be found in his *Civilization and Capitalism 15th-18th Century*, 3 vols (New York: Harper & Row, 1979-84).

<sup>5</sup> David Riesman, 'The Nylon War' from 1951, in his *Abundance for what? and other essays* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Inc., 1964), p. 67. Many thanks to Victoria de Grazia for drawing my attention to this work of Riesman.

<sup>6</sup> Op. cit., pp. 75-76.

<sup>7</sup> Gregory Castillo, 'Revolutions in Cold War Domesticity: Model Homes and Model Citizens in Divided Germany, 1948-1958', paper presented to the conference 'Discourses of Global Ambitions and Global Failures' February 2003, at the Collegium Budapest, arranged by the Program on East European Cultures and Societies (PEECS) Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim.

<sup>8</sup> In the 1957 musical *Silk Stockings* (based on the 1939 film comedy *Ninotchka* with Greta Garbo), the communist female character played by Cyd Charisse fell for the temptations of exclusive silk and satin underwear. By the time MGM released the musical, however, 'Nylons' had brought about a 'democratic revolution' in Western fashion (cf. Susannah Handley, *Nylon. The Story of a Fashion Revolution* [Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999]). However, what became cheap and easily accessible products for the Western customers, turned into objects of frenetic adoration (with little chances to get hold of them even at exorbitant prices) in the countries of state socialism. The author of these lines remembers that simple nylon rain coats or wind breakers (*orkán kabát*) changed owners in Budapest on the black market of the early 1960s at prices close to an average monthly salary, but cost a trifle only 300-400 kilometers away in the West, in Vienna.

<sup>9</sup> The text of the 1848 Manifesto of the Communist Party is available at <[http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist\\_manifesto/cho1.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist_manifesto/cho1.htm)> accessed for this text on 1 June 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism. Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> Indeed, one can argue that there were several cultural and developmental 'nylon curtains' separating various parts of the Soviet Bloc — which is in evidence also in Soviet traveling cadres' 'mental maps' over East Central Europe in the postwar era: for a study of Soviet images of Czechoslovakia see Lars Peder Haga, *Oppdagelse og oppdragelse: sovjetiske reisekadere rapporterer fra Tsjekkoslovakia 1945-1949* [Discovering and upbringing: The reports of Soviet traveling cadres from Czechoslovakia 1945-1949, diploma thesis in history], PEECS, Norwegian University of Science & Technology, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> This tendency caused a great deal of anxiety among Western politicians and scholarly observers of liberal and conservative persuasion. James Burnham wrote this in 1964: 'The new [communist] rulers understood their initial territory to be the base for the development of a wholly new civilization, distinguished absolutely not only from the West but from all preceding civilizations, and destined ultimately to incorporate the entire earth and all mankind.' (*Suicide of the West. An Essay on the Meaning and Destiny of Liberalism* [New York: The John Day Company, 1964], p. 17).

<sup>13</sup> The formula comes from Sheila Fitzpatrick's essay, 'Becoming Cultured: Socialist Realism and the Representation of Privilege and Taste', in her *The Cultural Front. Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 227.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Gregory Castillo 'Blueprint for a Cultural Revolution: Hermann Henselmann and the Architecture of German Socialist Realism' forthcoming in our second thematic issue.

<sup>15</sup> See Danielle Fosler-Lussier's contribution to the present theme issue of *Slavonica* and/or her PhD dissertation *The transition to communism and the legacy of Bela Bartok in Hungary, 1945-1956* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999).

<sup>16</sup> The Hungarian–French historian Francois (Ferenc) Fejtő once told this anecdote from a conference in the 1960s about futurology: he was approached by a Russian scholar who said ‘You know, I am impressed to see that you can seriously discuss the scholarly study of possible futures. We in the USSR cannot even predict what kind of a past we are going to have!’

<sup>17</sup> As Rachel Beckles Willson’s article in this issue demonstrates, Western reception of East European music was not at all indifferent either for the practitioners of the musical field or for cultural politicians. Just as much as it was a matter of national (and systemic) identity, it was also a source of national s (and systemic) pride, which clearly transpires, for example, from the reception in Budapest of the Hungarian contributions to the 1968 Darmstadt International Summer School of Contemporary Music.

<sup>18</sup> They were the satellite (1957), plastic foil tent (1954), and the laser (1960). Cf. Table 12.7 in János Kornai, *The Socialist System. The Political Economy of Communism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 298–300.

<sup>19</sup> Catriona Kelly, ‘The Little Citizens of a Big Country’. Childhood and International Relations in the Soviet Union, *Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures & Societies*, No. 8 (April 2002).

<sup>20</sup> Michael David-Fox, ‘Stalinist Westernizer? Aleksandr Arosev’s Literary and Political Depictions of Europe’, *Slavic Review*, 62.4 (Winter 2003), 733–59.

<sup>21</sup> The imagery used by Arosev here is strongly reminiscent of the one used by French travelers of the Enlightenment describing their impressions acquired in the Eastern parts of Europe. As if Arosev internalized Count Louis-Philippe de Ségur’s view, who wrote this about Petersburg: ‘there are united the age of barbarism and that of civilization, the tenth and the eighteenth centuries, the manners of Asia and those of Europe, coarse Scythians and polished Europeans’ (quoted by Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* [Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1994], p. 22).

<sup>22</sup> Significantly, this dualism is detectable also in the reports on post-1945 visits to Czechoslovakia by officials of the All-Union Society for Cultural Ties Abroad (VOKS). Visiting Praha to teach their Czech comrades about insuperable Soviet–Russian achievements in the cultural-academic domain, VOKS’ travelers reported back to Moscow their astonishment over the fact that in the Czech lands ‘Derevni ne pokhozhi na derevni’, as in Czech villages they found stone-paved sidewalks and streets. (A. Karaganov’s report on his trip to Romania and Czechoslovakia, June 7–16 1945, GA RF F. 5283 Op. 22, D. 22, L. 39, cited by Lars Peder Haga, *Oppdagelse og oppdragelse*, 2003), p. 49, 57.

<sup>23</sup> J. V. Stalin, speech, ‘The Tasks of Economic Executives’, delivered at the First All-Union Conference of Leading Personnel of Socialist Industry, 4 February 1931, is accessible at <<http://ptb.lashout.net/marx2mao/Stalin/TEE31.html>> (accessed last: 1 June 2004).