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Professor Karen Dawisha  
Walter E. Havighurst Chair of Russian and Post-Soviet Studies,  
and Director of the Havighurst Center

**Mirror and Mask  
in America's Image of Russia**

**Introduction**

In writing this lecture, I have spent a lot of time asking people who Walter Havighurst was: I spent time in the archives reading his papers, talking to his friends, colleagues, relatives and neighbors, and all with the same objective: to find out why a man who had been a professor of English for fifty years at Miami gave money to establish a center devoted to a country he never visited, never wrote about, never even spoke about publicly. To be sure Walter Havighurst was a generous man, giving throughout his life to many causes, but this multi-million dollar gift that came to Miami to establish the Walter Havighurst Center for Russian and Post-Soviet Studies was far larger than any of his other bequests. In the United States, two other centers at Harvard and Columbia devoted to Russian studies have been established with similarly large bequests, and as with these other two centers, the scale of the Havighurst center is such that it has potential to affect the landscape of the study of this region in the United States for the foreseeable future. And undoubtedly it will also have a huge, and I hope positive, impact on Miami. And so my purpose here today is first of all to talk briefly about Walter Havighurst himself, his vision for the Center, and how we might use this gift to deepen our own appreciation and imagination of Russia.

Walter Havighurst was a long-serving and much-beloved professor of English here at Miami; from his pictures one sees a tall man, patrician and distinguished of bearing. He was a keeper of the faith in Miami as an institution, and he loved both Miami and its students, whom he took such obvious pleasure in teaching—his papers are full of correspondence with former students decades after they had left the university. Some of the university's most distinguished alumni were among his students, and they all spoke above all of their gratitude for his ability to teach them to write. He himself was a writer, his first book was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, and it was the very first selection of the Book-of-the-Month club. He wrote the history of Miami University, and never strayed far from it. While he spent his entire career here, he was not by any means an isolated person, and counted among his friends Robert Frost and Democratic nominee for the Presidency, Adlai Stephenson. He was the son of a distinguished academic family with brothers at the University of Chicago and Amherst, and he traveled often. He brought his experiences and his friends back to Miami, forever enriching it.

He drew up his will at a time of enormous opening in US-Soviet relations, when for the first time in three generations, people from the two sides were able to visit each other's countries, people-to-people diplomacy was at its height, and the prospect for ending the long nightmare of the arms race seemed at hand.

He shared the yearning of many in the United States to have more direct contact with the people there. His own niece, Ruth Neff, who cared for him in his final years, was active in establishing a sister city relationship with a town in Russia, and Walter paid the way out of his own pocket for several students to go there. If not a pacifist himself, he was nevertheless deeply committed to improved mutual understanding between the two countries, and his gift was intended for that purpose. He shared the view that physical, ideological, and especially psychological barriers had for too long separated Russia and America. Walter Havighurst was not alone in believing that the almost two centuries of direct relations between the two countries had been marked by more misunderstanding than understanding and that America's image of Russia had never quite accorded with Russia's image of itself. Usually this meant emphasizing the darker side of Russia, and ignoring or being unmindful of its liberal or reforming elements, but not always. The founding fathers considered Russia a natural ally against Britain and sent an envoy to St. Petersburg instructing him to "lay a foundation for good understanding and friendly [relations] between the subjects of Her Imperial Majesty and the citizens of these states" [Mayers, 15].

While these were the noble objectives upon which US-Russian relations were established, in fact very few people have been exchanged between the two countries, and very little understanding has been achieved in the course of these past two centuries. And one can argue that this is not just because of physical distance and ideological barriers, although both were in fact significant, but also because Russia very quickly became a major 'other' for America, became an icon against which America's achievements as a country were judged. America's experiment in democracy always looked so much more successful when set alongside Russian autocracy. The problems America faced paled into insignificance when compared with Russia's. Yet certain parallels between the two countries made comparison inevitable: both were continental giants, both were born as modern states in the 18th century and were fighting for a seat at the table of European powers in the 19th, both were slaveholding and dominated by European-oriented elites, both were expanding their reach from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

And so like squabbling siblings, the fate of these two great countries was constantly being compared both here in America and there in Russia, each serving as the mirror for the other, a mirror that was sometimes used to reflect on one's own deficiencies and sometimes meant to mask them. Thus, tales of prison conditions in Russia masked objectively ghastly conditions here, expressions of moral outrage about serfdom in Russia were being written while slavery existed here, and ethnographic treatises on the pacification of native peoples in Siberia in the wake of Russian conquest appeared in America at the same time that native Americans were suffering forced relocations and genocide here. Sometimes, the authors condemned practices in both countries, but more often writers found it easier to be horrified about Russia while being silent about America.

## Otherness

How does it happen that a country becomes the standard against which one's own progress, one's own level of civilization, is judged? Who defines one's own identity, who helps shape one's view of the other? Can a nation be great without an enemy, without an 'other' against which to compare? Is it possible to see otherness without consigning it to inferiority? As the eminent literary critic Edward Said, the author of the classic book *Orientalism*, has written: "The development and maintenance of every culture require the existence of a different and competing *alter ego*. The construction of identity...involves the construction of opposites and 'others' whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and reinterpretation of **their** differences from 'us'." [331-2]

Unlike India or China, for example, whose populations are larger than Russia's or Mexico and Canada, who are our neighbors, or Britain who is our eternal mother (with all the ups and downs that such a relationship implies), Russia has more than any country been the eternal 'other' for the United States. In Russia, we see the archetypical adversary, the erstwhile if always temporary partner, and the symbol of autocracy, of totalitarianism, against which all other systems look so good.

Yet it is also an 'other' for us because even while we condemn its political system, we know it to be a great country, and for those who know its music, its art, its literature, its people, they know another Russia, one of deep and resonant soul-searching, of profound creativity and innovation. Imagine what would have happened to the symphony, for example, if the German school had not been renewed by the romanticism of the Russians. Imagine how boring French impressionism might have become if it had not been transformed by the infusion of the colors of Chagall, or the abstract forms of Malevich and Kandinsky. Would there have been classical ballet at all without Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky, Diaghilev and Pavlova? And the great novels of social commentary of the 19th century like those of Charles Dickens, think how much was added to the novel as a form by the voice of conscience we find in *Crime and Punishment* or the searching for universal truth that is so much a theme in *War and Peace*.

How then to reconcile these competing visions? For students and scholars of Russia, it so often seems that when **we** think we see Russia, we end up realizing that at most we've seen a construction of our own making, a projected sense of our own selves. This struggling for basic categories doesn't happen when we look at Europe (although perhaps it should). Europe is seen as having provided us with liberal philosophy, constitutionalism, democracy, parliamentarism, the industrial revolution, and the very concept of modernity. Europe is seen as the **natural** home of freedom and democracy. Progress in Europe is treated as progress for all the world's people, and when it breaks down, as it frequently has, blame is usually attributed to reasons other than the nature of European life and culture itself. The Inquisition is seen as resulting from the single institution of the Catholic Church; the Napoleonic wars are blamed on Napoleon; the rise

of fascism to Hitler's personality, or to economic hardships in Weimar Germany, or to allied humiliations of the Germans after World War I, or as we saw in Daniel Goldhagen's book, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, the German people themselves. Evidently when Germans behave well they're Europeans, when they behave badly, they're, well, Germans. Not until Mark Mazower's book *Dark Continent* published last year was there a systematic consideration of the fact that Europe both geographically and ideationally has been the home not only of light, but also of darkness, of imperialism, of tyranny of the Right and the Left, of the Holocaust, and of ethnic cleansing. In most histories, these events are generally explained as aberrations from the norm of European values and accomplishments, accomplishments that are regarded as breakthroughs for all mankind, as universal. Thus everything that is positive about Europe is treated in our minds as natural, everything that is negative is seen as an exception to the rule, as a deviation from the golden norm.

Such is not the case with Russia, where historiography has tended to see everything that is negative about Russia as normal, everything positive as abnormal. Autocracy, serfdom, Stalinism, the Russian mafia are the norm: the Decembrists, the liberation of the serfs, the contribution of Russia to world art and literature as against the norm. And to the extent we think about these positive trends at all, we think of them in terms of Westernizing. We attribute reforms in Russia to "Westernizing" intellectuals, implying that the very concept of reform is somehow exogenous to Russia's true nature, and that left to its own devices, only the negative aspects of Russian life would prevail.

Our own view of Russia, therefore, is of a particularly foreign country, exotic, great, expansive, unmoving, barbaric. Yet at the same time, studying Russia clearly has an allure. Students of Russia are clearly not your usual middle-of-the-road variety: nationally Russian studies majors score among the highest in SATs and GREs. But more than that: they are adventurers, seekers of truth, revolutionaries, lovers of intrigue. Crossing the cultural barrier from one's home turf in Europe and America into this foreign territory obliges but also allows students constantly to revisit and question basic categories about progress, revolution, history, nation, ethnicity and culture in a way that we have virtually ceased doing in the West.

Whereas we tend to acknowledge but not to worry too much about whether Victor Hugo was quintessentially French, or Verdi the most Italian of all composers, (or even what it means to be "French" or "Italian"), thousands of theses have been written exploring which writer, Dostoevsky or Tolstoy, is more Russian. Similarly, we don't spend time wondering whether Cromwell would have succeeded had he been French rather than English, or whether the French revolution degenerated into Jacobinism because of French culture, but dozens of books have been produced pondering whether the Russian revolution failed because of the deadening hand of Russian culture. When imagining events in the West, Western authors are not obliged to reexamine their basic assumptions--their histories are written within the comfort of accepted and narrow categories.

Russia however remains firmly outside, with accounts of Russian history and culture almost always being subject to large-scale mythologizing about the general capabilities and capacities of a whole culture, a whole people, and a whole civilization. This happens one must say not only because Russia exists as the eternal other for America, but also because anyone exposed to intellectual debate within Russia itself knows that above all other pastimes, the search for the truth about Russia is the national obsession. All writers and artists in Russia must relentlessly seek the Russian soul, and must endlessly comment on the fate and future direction of Russia. Western intellectuals exposed to this debate are alternately intrigued and frustrated by it. Nevertheless, it is not surprising that sooner or later, so many of the great historians and political commentators contend with Russia—whether it be Arnold Toynbee, E.H.Carr, Isaiah Berlin, A.J.P. Taylor, or Hugh Seton-Watson in England or Daniel Boorstin (in his Introduction to an edition of Custine’s book), John Lewis Gaddis, Stephen Ambrose, or Paul Kennedy in America.

I too have been intrigued about this interaction between Russia’s self-image, and America’s image of Russia, and I want to spend some time looking at the substance of these images and self-images, including Miami’s own limited interactions with Russia.

### **Early Years: Image and Self-image**

Looking first at the early years in America, when Miami University was just being established, Russia had already had 1000 years of history centered around the great cities of Kiev in contemporary Ukraine and Novgorod, the city between Moscow and St. Petersburg where Miami University has one of its summer programs. But Russia’s sense of itself as a nation emerged along with other European nations only in the 18th and 19th centuries. By this time, Russia had already become an expanding and even an imperial power. In this way, unusually in the history of the nation-state, Russia’s self-image *as a nation* emerged only after it had already become not only a state but also *an empire*. Whereas European nations built the state first, constructed a sense of national identity on the basis of internal development, and only then began expansion abroad, Russia’s development of a ‘grand governing narrative’ came only after the imperial project had begun. National identity was thus imperial identity.

The idea of Russian national identity was imported by Russian elites in a bid for recognition on the European stage. At a time when Johann Herder in Germany was preaching the unity of all Germans on the basis of blood, bones and flesh, peasants in Russia had no idea they were Russians. They self-identified as “krestyanin” (Christian folk) or “pravoslavie” (orthodox), but not as Russians. At the beginning of the 19th century, the construction of Russian nationalism was stripped of any liberal hue it may have had under Catherine the Great, and became under Nicholas I what was called official nationalism—‘offitsialnaya narodnost’—a combination of Orthodoxy, autocracy and nationalism: in Russia, therefore, the romanticism and sentiment of the national project was harnessed almost from the beginning in the service of reaction. At a time when Verdi was writing operas expressing the aspirations of the Italians for freedom from the Austrians, Russian composers like Mikhail Glinka, the founder of the Russian

nationalist school, were obliged to write operas glorifying state and nation filled with lines like: "Praise (Slava) to thee our Russian Caesar!"

Far from all of this in America, on the shores of the Ohio, Miami had not long before received its charter from George Washington: forests were being cut, smoke from the clearings was sometimes so thick, Walter Havighurst tells us in *Miami Years*, that you couldn't see clearly in the tiny settlement of Oxford, where a college dedicated to classical education was being established. There was not much thinking about Russia in Miami or anywhere else in America in the early years. Britain, with its unreformed monarchy and its hostile policy to this young country, was the great other. To the extent that we knew anything about Russia, it came from three sources--from the accounts of our earliest ambassadors, from Europeans, especially Central Europeans who sought America's help in regaining their liberty from Russian expansion, and from American and European travellers to Russia whose often sensational reports of their adventures were serialized in American magazines.

The earliest official American experience of Russia came in the late 18th century when in 1780 the Continental Congress sent its first envoy, Francis Dana, to Russia. Americans were favorably disposed to Russia, because Catherine the Great had refused to heed George III's request for troops to aid in putting down the American insurrection. As with most early American envoys to Russia, Francis Dana spoke neither French, the language of the nobility, nor Russian and spent most of his unsuccessful time there simply trying to get accepted at court: as one Russian historian later correctly observed in comparing the tenure of the first American ambassadors in Russia and Paris: "Francis Dana was no Benjamin Franklin." (Bolkhovitinov, 27) Dana had only one other member of staff, a fourteen year old boy, who acted as both interpreter and secretary, who was a 14 year old boy--although in this case the boy's letters home to his mother showed a much keener mind than the letters sent by Dana--the boy was none other than John Quincy Adams, who would return to Russia some decades later and serve as the only really good ambassador we had in St. Petersburg in the 19th century, before going on to become the 6th president of the United States. [Anschel]

Politicians in Washington understood that these early ambassadors were not well trained: they were either cronies of the sitting President or political rivals ill-equipped for the rigors of a posting to Russia. Complaining about the incredible waste of resources involved in sending emissaries to what was by then Europe's most expensive city, one congressman remarked: an American ambassador to Russia makes a grand tour of Europe arriving only after some time in St. Petersburg, "puts on his diplomatic uniform (exercising all caution to keep the sword from getting between his legs), makes the round of dinners and balls, talks French (if he can) with the Emperor, and after all this pleasant marching and countermarching at Uncle Sam's expense...makes way for some other patriot who desires to make the tour of Europe." [Mayers, 28] One might conclude that as a group, these ambassadors were unrestrained by their ignorance and lack of preparation, taking it upon themselves in general to misrepresent American interests while in Russia and then write about 'the backward Russians' upon their return.

However, they weren't the only influence on American public opinion. Americans also heard from many Europeans seeking American support in their various struggles against Russia. In particular, Poles and Hungarians, whose own interests and freedoms were being crushed by the emergence of Russia as a major power, came to America seeking to turn public opinion against Russia. The Polish hero of the American revolution Thaddeus Kosciuszko toured the US in 1797, and was mobbed by supporters who were swayed by his accounts of Russia's role in extinguishing Polish statehood. Similar scenes occurred half a century later when Lajos Kossuth, the hero of the Hungarian uprising against the Austrians that was smashed with the help of Russian forces, also sought American support for Hungarian freedom. (Thomas Masaryk, the first President of independent interwar Czechoslovakia was a clear exception to this rule, having himself made a deep study of Russia, as in his *The Spirit of Russia*.)

Travellers too were important, and in the mid-1800s, the French Marquis de Custine would write an account of his own brief 1839 travels to Russia that would have a salutary effect on the West's image of that country for the next 150 years. Custine's account had a particular resonance because his journey to Russia to explore prison conditions took place at the same time that Alexis de Tocqueville came to America to look at similar conditions here. But what different conclusions the two Frenchmen drew about these countries--despite de Tocqueville's sobering account of Jacksonian democracy, nevertheless his fundamental belief in the soundness and even brilliance of America's future could not have been greater. Custine went to Russia as a supporter of autocracy but became appalled by its savagery, leading him to give a famous piece of advice in his conclusion: "If ever your sons should be discontented with France, try my recipe: tell them to go to Russia. It is a useful journey for every foreigner: whoever has well examined that country will be content to live anywhere else. It is always well to know that a society exists where no happiness is possible."

No one could object to Custine's belief in man's inalienable right to freedom, but there were those who objected to what they felt was a one-sided, superficial and narrow interpretation of events in Russia. Nevertheless Custine's account has become one of the standard works to read for all future Russian specialists as they seek to discover 'the truth' about Russia, much as Tocqueville's account of *Democracy in America* has become a standard text for Americans. Custine's book has been reissued in dozens of subsequent editions, with introductions by many of the country's leading specialists and senior diplomats.

### **The Closing of Old Miami**

Returning to Old Miami, prior to the Civil War, students came here, then as now, not to go into the heartland but toward the frontier, not to escape from the world but to engage it. The curriculum was then as now outward looking, international and public-service oriented. Of the first 1033 graduates of Old Miami, there were 34 congressmen, 8 state governors, 9 ambassadors, and 10 university presidents, and of course 1 president of the United States [Walter Havighurst, Charter Day Dinner Speech, February 17, 1975, Miami

University Archives, Havighurst Papers]. Among the ambassadors were envoys to Latin American countries, to Britain, and even to Russia, although the case of Miami's ambassador to Russia was unfortunately more typical of the mishaps and misunderstandings that dogged the early relationship. John Reily had been one of the first trustees of Miami—he was a local landowner, and it was after him that Reily township is named. His son James graduated from Miami in 1829, and emigrated to Texas which was at that time an independent republic. Miami archives reveal that he was appointed by Sam Houston as Texas' envoy to the United States, and negotiated an unsuccessful treaty of friendship with Washington. He was opposed both to the abolition of slavery and the annexation of Texas into the Union. But nevertheless when Texas did become a state, he needed a job, and having never traveled abroad and speaking neither French nor Russian, he obviously was a perfect candidate as envoy to St. Petersburg, where he arrived on August 6, 1856, twenty days before the fabled inauguration of Alexander II, the reforming Tsar who would, prior to his assassination, set in train the reform of autocracy, and free the serfs. However, Reily complained that the weather (possibly he meant the political weather) was not to his liking and the city was too expensive, and he departed after 13 days—not even staying for the coronation. He died several years later fighting for the South in the Civil War. So much for Miami's, and Reily Township's, man in Moscow. [Havighurst, *Miami Alumnus*, May 1958; Handbook of Texas Online; 4th Texas Cavalry Regiment Website]

After the Civil War, there was a marked tendency to consider Russia in a very favorable light. After all, the Tsar had not sided with Britain in supporting the permanent splitting of the union into North and South, the serfs had been freed in Russia at more or less the same time slaves had been freed in America, and as a result American newspapers a tended to equate the Union's fight against the Confederacy with Russia's efforts to quell unrest in Poland: with the *New York Herald* even proclaiming that the destinies of both countries were forever intertwined, “must ever be friendly” while “advancing hand in hand in their march to empire!” [Mayers, 46]. Tourism to Russia even had a modest beginning, including in August 1867 when a group of passengers aboard the American steam yacht Quaker City who had put in to port in Yalta requested and received a meeting with “His Majesty, the Autocrat of All the Russias.” They were very well received and when expressing surprise that their documents were not being checked every “40 minutes” as they had been led to believe they would be, the attending Russian officer replied “Yonder is your passport--the flag you are flying is sufficient!” These events were recorded by one of the passengers aboard, a certain Sam L. Clemens (aka Mark Twain) [Twain, 142].

The expansions of these two countries to the oceans were also treated as examples of parallel nation building, with historians on both sides mythologizing the frontier as embodying the most fundamental and positive elements of the national character of each people [“Meeting of Frontiers” website]. Perhaps Walter Havighurst's best known book was a biography of Annie Oakley, the girl with the golden gun, who was a central figure in Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show. This show toured both America and Europe and shaped and reflected the East Coast's and Europe's romanticized and sanitized version of the winning of the West. However, as Havighurst tells us, while Buffalo Bill featured



cowboys and Indians from the West, he also included horsemen from the far reaches of the Russian Empire who performed daring feats in this show. Cody also invited the Grand Duke Alexis to come to America to go on a much-publicized buffalo hunt with him and General Custer, and in the process bolstered the impression that while Russia and America may be two separate countries, there was only one mythic frontier, just as a century later there would again be efforts to achieve closer relations through joint exploration of the next shared frontier, the frontier of space.

Such positive interpretations were, however, short-lived and soon gave way to growing concern about a renewed period of reaction in Russia following the assassination of Alexander II. In particular there was deep alarm about the condition of Russian Jews. Russian Jews had been forced to leave major towns and live in a broad "Pale of Settlements" where every aspect of their daily lives was subject to strict supervision and capricious and excessive repression. The word pogrom entered the English language at this time from Russian and referred to the reign of terror in Jewish settlements inflicted by Russian fascist gangs called the Black Hundreds who had the unofficial endorsement of local police officials. America had a sizable Jewish community who was worried about its co-religionists in Russia and who naturally sought to improve their circumstances. The mood in American newspapers began to change when stories of these pogroms emerged. In addition because there were several American Jews who were initially forced to live 'beyond the Pale', as it was called, the US government became involved in pressing for their release. The US image of Russia deteriorated even more when Tsarist conditions forced hundreds of thousands of Russian Jews to seek asylum in America.

This focus on the undoubted increase in Russian repression left no space for reacting to the development of political ideas in Russia that challenged autocracy, whether it be the nihilism that led to a wave of terror in Russia and that was reflected in Russian literature most brilliantly in Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, or the variants of socialism that led to the rise of Lenin, or even the emergence of a Russian national idea that was rooted in populism rather than autocracy. All of these political stirrings occurred largely beyond the view of the West, not because in all cases Russia was inward looking, but more because these aspects of Russian life were ignored or downplayed. This produced a backlash in Russian intellectual circles, as Russians asserted their uniqueness and separateness from the West: in the latter half of the 19th century they saw themselves as distinctly Russian: they magnified their difference, both to compensate perhaps for Europe's own treatment of them as inferior and in certainty of Russia's cultural, moral and salvific mission.

Trying to find a way to express this mission in an atmosphere of official censorship, Russian artists often relied on the figure of the holy fool, the Yurodiviy, the simpleton who knew neither polite custom nor any fear, and therefore spoke the truth. St. Basil's cathedral in Red Square is named after one such Holy Fool whose name was Basil and who with his flowing beard and hair, and self-imposed chains, denounced injustice wherever he saw it, including to Ivan the Terrible. The Tsar was reportedly so taken with him that he visited him on his deathbed, and supervised his burial on this spot. As one of the foremost theorists of Russian nationalism, Dmitri Likhachev, has observed: "[Holy

Fools] taught the people to love freedom,... and not to accept any injustice...The Russian people love fools not because they are stupid but because they are intelligent.” [Likhachev, 114-15] And in this period of increased reaction at the end of the 19th century, the image of the holy fool reemerged as a clarion cry in Russian art: Ilya Repin’s realistic paintings often portrayed villagers crowding these soothsayers. The presence in Modest Mussorgsky’s *Boris Godunov*, for example, of a holy fool who confronts the Tsar in a way that ordinary people could not, expands on earlier treatments by giving the fool the ability both of prophesy and pathos, speaking for all Russians who were struggling against autocracy. In the opera it is the Holy Fool who sings the final words by crying,

“Flow bitter tears,  
Weep Orthodox soul!  
Soon the enemy will come and darkness will fall  
Darkest dark, impenetrable dark  
Woe to Russia!  
Weep, Russian folk!  
Hungry folk!...”

If it is true that in the West the opera is not over until the sometimes portly soprano dies, at the end of Russian operas, it was the Russian people as a whole who were portrayed by these Holy Fools as dying.

### **The Bolshevik Revolution and the Soviet Period**

Looking now briefly into the 20th century, on the shores of the Ohio, many Miami students went off to fight in World War I: but those who stayed behind were aware of but perhaps not much engaged in the great debates of the day about the Bolshevik Revolution. A look at the newspaper *The Miami Student* on November 28, 1917 reveals that the students heard about the revolution “in chapel” and were informed by the chaplain that the Provisional Government contained men who were “sane, but with little power” and that the Bolsheviks under Lenin were “insane with the amount of their power still to be determined.” The article was placed on the front page of the student newspaper next to an even more prominent piece entitled “Large Crowd of Miami Rooters to See Annual Cincy Game Tomorrow.”

It was over two years before another lecture on Russia was reported by *The Miami Student* (on April 11, 1919) to have been given, by a certain Ralph Dennis, formerly American Vice Consul in Moscow, in which the student journalist noted perceptively that “Mr. Dennis quite frequently alluded to Russia as ‘poor’ Russia, placing special emphasis on her unstable condition.” On this occasion the piece was next to a special feature on the occurrences in the Glee Club’s spring tour, in which various towns en route had provided hospitality: “The chicken dinner was particularly emphasized at Maysville, Kentucky while Portsmouth will be remembered for its women.” And so, entering the Roaring Twenties, at Miami, certain themes seem to be well established: the rivalry with

Cincinnati and the timelessness of Glee Club concerts on the one hand, but also the general distance of Russia from the heartland of their concerns on the other.

This distance did not last long however, since with the rise of Soviet control over international communism, Russia changed from being an external to an internal other. Communist Russia was not just, or initially even primarily, seen as a foreign threat but rather as a domestic one. As a country Russia might be distant but as a threat to the American way of life, communism posed, in the language of the time, a clear and present danger. To be sure our image of Russia had to be transformed to accord with the massive growth in military spending undertaken by Stalin and his successors. But our image was shaped by other factors as well—by relentless Soviet propaganda which we now know massively exaggerated the state of Soviet prowess.[Gaddis] It was also affected by socialists and communists, including evidently some women from Oxford College who went over in the 30s, who returned from the Soviet Union declaring that like others they had “seen the future and it works”. (May 1933 *Alumnae Newsletter* report of the trip to Soviet Russia by Evelyn Adams--OC '05 nee Evelyn Crady--who had been ‘sent there to study conditions’)

After the second world war America’s image of Russia was also shaped by American governmental efforts to convince the American people that the Soviet Union was just as much an enemy as Hitler’s Reich had been. After the war, sinister communists replaced Nazis and Japanese as villains in movies made in Hollywood but sponsored by the US Government. Movies such as *Iron Curtain* [1948], *I Married A Communist* [1949], and *Red Menace* [1949] reinforced the ideas both that the Soviet Union was now an enemy and that thinking about communism or even advocating certain of its features would subject you to black-listing, loss of employment, imprisonment, and even deportation. Despite efforts of some, like John Steinbeck [*A Russian Journal*] to combat it, nevertheless the fear of the Soviet Union masked a deep and growing intolerance at the center of American life.

This rigid construction of Russia remained in place until the 1960s when American youth and leftist intellectuals challenged less the image of Russia, but rather what they felt America itself had become under the weight of the Cold War. I remember doing science experiments in which the teacher encouraged us to see how long we could last in a fall-out shelter. I saw a movie in my Russian class purporting to prove that the entire Soviet space program was a hoax. By the late 1960s young people were no longer prepared to accept these views as authoritative. They saw in America a country mired in Vietnam, a society that was militarized and deeply fractured by promises unkept, and in reaction they dropped out and turned off—they cared not a whit about Russia or the Soviet threat.

It was in these circumstances that I first started studying Russian—it’s hard to know exactly why I made this choice that ended up being rather consequential for my future, but I remember feeling that my choices were limited: my brother had already studied German, and my sister had already dropped out, so these two avenues were obviously cut off. But having gone to college at the height of student turmoil in the sixties, I soon

realized that studying Russia, indeed studying at all had become completely passe. I applied to do a junior year abroad and ended up in England for the next 15 years.

How different everything looked from Britain. At that time, Britain still was adamantly not a member of the European Community, and the British had two 'others'- the US and Europe. (England's own condescending attitude toward Europe as a whole was summed up in a famous headline in the *London Times*: "Thick fog blankets the Channel: Europe cut off") It was very obvious that despite Britain's membership in NATO, it maintained a dim view of the notion of permanent alliance, still preferring to abide by Lord Palmerston's famous quip that: "Britain has no permanent allies, only permanent interests." Arriving in Britain, therefore, during the Vietnam war I was made aware on a daily basis that whatever the British government's official position might be, people in the street in general and students and intellectuals in particular had deep antipathies about America's right to leadership of the so-called Free World. Many felt that Britain's friendship with America had been taken for granted and many had deep sympathies for the Vietnamese cause. Most saw no difference between British imperialism of the 19th century and American imperialism of the 20th, and in fact the Soviet Union was often portrayed in major news outlets as having a better social welfare system than America's cowboy capitalism. Our politicians were routinely portrayed as 'second-raters' whose moralistic and static approach to the world was seen as hopelessly naive and doomed to failure, unless moderated of course by the wise counsel of Washington's British allies.

British university life was also very different: there was no black power movement, nor women's liberation. But there were Soviet-oriented communists, Euro-communists, Maoists, socialists, trade unionists, Trotskyites and anarchists, amongst others. Certainly if you wanted to be a banker or a lawyer when you graduated, you kept it strictly to yourself. Yet opinions were respected, if fought against mercilessly in the classroom. Occupations, sit-ins, and all kinds of disobedience on campus were allowed, and even larger-scale demonstrations mainly were held without violence or arrests.

In America, including at Miami, disobedience on campus was no laughing matter-the National Guard was called out, and as Walter Havighurst tells us in his history of the Miami Years, only the dedication of faculty and administration protected the campus and its students from the same kind of fate that was befalling the students at Kent State.

In England, I was happy to be able to see this turmoil from afar, and threw myself into an ivory tower existence. My own education was undertaken by people with very different backgrounds. I studied Russian history with Isabella de Madriaga, a fervent anti-fascist who had been brought up in exile after her philosopher father's failed efforts to prevent Franco's rise to power. I learned Soviet politics from Leonard Schapiro who was an anti-Bolshevik émigré from Russia whose history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union I read with even greater interest when dissidents whom I met in Russia whispered their pleas that I somehow get them a copy of this book. There was also Abe Sirton, a Lithuanian Jew who had been part of the communist underground, had fought with Tito during the war and had gone on to join the military in the new state of Israel and then had subsequently renounced his Israeli citizenship in disgust over their treatment of

Palestinians—from him I learned to love arguing. And then there was Ralph Milliband, a French Marxist and arm-chair revolutionary of the first order, from whom I learned a lot about what Marxism had become. I learned about their creed, and their cynicism and above all I learned that I wasn't one.

When I went on to **teach** in England, my experience was no less rich—I learned an enormous amount from my students, including one particular seminar in Communist Politics that had a Trotskyite, a leftist trade union worker from Jamaica, a British policeman being trained for counterintelligence and a young woman who had just been purged from the Communist Party of Great Britain for her elitist views. Now that was diversity! This is by way of saying that for me, imagining Russia has been more about the journey than the destination. It has allowed me a large canvas upon which to write, to teach and to learn. The field of Russian studies has also been unusually full of interesting, contentious and even cantankerous people—people who both love Russia and despise it, but who are all to some degree also mystified by it, and held in its spell.

## **Conclusion**

And so this festival which will last for ten days will allow you to sample Russia in many of its forms: its food, its history, its film, its politics, more food, chess, its wonderful music and art. Some of the events will involve outside speakers and groups, others have been organized by students and faculty here at Miami, and to all who have been involved in this effort I am so grateful. My only regret is that Andre de Saint-Rat who was the father of Russian studies at Miami, who established a wonderful Special Collections library, and who lent many of his own pieces to the Museum for this festival, died two weeks ago and did not live to see all the wonderful things that we are going to do here.

Reading Walter Havighurst's papers it is clear that he left his bequest to Miami because above all he loved its students: having taught at other colleges for brief periods, he concluded that he "like[d] Miami students best. They are curious, open-minded, and impressionable—not yet set in fixed and hardened attitudes. I would like to think," he said, "[that] a person can still go star-gathering at Miami." [*Campus Sketches*, March 1964, Miami University Archives, Havighurst papers] This festival is an inauguration of a center, but also a celebration of Walter Havighurst's desire for students to go star-gathering.

And what better place to gather stars than in the heart and soul of Russia, a country with boundless mystery, where beauty and cruelty sit side by side. Perhaps in the course of the festival you will pause and think about the words that the Russian poet Fedor Tiutchev so famously wrote:

“Seek not by reason to discern  
The soul of Russia: or to learn  
Her thoughts by measurements designed  
For other lands. Her heart, her mind  
Her ways in suffering, woe and need

Her aspirations and her creed  
Are all her own--  
Depths undefined  
To be discovered, fathomed, known  
By Faith alone.”

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