

INTRODUCTION

The movie *Karnaval'naia noch'* (Carnival night), directed by El'dar Riazanov and released in 1955, depicts a New Year's Eve celebration in a *klub* (club), one of many institutions that hosted mass cultural activities.¹ Clubs hosted amateur music, dancing, and theater that attracted broad participation, termed *khudozhestvennaia samodeiatel'nost'* (amateur artistic creativity), along with festive events such as youth parties and New Year celebrations. In *Karnaval'naia noch'*, Comrade Ogurtsov has taken charge of the club just before New Year's Eve. Displeased with the plan for the festive evening, he demands that the program "be typical" and "most importantly, serious!" Ogurtsov thus forces a ballerina to put on less revealing attire and drains all the humor from the clown show. He bans the performance of the club's amateur ensemble, whose large complement of saxophones suggested controversial jazz overtones and therefore foreign cultural influence. Instead, Ogurtsov wants to invite a traditional, orthodox ensemble from the pensioners' association. He proposes starting the celebration with a speech on the club's achievements, followed by a propaganda lecture.

However, the young club workers and volunteer amateur performers refuse to accept Ogurtsov's plan for such a boring and politicized event and instead take matters into their own hands. They get the propaganda lecturer drunk, dress up as pensioners, and, after beginning their performance with staid classical music, launch into a jazz-style piece heavy on saxophone and brass. The viewer is witness to Ogurtsov's growing surprise and anger as the faux pensioners play and somersault about the stage. By the end of the movie, the club's young employees and amateur performers have managed to ensure a festive and fun evening for everyone except Ogurtsov.

The movie proved controversial from the first. Prominent officials disparaged the script for its focus on entertainment and fun rather than politics and for encouraging undue initiative from the lower ranks. Such attacks came from individuals who held what may be defined as a hard-line, conservative position, which included some combination of militant, narrowly defined Marxism-Leninism, the official Soviet ideology; demand for close control from above; support for a xenophobic version of Soviet nationalism; and espousal of traditional rural social and cultural values. Each cadre holding a hard-line view shared some or all of these elements, thus

explaining the antagonism toward this film. Only the sustained advocacy of those bureaucrats expressing more liberal, moderate sentiments—advocating a combination of pluralism and tolerance in interpreting Marxism-Leninism, a more cosmopolitan and internationalist outlook, and greater engagement from and autonomy for the grassroots—enabled the filmmaker to complete the movie. Regardless of hard-line censure, *Karnaval'naia noch'* drew a huge audience, becoming one of the most popular Soviet films of all time.

The film's portrayal of the tensions in clubs between political propaganda and popular entertainment, between orthodox music and foreign jazz, and between popular initiative and bureaucratic directives reflects the broader strains within the state's cultural recreation offerings. This book examines these official cultural activities during the first quarter century of the Cold War, often called the First Cold War. It tells the story of how Soviet authorities attempted to construct an appealing version of socialist popular culture as an alternative to the predominant "western" model that had such enormous worldwide allure.² Soviet cultural functionaries strove to define the public norms for cultural fun. I use the term "fun" to refer to those cultural activities in which people found meaning, pleasure, and joy and into which they invested time, energy, and resources primarily out of their own volition and initiative. Many youngsters responded enthusiastically to the Kremlin's cultural policies and had fun within government-managed cultural spaces. However, popular desires did not overlap fully with top-level guidelines, resulting in hidden tensions and open conflicts.

This monograph brings to light a little-studied sphere that I call "state-sponsored popular culture"—cultural activities of the masses within government institutions. Looking at state-sponsored popular culture helps shift the traditional focus on the intelligentsia or intellectual elites as cultural creators in a different direction, spotlighting ordinary citizens. State-sponsored popular culture elides the traditional distinctions between "high" culture, or sophisticated artistic forms aimed at elite tastes, and "low" culture, or entertaining cultural activities intended to appeal to the masses, both of which were typically performed by professional artists. State-sponsored popular culture contained a broad spectrum of genres for a variety of tastes, all produced by nonprofessional volunteer artists in officially managed cultural settings.³

That 4.8 million Soviet citizens had performed as amateurs by 1953 (a number that rose to 9 million in 1962) underscores the broad appeal of organized cultural recreation.⁴ The Communist Party managed this sphere through government institutions and party-controlled social organizations such as trade unions and the Komsomol, together known as the party-

state complex. The Komsomol, the mass Soviet youth organization, accepted those ranging in age from approximately fourteen to twenty-eight, and this study defines “youth” as those eligible to join the Komsomol. This social demographic had significant divisions based on factors such as age, occupation, social class, gender, and geographical location. Nonetheless, since the party-state’s cultural recreation policy treated this cohort in a largely unified fashion, which powerfully shaped the opportunities, experiences, and societal perceptions of the young, it makes analytical sense to consider young people as a cohesive category for this study.

Examining the artistic creativity of millions of amateurs belies typical classifications of Soviet cultural activities within the official/unofficial binary. The label “official” typically refers to thoroughly vetted cultural production by state-employed artists in government cultural venues; “unofficial” encompasses cultural activities that did not pass through cultural censorship and that occurred in nonstate settings. Amateur artists performed in party-state cultural institutions with some degree of oversight, making these activities official. However, amateurs had much greater room to maneuver due to their nonprofessional status, presumed lack of cultural knowledge, and performance for small audiences. Moreover, as most amateurs did not intend to build careers around artistic activities, they had much less to fear from pushing the boundaries. Likewise, the mass nature of amateur arts, with millions of participants, made it a challenge to impose thorough top-down controls. These factors resulted in substantially weaker censorship over state-sponsored popular culture as compared to professional cultural production.

The Soviet Union’s vast network of club buildings, numbering more than 123,000 in 1953, functioned as the chief venue for cultural recreation.⁵ A typical mid-size club had two halls for concerts, dances, theatrical performances, movie showings, lectures, political meetings, and other events; several smaller rooms for amateur groups to practice their artistic activities; a recreation area with various games, books, newspapers, and sports equipment; and a cafeteria. The club administration had the mission of providing financial and logistical support for amateur arts and cultural events, while ensuring that these activities followed the cultural policy dictated from above. The party-state leaders considered clubs an important site of socialist construction, where youth subjectivity—a sense of self and one’s place within society—undergoes modification into that of a model Soviet subject ready to help the country transition to communism. Owing to the widespread popularity of state-sponsored cultural entertainment, clubs constituted central public spaces for youth entertainment, socializing, leisure, and romance. While this centrality made clubs a crucial

location for the construction of a personal worldview and self-identity for young club-goers, such individual subjectivities did not always match top-level intentions.⁶

These disparities resulted from divergent visions of appropriately “socialist” fun. A key point of tension was the large proportion of young people enjoying western popular culture, such as jazz in the style of Louis Armstrong and John Coltrane, rock and roll by the Beatles and Elvis Presley, and dances such as the fox-trot and boogie-woogie, while not perceiving their behavior as anti-Soviet. By contrast, many militant ideologues considered western cultural influence to be subversive, especially in the Cold War context. These hard-liners proclaimed that young people should have fun by partaking in heavily politicized cultural activities or, at the very least, highly orthodox and traditional ones such as ballet, widely perceived as instilling appropriate cultural values. In some years, such militant perspectives prevailed in defining central policy. Yet, even then, certain club managers continued to host the controversial but popular western-inflected cultural forms, using deceptive practices to do so. A key motivation sprang from their need to fulfill the annual plan, which required enticing audiences to visit the club and encouraging amateurs to perform there voluntarily. Club administrators functioned at the uncomfortable intersection of carrying out top-level cultural mandates while organizing artistic activities that had wide popularity among the citizenry. Their experience shows that organized cultural recreation did not simply reflect the Kremlin’s guidelines at any given point. State-sponsored popular culture was defined by the always evolving and frequently strained relationship among the leadership’s directives, the varied incentives facing the cultural apparatus, and the desires and activism of ordinary citizens.

SOCIALIST FUN AND THE SOVIET PROJECT

Socialist fun was central to the overarching goal at the heart of the Soviet project: developing a socialist version of modernity. “Socialist modernity” refers to a society, culture, and a way of life widely perceived as progressive and advanced, informed by Marxism-Leninism, and actively constructed by human efforts. Scholars such as Anthony Giddens consider “modernity” a new stage in history defined by a break with notions of a static, tradition-based society. Replacing these assumptions with the conception that humans themselves construct and order social structures, modernity implicitly promised that people could build a perfect world on the basis of reason. From the beginning, the Soviet project endeavored to construct an alternative to the dominant western paradigm of a capitalist modernity; Zygmunt Bauman thus terms socialism the “counter-culture of moder-

nity.” Indeed, perceiving western modernity as characterized by class divisions, social conflict, consumerism, and individualism, the Communist Party sought a different path to the future—a socialist modernity, one placing greater value on egalitarianism, community-mindedness, altruism, and collectivism. However, the emphasis on these values, the vision of the specific form that such modernity would take, and the methods of attaining it changed over time.⁷

The early Soviet years involved a series of radical transformations aimed at building a utopian future. By the mid-1930s, the Stalinist leadership had proclaimed that the country had built the foundations of socialism, and thus it changed the focus to guarding those accomplishments. During the Thaw—the decade and a half following Joseph Stalin’s death in 1953—the new leadership under N. S. Khrushchev revived the drive to move from socialism to communism. The term “Thaw” should not be read as equating the post-Stalin period with unvarnished liberalism but as conveying the series of thaws and chills in this ambiguous and multivalent but generally more pluralistic, tolerant, and grassroots-oriented era. The complexities, zigzags, and contradictions in Thaw-era policy resulted, to a large extent, from a combination of the Soviet Union engaging in the Cold War while trying to transition to communism.⁸

The post-Stalin authorities transformed the isolationist and top-down late Stalinist vision of socialist modernity into a novel Thaw-era model that aimed for grassroots engagement and for broad popularity at home and abroad. The new leadership rejected the previous tendency to simply dictate cultural norms from above and gave some weight to actual youth desires and preferences; moved away from demanding disciplined compliance to the officialdom and instead encouraged the young to express some autonomous initiative; and, finally, decreased the politicization of club activities and placed a much greater emphasis on entertainment and fun, including giving official sanction for a modicum of western-style cultural forms. Likewise, the post-Stalin administration increasingly pulled aside the Iron Curtain to showcase the Soviet Union, including its organized cultural recreation, as an attractive socialist alternative to western modernity. Indeed, the socialist alternative had wide global acclaim, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, when the Soviet project seemed most vibrant due to its apparent creation of social harmony, rapid economic growth, technological achievements, military might, and anticolonial internationalist orientation. Billions of people in East and South Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and eastern Europe oriented themselves toward the socialist version of modernity rather than the western one. So did a significant minority of westerners.⁹

Yet, to secure legitimacy for a socialist modernity, the post-Stalin Kremlin needed to present an alluring version of socialist fun. This goal proved especially important and difficult to achieve in popular culture, the area in which western modernity had a vast global influence. The Soviet leadership wanted to forge a socialist popular culture, of equal or greater appeal than the western one, which would convey socialist values, as defined by whatever the current party line prescribed. In doing so, policy makers also aimed to ensure their cultural hegemony, meaning sure support among the masses for the cultural standards propounded by the ruling elites, which was necessary for maintaining political power and ensuring social stability.¹⁰

My analysis builds upon the work of Stephen Kotkin and David Hoffmann, who have demonstrated the Soviet project's ideologically driven rejection of capitalism as part of the drive to build a modern alternative to the western model in the pre-World War II Soviet Union. While extending their insights about the importance of Soviet ideology to the postwar years, my research indicates that World War II and especially the Cold War acquired a great deal of weight after 1945. The Cold War served as an existential threat to the Soviet Union and its achievements in building the foundations of socialism. On the other hand, it revived the possibility of socialism triumphing around the globe rather than in only one country, thus reinvigorating the dream of reaching communism in the foreseeable future.¹¹

This book challenges the views of those scholars, such as Martin Malia, who treat the Soviet Union as unique. It also departs from the views of György Péteri and others who underscore the similarities between different socialist states in trying to build a socialist exception to the western version of modernity, without placing these modernizing projects in a global setting. The Soviet version of socialist modernity was one of many socialist modernities, though it functioned as the archetypal and most influential socialist modernity. Furthermore, I argue that the Soviet Union constituted one among many "multiple modernities," or countries that seek to forge a modern society different from the western model. Situating the Soviet Union among a field of multiple modernities allows us to move beyond the Eurocentric emphasis of traditional modernization theory, which assumes an inevitable, eventual convergence of all systems on a western modernity.¹²

A multiple modernities perspective highlights the contributions that the Soviet Union as a case study brings to other fields. Thus, this book develops the theory of multiple modernities by noting that, during the Cold War, the Soviet Union aimed to construct the most prominent alternative

modernity and also presented itself as a model to emulate for all other countries striving to forge a modern society distinct from the western one. Likewise, I highlight the tensions inherent in the Soviet version of modernity. Differing ideas of what constituted a truly socialist modernity sparked conflicts within the Soviet Union. Comparing these to debates over modernization projects in other contexts produces illuminating insights.¹³

Scrutinizing clashes over state-sponsored popular culture from 1945 to 1970, my study also looks back to their origins. Adopting this wide-lens approach exposes the roots of these clashes in early Soviet and even pre-revolutionary disputes over “spontaneity” versus “consciousness,” namely, whether a socialist cultural industry should privilege grassroots spontaneity or top-down ideologically conscious guidance, as well as the extent to which it should focus on ideological propaganda, on cultural enlightenment, or on pleasurable entertainment. The answers to these questions evolved throughout Soviet history, defining the nature of state-sponsored popular culture at any given time.¹⁴

Likewise, this monograph looks forward to the consequences of these struggles during the 1970s and 1980s, underscoring the key role that contingency played in the failure of socialist modernity. After the 1964 coup against Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev and his allies gradually turned away from soliciting initiative from below. This militant turn had an especially powerful impact on youth, as it went against the early, Thaw-inspired expectation that the party-state would grant them ever-increasing cultural autonomy. The Brezhnev administration’s choice severely undermined youth commitment to the Soviet project, a conclusion complicating accounts that posit the inevitable triumph of western over socialist culture.¹⁵

Addressing the lived experience of socialist youth culture provides insights into the Soviet system’s endeavor to build a modern socialist youth—the New Soviet (Young) Person. The Marxist-Leninist canon assigned the young a central role as those not only constructing but also slated to live in communist utopia; in turn, youth represented a major social demographic. Consequently, the Kremlin invested considerable resources into managing the young. Recent archive-based histories have revealed much about young post-1945 intelligentsia. Scholars have also investigated extensively the small numbers of countercultural youth. Such studies have shed much-needed light on the inadequacies in the party-state’s cultural policies. Nonetheless, the cultural practices of the large majority of ordinary youth who did not openly deviate from official cultural norms remain largely in the shadows. This problematic dynamic implicitly reproduces the imbalance found in writings on western youth, which excessively

privilege nonconformists. Consequently, the overarching image emerging from scholarship on Soviet and non-Soviet youth alike does not convey a representative picture of reality.¹⁶

An investigation of mass-oriented cultural entertainment casts doubt on the widespread notion, expressed by David Caute, Sergei Zhuk, and Reinhold Wagnleitner, among others, that Soviet youth generally longed for western culture and did not find pleasure and fun within official culture. Building on Alexei Yurchak's and Kristin Roth-Ey's work on other cultural spheres, my analysis of club activities indicates that many Soviet youngsters saw no contradiction between a full commitment to building communism and an appreciation for certain elements of western culture. In other words, loyal Soviet youth could like both communism and jazz, and Khrushchev as well as Coltrane.¹⁷

Moreover, Soviet organizations not only permitted but in some cases even encouraged a surprising amount of room for agency. Agency refers to behavior primarily motivated by an individual's personal interests and wants, as opposed to conduct imposed forcefully by external forces. Exploring Soviet organized cultural recreation underscores that grassroots agency did not necessarily translate to resistance or subversion, thus countering narratives that juxtapose state and society and postulate an inherent rift between a genuine, everyday culture and an official, state-managed one. Significant numbers among the young readily devoted themselves to cultural activities that bore a substantial ideological load, such as singing songs eulogizing Stalin. Their conduct demonstrates what I term "conformist agency," or the conscious and willing decision, stemming primarily from one's internal motivations and desires, to act in ways that closely follow top-level guidelines.¹⁸ Plenty, however, expressed their individual agency by abstaining from amateur arts with thoroughly politicized repertoires. Instead, they enjoyed singing folk songs and acting in Russian prerevolutionary plays, and a large number engaged in western-themed cultural activities in clubs. The most avid fans took deceptive measures to avoid censorship during periods of top-level militancy and antiwestern jingoism.

Early in the Thaw period, the authorities allowed young people to shape state-sponsored popular culture through a major campaign to promote initiative from below, greatly expanding the space for autonomous youth agency and self-determination within official settings. This drive helped lead to transformations in the behavior, worldview, and cultural tastes of those growing up in the period between the end of the war and Stalin's death, a group whom Juliane Fürst called the "last Stalin generation," and those coming of age in the turbulent mid- and late 1950s. I term

this latter age cohort the “post-Stalin generation.” Generations share many characteristics, but a shared sense of belonging to the same social group is a crucial component of a powerful generation. In this way, a generation parallels what Benedict Anderson has called an imagined community—a group, such as a nation, whose members share a common sense of identity and community, though their relations are distant and “imagined,” rather than direct and personal. The post-Stalin generation, I find, possessed a much greater sense of belonging to the same age cohort, and consequently its generational cohesion was stronger than in the last Stalin generation, which helped the post-Stalin generation push for major cultural reforms and stand up to older authority figures. The post-Stalin generation met with some notable successes in changing top-level cultural policy and its grassroots implementation. The minute actions of millions of young people uniting with others of their age group to advocate for their personal and mutual wants not only shaped their everyday environment but also powerfully influenced the wider Soviet cultural field. Youth agency thus helped determine broad historical processes, a parallel to what Lawrence Grossberg has found about the social impact of young people in western contexts.¹⁹

State-sponsored popular culture helped define a socialist mode of cultural consumption. The burgeoning historiography on socialist consumption, which largely focuses on material consumer goods, has underscored the obstacles Soviet rulers faced in finding an appropriately socialist approach to consumption. This book proposes that mass-oriented collective cultural activities in clubs served as a lynchpin in the Kremlin’s efforts to define and enact a socialist form of consumption and build a socialist version of a consumer society. However, deep tensions existed between ideological imperatives and marketlike financial consumerist forces in state-sponsored popular culture. Different party-state bodies gave more weight to one or the other, according to their varying missions and the political positions of the bureaucrats in each organ. These agencies frequently acted at cross purposes, undermining the imposition of a cohesive mode of socialist cultural consumption. This divide underscores the inefficiencies and contradictions within the Soviet top-down bureaucratic system. Such problems helped ordinary citizens and lower-level administrators alike maneuver within official institutions and challenge the center’s cultural policy, ensuring that both groups possessed real agency. Furthermore, youth used their agency to refashion the nature and meanings of club cultural offerings to fit their own individual interests. These data expand our understanding of how individuals remake mainstream products to suit their own needs.²⁰

Setting my case within an international framework highlights intriguing parallels and distinctions between how twentieth-century European authoritarian states, such as the Soviet Union, socialist eastern Europe, fascist Italy, and Nazi Germany, used cultural production for the masses as a tool for governance. The Soviet Union, in this regard, constituted what Bauman terms a “gardening state,” referring to how modern authoritarian governments strive to transform—to garden—their populations, thus growing an ordered society that fits the leadership’s needs and ideals. Drawing attention to commonalities and differences around the globe in the struggle against the postwar expansion of American popular culture, my work contributes to our understanding of how both socialist and nonsocialist societies resisted US cultural globalization. By emphasizing that governments could play a substantial role in shaping popular culture, consumerism, aesthetic tastes, and leisure, my project expands the western-centric academic models that used only North American and western European capitalist democratic contexts as the basis for their evidence and gave minimal attention to state structures.²¹

Investigating the grassroots impact of top-level cultural guidelines gets at the notoriously difficult issue of the reception of popular culture. At one end of the spectrum in my narrative stand young cultural activists and performers who embraced officially prescribed, orthodox cultural offerings. Many youths, however, found themselves closer to the middle, participating in mainstream club activities while occasionally testing the boundaries. On the far end of the range lie avid fans of western popular culture who pushed state-managed cultural institutions to host their favored musical genres. A crucial subgroup among the latter consisted of “jazz enthusiasts,” my translation of the term *dzhabzovye liudi* used by one of the most famous Soviet and post-Soviet jazz musicians, the late Georgii Garanian, to describe himself and his friends in his interview with me. “We were so into jazz that we had no other interests; it was jazz and nothing else,” he stated. These jazz enthusiasts formed a fan community, getting together with other aficionados to listen to jazz, especially the newest and most fashionable styles; learn everything about this music and spread their knowledge to anyone interested; collect and trade jazz records; and, in many cases, to perform this music. While acknowledging their countercultural status in the late Stalin years, my study shows that many young jazz enthusiasts eagerly participated in state-sponsored popular culture once the post-Stalin leadership adopted a more pluralistic cultural stance. This finding challenges scholarship that treats jazz behind the Iron Curtain as embodying oppositional attitudes, a longing for freedom, and a desire for an American way of life.²²

Speaking of “socialist fun” engages with literature that treats emotions not as simple biological givens but as largely cultural constructs of a specific society that reflect underlying social values. For instance, the psychologists Elaine Hatfield, John T. Cacioppo, and Richard L. Rapson have demonstrated how people’s emotional experience results, to a significant extent, from the feelings expressed by those around them, as well as from what individuals consider to be the emotional norms in their society. Building on such research, historians have recently drawn attention to the historical significance of the evolution of emotions. William Reddy has used the term “emotional regime” to describe the normative sentiments prescribed by the political, social, and cultural authorities at any given time, along with the mechanisms enforcing these feelings. The term “emotional community,” coined by Barbara Rosenwein, refers to a group whose members follow shared norms of emotional expression and possess the same outlook on appropriate affect. Any society has an overarching emotional community and subordinate emotional communities, which engage with but elaborate upon and occasionally oppose the affective values of the primary emotional community. Looking at organized cultural recreation helps illuminate the evolution of Soviet emotional regimes and emotional communities in the first decades of the Cold War. Soviet cultural policy strove constantly to ensure that young people expressed and experienced officially prescribed sentiments within state-sponsored popular culture. Yet, the nature of the emotional regime changed a great deal between 1945 and 1970. For example, a substantial shift occurred, from a restrictive and militant emotional regime in the late Stalin years to a more pluralistic one in the early Thaw period. This transformation represented a conscious step by the Khrushchev Kremlin to bring officially prescribed emotions closer to the reality of youth emotional communities as policy makers sought to mobilize feelings of enthusiasm and excitement among the young and channel them into renewing the drive toward communism. Still, top-level guidelines never entirely overlapped with the actual tastes and sentiments of young club-goers, resulting in gaps between youth emotional communities and the party-state’s emotional regime. These fissures grew wider during periods of cultural conservatism, whether in the postwar Stalin era, at brief periods during the Khrushchev era, or in the late 1960s under Brezhnev, with many youths garnering pleasure and having fun by thumbing their noses at uptight prescriptions issued by the party-state.²³

Exploring how youth cliques readily engaged in and invested deep personal meaning into state-sponsored cultural activities contributes to recent scholarship questioning the traditional distinctions drawn between the Soviet public sphere—everything associated with the party-state, such

as official cultural production—and the private sphere—individual emotions, personal life, friends, sociability, family, and home. Organized cultural recreation embodied a liminal space that contained elements of what earlier scholarship labeled as public and private. These elements intertwined in a complex fashion to enmesh ordinary citizens within party-state structures and ideology. Simultaneously, the population's attitudes, preferences, and behaviors powerfully shaped the conditions local cadres and policy makers faced, as well as their perceptions of those conditions.²⁴

The post-Stalin Kremlin's drive to build a modern and socialist popular culture that offered an alluring yet ideologically appropriate alternative to western popular culture placed the Soviet club network at the heart of the Cold War domestic cultural front. As recent publications have shown, the cultural struggle played a vital role in the Cold War's eventual outcome. In the contest for the hearts and minds of domestic and foreign audiences, both sides deployed culture as a weapon of soft power, that is, the ability to achieve international geopolitical goals through attraction rather than coercion. Scholars have furthered our understanding of western cultural diplomacy, or the government effort to promote its domestic culture abroad and thereby win over world publics. Yet, the more complex, and ultimately more revealing, question of the actual fruits of this soft power offensive on Soviet daily cultural life remains poorly explored. By illuminating the grassroots effect, and effectiveness, of western cultural diplomacy—an issue just now starting to receive serious attention from pioneering scholars—my work complements and enriches our comprehension of the Cold War.²⁵

Exploring Soviet state-sponsored popular culture enriches our understanding of Soviet cultural diplomacy. There is surprisingly little scholarship on how authorities within socialist and nonsocialist contexts alike deliberately utilized internal cultural structures to sway the opinions of foreign visitors. I term this practice “domestic cultural diplomacy” to distinguish it from the traditional understanding of cultural diplomacy, which I suggest deserves the name “foreign cultural diplomacy.” Existing scholarship has not drawn such distinctions and as a result has overlooked cultural diplomacy oriented toward foreign visitors. The party-state's leadership aspired to use its domestic mass cultural network to persuade outsiders that the Soviet Union had an attractive and socialist popular culture. State-sponsored popular culture also proved useful for foreign cultural diplomacy, as the Soviet authorities sent amateur artists to international cultural events, such as jazz festivals. Tracing the impact of these activities on both Soviet visitors and the foreigners with whom they interacted enriches the growing scholarship on the significance of Cold War cross-border

interactions among nonstate actors. Moreover, examining both domestic and foreign Soviet cultural diplomacy helps place the Soviet Union within the context of twentieth-century transnational history.²⁶

Grassroots events and exchanges in the mass cultural network constituted a critical daily experience of the Cold War for the population, while also representing a central component and microcosm of the superpower conflict as a whole, demonstrating the necessity of using micro-level case studies to grasp key elements of the Cold War. Such evidence suggests the validity of treating the Soviet Union as one among many “Cold War cultures,” or countries that experienced the struggle between the blocs on an everyday cultural level. I wish to avoid Cold War determinism—the idea that every development from 1945 to 1991 stems from the superpower conflict—and acknowledge fully that the Cold War did not touch everything and that other international processes had important transnational impacts during this period. Likewise, each individual polity had particular historical trends that drove domestic developments prior to and after 1945. Nevertheless, the Cold War played a very significant role, including in Soviet cultural practices. My narrative shows that the superpower struggle influenced day-to-day lived experiences and that the cultural Cold War at the grassroots had real significance for Soviet rulers. Growing concerns about what many political elites saw as the subversive impact of western culture, along with top-level desires to influence foreign attitudes through domestic cultural diplomacy, influenced their actions in the domestic and foreign policy arenas.²⁷

SOURCES AND STRUCTURE

A diverse complement of sources illuminates four interlinked elements of state-sponsored popular culture. First, my book examines the nature of and debates over policy formation within central institutions using central archives, including the files of the Komsomol, the trade unions, the Ministry of Culture, and the party. Second, recognizing that local practice frequently diverged from federal intentions, I have used for this project regional archives to compare top-level policy implementation in Moscow and Saratov. A regional center on the Volga, Saratov was the most provincial of Soviet cities and was closed to nonsocialist foreigners. It thereby offers a representative example of youth experience in the Russian heartland outside of the atypical, and exhaustively researched, settings of Moscow or Leningrad. This study closely surveys two working-class neighborhoods: Moscow’s Krasnopresnenskii District and Saratov’s Kirovskii District. The documents of several large enterprises and universities reveal ground-level policy enactment. These include Moskovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet

(MGU, Moscow state university), the Soviet Union's flagship educational institution, and Saratovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet (SGU, Saratov's state university), one of the strongest Soviet regional universities. The experience of working-class youth emerges from Saratov's Tret'ia gosudarstvennaia podshipnikovyi zavod (Third state ball-bearing factory) and Moscow's Krasnyi Bogatyr' (Red knight) and Trekhgornaia Manufaktura (Three mountain manufactory) factories. My work thereby brings to light both the daily life of and federal policies toward young urbanites—both middle class and working class, women and men, in the capital and in the Soviet Russian provinces—who attended official cultural events. While the center's directives applied to organized cultural recreation offerings for peasants and those in non-Russian regions, my study does not deal with their day-to-day cultural experience.²⁸

This study also explores the depictions of organized cultural recreation in official discourse. Tracing the evolution in this rhetoric furthers our comprehension of the shifts in the official ways of thinking, talking about, depicting, and understanding Soviet reality, which also played a powerful role in constituting the worldview and cultural practices of young people. My sources here include national, regional, and local newspapers, instruction booklets for cultural officials, literary works, movies, and musical repertoires.

Finally, to comprehend how young people perceived and experienced state-sponsored popular culture on the day-to-day level, this work relies on firsthand accounts, including memoirs, diaries, and, most important, a series of open-ended interviews I conducted with scores of individuals. My interviewees include lower-level, mid-ranking, and top officials who participated in formulating and enacting organized cultural recreation. They include Liubov Baliaskaia, a high-level official in the Komsomol central hierarchy, and Anatolii Avrus, the leader of the Komsomol cell at SGU. I spoke with youth cultural activists who engaged extensively in state-sponsored popular culture; these activists included Iurii Gaponov, the leader of an innovative amateur artistic collective at MGU, and Iurii Sokolov, who participated in a variety of mass cultural activities. Jazz enthusiasts constitute the third category of interview subjects, whether Muscovites famous across the Soviet Union and in post-Soviet Russia, such as Georgii Garanian or Aleksei Kuznetsov, or Saratovites well known in that city, including Feliks Arons and Iurii Zhimskii.

Treating these oral sources as autobiographical texts, my methodology follows Donald Raleigh and other scholars in considering interview accounts to be a reflection of people's interpretation of the narratives of their lives rather than an entirely accurate portrayal of the past. Taking into ac-

count that the stories individuals tell about themselves change throughout the course of their own history caused me both to look for patterns across my interview subjects rather than trusting the memory of any one person and to remain aware of how new experiences shape recollections. My approach involves paying the greatest attention to those narrators who consciously differentiated between the values and emotions of their youth and their current sense of self. In analyzing the self-reported meanings that adults drew from their youthful lives and the feelings they experienced in state-sponsored popular culture, I most valued accounts that illustrated how behavioral changes arose from such emotions and meanings. In producing this work, I used archival and published sources to complement and test oral evidence, holding in highest regard those interviews that best correlated with written documents. The interviews served as invaluable tools for uncovering what happened behind the scenes of cultural events and within the interstices of youth cultural practices, spaces generally not reflected within archival documents and official publications. Furthermore, the interviews offer the best available instruments for getting insights on the meanings, emotions, and evaluations that young people associated with mass-oriented cultural activities. Informed by the work of Irina Paperno, I follow a similar approach in analyzing memoirs and diaries.²⁹

The eight numbered chapters combine a chronological and thematic structure. Chapter 1 overviews Soviet organized cultural recreation from its origins to the end of World War II and then examines more thoroughly the immediate postwar period, 1945 and 1946. The next chapter investigates the extreme ideologization of the official prescriptions for club activities in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Chapter 3 takes an in-depth look at the attacks on western-style music and dancing during the same period. In chapter 4, the text explores how the pluralistic cultural turn during the early Thaw period, 1953–56, affected organized cultural activities. The fifth chapter presents a case study of Thaw-era transformations, particularly the explosion of youth enthusiasm, by focusing on novel institutions such as youth initiative clubs. Chapter 6 provides insights on the Kremlin's campaign to instill normative cultural tastes among youth in a brief hard-line turn during the late 1950s. The seventh chapter deals with the revival of a more pluralistic approach to cultural policy from the end of the 1950s and into the early 1960s. Finally, chapter 8 teases out the ambiguities of the early post-Khrushchev years and the turn toward militancy by the end of the 1960s, concluding with the Sixteenth Komsomol Congress, in May 1970, which defined the shape of the overarching Brezhnev-era policy toward cultural recreation.

The book illustrates the evolution in the party-state's use of state-sponsored socialist fun in the Cold War context to help elucidate the primary alternative to the western paradigm of modernity. My research highlights the challenges faced by the authorities in achieving their goals, whether owing to disagreements among officials, incongruities within the Soviet institutional structure, or noncompliance by young people. At the same time, it demonstrates that the state's cultural policy, riven by tensions between hard-line and soft-line approaches, opened up significant room for youth agency and grassroots activism, with young people themselves playing a crucial role in defining state-sponsored popular culture.