

SLAVONIC & EAST EUROPEAN REVIEW



ISSN 2222-4327

Volume 102, Number 2, April 2024

Ismene Brown, Ekaterina Furtseva and the Impresarios: The Golden Age of
Soviet Arts Tours, pp. 231–262

Project MUSE, <https://doi.org/10.1353/see.00010>

<https://muse.jhu.edu/journal/823>

<https://www.jstor.org/journal/slaveasteurorev2>

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The Modern Humanities Research Association and the School of Slavonic and
East European Studies, University College London

Ekaterina Furtseva and the Impresarios: The Golden Age of Soviet Arts Tours

ISMENE BROWN

ON 25 October 1974 the *Manchester Guardian's* music writer Christopher Ford reported: 'The death of David Oistrakh effectively ends a period of two decades during which Soviet performing artists dominated the world's concert halls.'¹ The news of the celebrated violinist's heart attack in Amsterdam was followed within 24 hours by reports from Moscow that another Soviet notable had died suddenly — the long-serving USSR Minister of Culture, Ekaterina Alekseevna Furtseva, struck down similarly (if official reports were to be believed) by heart failure a few hours after Oistrakh. The period Ford mourned remains to this day a golden age for classical performing arts, a legendary parade through the Cold War of Soviet musicians and dancers who won wide acknowledgement as the best of the best, even in comparison with the abundant outstanding performers in Europe and America. The depth of the Soviet excellence was underlined by that year's other headlining losses, the departures of Mstislav Rostropovich, Galina Vishnevskaya, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the Kirov Ballet's Mikhail Baryshnikov, Valery and Galina Panov, and the mental collapse of the pianist Sviatoslav Richter. In the tumult of 1974, two other exits were less remarked: in March the flamboyant American impresario of Russian performers, Sol Hurok, died, and in May his British counterpart, Victor Hochhauser, terminated his long Soviet business by giving Rostropovich and Vishnevskaya refuge in his London home.

Ismene Brown is an independent researcher based in Windsor. A musician by training and journalist by profession, she is a former dance critic for *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Spectator*.

Spellings of Russian names familiar to Western audiences have been retained throughout.

¹ Christopher Ford, 'String Base', *The Guardian*, 25 October 1974, p. 15.

The prolific Soviet tours to Britain and America between the late 1950s and 1970s seemed insulated from the Cold War's terrifying crises, operating as if in a separate space of aesthetic and emotional universality, where disapproved Prokof'ev and Shostakovich works were introduced to British audiences by the Moscow and Leningrad state orchestras, where Ulanova, Plisetskaya, Nureyev and Baryshnikov persuaded the West of Russian ballet's global supremacy, while the Moiseyev dance ensemble headed a flotilla of heartlifting folkdance and song companies from vast Eastern territories. Today the names have lost none of the reverence they won. Music critics still point modern listeners towards Gilels, Richter, Rostropovich and Oistrakh records, the dance world remains enthralled by the Bolshoi, and Shostakovich's ubiquity in British concert life has nurtured a flowering of interest in other former Soviet composers too. Overall, the popular notion of there being something special about Russian performers endures in Britain, sprinkling box office magic dust over even the meagrest of Russian ballet pickup troupes and pianists, to the frustration of better British ones.

As with a magic trick, however, the processes behind the phenomenon, which seemed suddenly to arrive in the mid 1950s and as suddenly vanish in the mid 1970s, are not easily discoverable, and there has been little scholarly interrogation of it. This article offers new information, witness interviews, exploration of unpublished materials and fresh assessment of published evidence, which cohere in indicating a much more leading role for private initiative and closet brokering than is maintained in much Western scholarship on the Soviet arts trades with the USA and Britain. I argue that behind the official government agreements existed an unofficial network consisting of the American and British governments' surrogate agents, the impresarios Sol Hurok and Victor Hochhauser, and the Soviet Minister of Culture, Ekaterina Furtseva, and that this relationship significantly reprioritized the terms and goals of the Soviet-Anglosphere arts trade, placing artists at the core of the business rather than the governments' ideological aims. This shift, which was also personally extremely advantageous to the three protagonists, generated and protected the phenomenon of the golden age of Soviet performers abroad.

In this network Furtseva emerges as pivotal, a curious, widely visible, yet historically opaque figure. Though a vital lieutenant to Khrushchev — and the sole woman in the Soviet leadership, this not being an irrelevant qualifier — her entire career (and even name) is endemically

misrepresented in scholarship East and West.² Her conduct of her position as USSR Minister of Culture is shown to be decisive in enabling the rise of individual initiative in the arts trades, including unorthodox behaviour by artists themselves; in parallel, it can be shown that all three governments facilitated, somewhat neglectfully, the impresarios' empowerment. Hence the argument will be that individuals, not governments, fashioned that brightest of all the products of the cultural exchange agreements, and that it was an independent, anomalous product.

Such a finding must battle with a considerable academic consensus that focuses on the ideological mandates and bureaucratic processes that sustained intergovernmental cultural exchange agreements. Leading scholars such as Kiril Tomoff, David Caute and Nigel Gould-Davies posit that the Cold War cultural trade was synecdoche for the zero-sum moral contest of empires — capitalism versus Communism, freedom versus authoritarianism.³ This moralist structuring conditions the notorious controversies over interpreting cultural actors' loyalties from their actions or creativity. Was Shostakovich a collaborator? Was Nureyev an opportunist? And so on. In such a megalithic battle, to be analysed through 'theories of cooperation' and the 'logic of cultural diplomacy',⁴ independent human agency indeed looks impossible, since all brokers involved — impresarios, bureaucrats and politicians — must be presumed subject to the same rules.

Peter Waldron, in a recent *SEER* article, considered the agency matter more closely from the British side, dissecting the energetic activity in the Foreign Office in pursuing the UK's soft power objectives in its Soviet

² Furtseva's historiography has been invaded by primitive errors. She is misnamed 'Elena' in, for instance, Ronald Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States*, Oxford and New York, 1998, p. 418; Dmitri T. Shepilov and Stephen V. Bittner (ed.), *The Kremlin's Scholar: A Memoir of Soviet Politics under Stalin and Khrushchev*, trans. Anthony Austin, New Haven, CT & London, 2007, p. 335 — presumably a translator's error since the original, Dmitrii Shepilov and Dmitrii Kosyrev, *Neprimknuvshii*, Moscow, 2001, p. 327, is correct; Laurence Senelick, "'A Woman's Kingdom': Minister of Culture Furtseva and Censorship in the Post-Stalinist Russian Theatre", *New Theatre Quarterly*, 26, 1, 2010, pp. 16–24 (p. 16), and Polly Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma: Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union, 1953–70*, New Haven, CT and London, 2013, p. 170. Her career is widely misrecorded in both modern Russian biographical literature and Anglophone gender and cultural scholarship.

³ David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War*, Oxford and New York, 2003; Kiril Tomoff, *Virtuosi Abroad: Soviet Music and Imperial Competition during the Early Cold War, 1945–1958*, Ithaca, NY, 2015; Nigel Gould-Davies, 'The Logic of Soviet Cultural Diplomacy', *Diplomatic History*, 27, 2, April 2003, pp. 193f.

⁴ Gould-Davies's lens. *Ibid.*, pp. 193–94.

relations as it implemented the official cultural exchange mission.⁵ Certainly scientific exchanges, publications policies, educational visits and tourism, with their necessary bureaucratic detailing and essayed reciprocities, had frontline performative roles in the contest for moral gain, yet in the artistic and performance area Waldron passes too briefly over ‘British promoters’ and their orders to arrange ‘satisfactory contractual terms’. He does not examine how those promoters fitted into the negotiatory machine — nor does he raise how events directly disrupting Soviet arts trading, such as the Jewish human rights protests, affected the agreements. Thus, the prevalent narrative is of twenty years of Soviet-US/UK duologue determined by government and civil servants obeying structural and logical rules, proceeding to expected ends.

But one must feel curiosity when the assumption that what government wants government will get relies on obscure agency, and especially when the agents are, bluntly, not on government payrolls. Where do they fit into this remorseless structural momentum? Other scholars have, by contrast, found signs that in the social transitions set in motion in the mid 1950s not only experimental new practices but also, covertly, new goals emerged, at a distance from the starkly familiar Cold War poles. Eleonory Gilburd characterizes the Thaw as a new ‘condition of possibilities’, a psychological state triggered on both Soviet and American sides by the Geneva summit — a framing that Khrushchev himself adopted in his memoirs, when he described the Thaw as a ‘relaxation of controls [reflecting] our inner state of mind’. (His main concern was that thaw should not turn to flood.)⁶ Already, in 1960, the political scientist Frederick Barghoorn had identified a burgeoning Soviet focus on Western European cultural diplomacy as an entry point for a new standing in the world, a sense of shared old-world traditions offering opportunities for ‘demonstration and blandishment’ not available in the Soviet-US binarism (indeed in cultural terms he thought the Soviets were positively anti-American).⁷ The diplomat Joseph Nye’s conceptualizing of ‘soft power’ builds on that perception, positing culture as a particularly effective arena for fresh thinking and interchange,

⁵ Peter Waldron, ‘Cultural Diplomacy during the Cold War: Britain and the UK-USSR Cultural Agreements’, *Slavonic and East European Review*, 100, 4, 2022, pp. 705–27.

⁶ Eleonory Gilburd, *To See Paris and Die: The Soviet Lives of Western Culture*, Cambridge, MA, 2018; Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev and Sergei Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev: Vol. 2, Reformer 1945–1964*, University Park, PA, 2006, pp. 557, 558.

⁷ Frederick Barghoorn, *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy*, Princeton, NJ, 1960, pp. 229, 231.

generating the new ‘soft power’ within ‘hard power’ geopolitics,⁸ the competitive element now moving from ‘East/West’ towards ‘then/now’. Since Khrushchev’s goal was a new Soviet credibility, atoning for the past, his initiative required newly conceived cross-cultural agents — described by Nye as ‘willing interpreters and receivers’ — to go behind and beyond the prescribed postures and formulations. We find examples of these agents, and of their penetration to the core of cultural interchange, in insightful recent investigations by Marsha Siefert and Cameron Pyke of cross-border activity in the 1960s in Soviet-American film and Soviet-British music; where individual engagement, peripheral opportunities, ambiguity and gameplay counterpointed, substituted or even subverted the official procedures of intergovernmental contest.⁹ What mattered in such explorations, argues Siefert, was less any public or claimable success than ‘distances willingly traveled by the participants’. Significantly, both she and Pyke — who examined Benjamin Britten’s Soviet interactions — uncover interesting activity by Minister Furtseva, and I return to their work later.

In sum, while the structuralist argument denies scope for individuals to influence outcomes of the intergovernmental agreements, there is vital scholarship suggesting that on the contrary not only did many opportunities exist, but that marginal and transitional agents did in fact exercise authority. My research expands this latter possibility with new evidence that in the field of arts touring under Furtseva’s aegis this developed to a high pitch of sophistication and arbitration.

A note here about my use of sources, particularly Soviet publications. Some familiar archival volumes such as the ample (and very well indexed and annotated) Fursenko, Afiani and Tomilina anthologies of Central Committee (CC) documents¹⁰ yield revealing new finds about Furtseva’s conduct, from her period as CC Secretary in the 1950s to her long Ministerial tenure, climaxing in her full report to the CC on the Soviet-US exchanges, presented in April 1972. I discuss this important and rich

⁸ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York, 2005, pp. 106, 120.

⁹ Marsha Siefert, ‘Meeting at a Far Meridian: American-Soviet Cultural Diplomacy on Film in the Early Cold War’, in Patryk Babiracki and Kenyon Zimmer (eds), *Cold War Crossing: International Travel and Exchange Across the Soviet Bloc, 1940s–1960s*, College Station, TX, 2014, pp. 166–209; Cameron Pyke, *Benjamin Britten and Russia*, Woodbridge, 2016.

¹⁰ A. Fursenko (ed.), *Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954–1964*, Moscow, 2004 and the *Apparat TsK KPSS i kul’tura, dokumenty* volumes, V. Afiani (ed.), 1953–1957 & 1958–64, and N. G. Tomilina (ed.), 1965–1972 & 1973–1976, Moscow, 2001–11.

document later. These sometimes conflict sharply with widely accepted stories about the leading performing artists, such as Rostropovich and Richter, and provoke questions about her use to Khrushchev in her role.

Furtseva's political life is almost entirely bypassed in her several, inadequate, often outrageously inaccurate, Russian biographies,¹¹ on which regrettably her scant Western historiography relies far too heavily. Relevant Soviet artist memoirs only sketchily mention her international role as Culture Minister. As will emerge, the salient point about her handling of the Westward arts tours was its opacity, and relevant Soviet archives, such as Goskontsert files, are out of reach for the moment. Consequently, her specific presence has to be carefully pieced together from many oblique directions, from references in artist and diplomatic memoirs and inferences taken from events, contextual observation and her own words, words which can be most revealing when cross-checking what originally seemed to be very opaque. This does not provide a complete picture, but undoubtedly we can gather an authoritative documentation of Minister Furtseva's political conduct that refutes the wilfully eccentric modern Russian variant that has her drowning in scandalous ignominy and routine humiliation throughout her long career.

A primary original source was interviews that I conducted (initially as the *Daily Telegraph's* dance critic) with the British impresarios Victor and Lilian Hochhauser, with artists involved in the touring and with Furtseva's longtime aide in Western tours, Alla Butrova.¹² Another fresh corpus was the enthusiastic coverage of Soviet arts visits in the Western quality press, particularly informative being classified advertising. This not only establishes touring plans and events, but also uncovers crucial presentational politics. Other largely undisturbed treasures are to be found in the Royal Opera House archives, clarifying Covent Garden's key place and obligations within cultural diplomacy of the 1950s and 1960s, and exposing the extraordinary authority of the impresarios; these important discoveries crosscheck illuminatingly with British diplomatic archives at Kew, proving how fragile was the Foreign Office's supposed control of the celebrated arts trades.

This is a varied, partial and opinionated mass of evidence, full of ambiguities, but packed with valuable data which I attempted to separate

¹¹ Tat'iana Mirskaia, *Mal'vina v poiskakh svobody. Khronika chastnoi zhizni Ekateriny Furtsevoi*, Moscow 2006; Natal'ia Korneeva, *Ekaterina Furtseva. Politicheskaiia melodrama*, Moscow, 2007; Leonid M. Mlechin, *Furtseva*, Moscow, 2011; Nami Mikoyan and Feliks Medvedev, *Neizvestnaia Furtseva. Vzlet i padenie sovetskoi korolevy*, Moscow, 2011.

¹² Victor died in 2019 and plans for their papers remain unclear.

from the engrossing subjectivities by creating a spreadsheet of the arts touring each way between the USSR and the USA and UK from 1953 to 1977 — that is, from the gestation of organized touring after Stalin's death till the aftermath of Furtseva's death. A full, documented inventory of events and bothways trading makes the trends and variations under Mikhailov, Furtseva and her successor Demichev clearer, and brings to light a rapid build-up of touring from her appointment as Minister of Culture, a sustained concentration on an elite performing Soviet corps and the abrupt drop-off of activity after her death. This primary finding identifies the period's components, protagonists and trajectory, and locates it as a phenomenon that occurred almost wholly under Furtseva's aegis.

My chart is too large to reproduce here, but some statistics prove the reality of the artistic exclusiveness that has anecdotally characterized the Soviet arts tours. I found a total of eighty Soviet individuals or entities sent out to Britain and America over the twenty-year period. Of those eighty, just eight soloists and eight flagship troupes carried out 210 of the 360 (at least) booked tours over the twenty years from Geneva — that is, 20 per cent of the talent provided 58 per cent of the product, if counted simply in tours. The dominance by the elite was still greater from the business point of view, since the elite's tours could be weeks or even months long.

Important inquiry lines surface from the data. Geopolitical crises, defections, deaths and key artistic appointments can be cross-referred into tours, suggesting connections and tensions with official formulae. Still closer to the heart of the matter, the data proves that Hurok and Hochhauser effectively monopolized the Soviet business after Furtseva's appointment, and that their only competitors, Columbia Artists in the US and Harold Holt in Britain, either failed to get a permanent footing or retreated. Further, data reveals that Hurok and Hochhauser acted as a single trading partner, for the Soviet product — the toured artists — hardly varied over those fourteen years, with almost total overlap between the top attractions. Hochhauser's first circle was Richter (seventeen tours), David Oistrakh (fifteen), Rostropovich (thirteen), the conductor, Gennadii Rozhdestvenskii (twelve), Gilels (eleven), Igor Oistrakh (nine) and Vishnevskaya (eight); Hurok's comprised Gilels and Rostropovich (ten), David Oistrakh, Kogan and the Moiseyev troupe (seven), Igor Oistrakh, Vishnevskaya and Rozhdestvenskii (six each), and Richter (five). The main differences lay in the touring of David Oistrakh and Richter — who both strongly favoured Britain over the USA — and of Leonid Kogan, whose British tours were never presented by Hochhauser, consonant

with his denunciation as an alleged KGB stoolpigeon by Hochhauser's prime star Rostropovich.¹³ Shafran's scarceness in the roster (two visits to the USA, one to the UK) reflected the Rostropovich supremacy in both markets.

Press advertising for the tours shows that Hurok and Hochhauser between them generated an exclusive marketing iconography of Russian 'world's greatest': Gilels and Richter for piano, David Oistrakh for violin, Rostropovich for cello and the Bolshoi for ballet. The chart demonstrates that any expansion in the product was determined by this iconography, because only the mentees and students of those 'world greats' would briefly join the touring circuit. (Luckily Tchaikovsky Competition winners tended to be pupils of the greats, who were usually also on the juries.)

Hence, by gathering information in factual form and removing narrative elements, one finds what no first-person witness could prove and no silence could conceal: the Soviet export market was quickly refined to a winning formula and then worked for all it was worth. The impresarios' bottom line would naturally be their priority, but the data points to the Soviet end also authorizing the elitist approach, rather than insisting on exhibiting Communist excellence in battalions. At any rate, market expansion looks less the priority than market protection, raising interesting questions about responsibility. Who or what determined this market approach? How did Hurok and Hochhauser win their monopoly position, and why did it last? Were the artists an authorizing source? Did the coincidence of the monopoly, and the favouring of a few artists, proceed from Furtseva's preferences? If so, was she representing official Soviet policy?

The impresarios can be tracked from several directions venturing into the negotiating space of the USSR's cultural exchange treaties with the USA and the UK (the nineteenth and twentieth of Khrushchev's series). There was a fundamental lack of bureaucratic equivalence on the three sides, reflecting largely irreconcilable appraisals of the place of arts trading in the governments' foreign policy: propagandist for the Soviets, diplomatic and ceremonial for the British, business for the Americans.¹⁴ One sees the Soviet and British governments quickly putting in bureaucratic controls

¹³ Rostropovich told me that Kogan informed on him to the KGB after their 1958 trio debut in Britain: 'I told him, "Now you know why I will not shake your hand for the rest of my life"' Ismene Brown, 'Shopped by the Leader', *Sunday Telegraph*, 23 June 1991, p. xv.

¹⁴ Films were 'cultural artefacts' for the Soviets and 'standard industrial products' for the Americans. Andrei Kozovoi, 'A Foot in the Door: The Lacy-Zarubin Agreement and Soviet-American Film Diplomacy during the Khrushchev Era, 1953-1963', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 2016, pp. 1-19.

to serve their aims, without much attention to the gaps of agency and conflicting terms. Appointed in March 1955, Culture Minister Nikolai Mikhailov's first priority was to make his lame-duck ministry fit for purpose,¹⁵ hiring able young Komsomol administrators and linguists who could double up as minders and interpreters for touring artists. Naturally, the USSR Ministry of Culture, the new Goskontsert and the Central Committee's micromanaging *otdel* system had no Western equivalents, nor did the concept of *ideino-khudozhestvennyi* rectitude, but in London the British Council's Soviet Relations Committee, formed in 1955 under the anti-Communist Labour MP Christopher Mayhew, aimed to take control of the British cultural import scene from the Communist-infiltrated friendship societies.¹⁶ Mayhew made official complacency clear, in 1958:

In the West we tend to take it for granted that if barriers between two countries are removed, contacts of all kinds will automatically follow. Without prompting, [...] profit-hungry impresarios will organize concerts and plays.¹⁷

(The whiff of antisemitism in the 'profit-hungry' reference is not irrelevant to developments.)

In contrast, the US State Department supervised the official objectives of cultural exchanges from a theoretical and often inexpert distance. In 1955 a *New York Times* editorial had urged the US government to follow the Mayhew example — 'a sensible and sound reaction to a problem which we too must face'¹⁸ — for American market capitalism was not well suited to deal with official initiatives. This was also digested by the acute young Eduard Ivanian, one of Mikhailov's new intake, dispatched in February 1956 as Rostropovich's *sputnik* on his US debut tour. Scouting for entry points for organized cultural exchange, Ivanian sized up a deluge of proposals by American promoters often promising government or

¹⁵ The Ministry of Culture had become a 'pritcha vo iazytsekh', a laughing stock. E. A. Ivanian, *Kogda govoriat muzy. Istoriia rossiisko-amerikanskikh kul'turnykh svyazei*, Moscow, 2007, pp. 6–7.

¹⁶ See also Lorraine Nicholas, 'Fellow Travellers: Dance and British Cold War Politics in the Early 1950s', *Dance Research*, 19, 2, 2001, pp. 83–105, and Emily Lygo, 'Promoting Soviet Culture in Britain: The History of the Society for Cultural Relations between the Peoples of the British Commonwealth and the USSR 1924–1945', *Modern Language Review*, 108, 2, 2013, pp. 571–96.

¹⁷ Christopher Mayhew, 'The Iron Curtain Today 1 — Making Contact', *The Observer*, 27 April 1958, p. 12.

¹⁸ 'Exchanging with Russia', *New York Times*, 23 May 1955, p. 22.

industrial contacts they did not have. It was that unreliability, he wrote in his memoirs, that prompted Khrushchev to formalize exchanges with the American government, and also to assess the agents on the trading floor.¹⁹

Tomoff's survey of the Western arts speculators dashing to the new Soviet well is too distracted by the Australian and Japanese also-rans and various fringe 'imposters'. He notably neglects key Anglo-Soviet developments, which by 1958 already emulated and even overlapped the American ones.²⁰ He also gives only two cursory sentences to the gap of agency:

Politicians on both sides saw the possible advantages of cultural exchange, even if they had to be convinced of it by Soviet Ministry of Culture officials or Los Angeles philanthropists. Their approvals enabled the more active partnerships among artists, impresarios, and cultural functionaries to work.²¹

Gilburd spots the importance of that dislocation, identifying it as a significant new condition of possibilities (to borrow her earlier phrase) generated by the challenges posed to sluggish governments fixed in Cold War discourse by Khrushchev's internal 'democratizing' of culture and his vague new latitude on Western culture. She summarizes that the US-Soviet agreement signed on 27 January 1958, 'after three months of talks and almost three years of false starts, papered over these divisions and left Soviet officials to negotiate many clauses directly with the relevant US agencies'. (Ivanian nicely defined it as time spent while 'the two sides agreed on what they could not agree on.')22 Gilburd leaves dangling what 'relevance' entailed, but she notes that in the British-Soviet agreement a year later 'the same story, with yet more mistrust and tension, was repeated'.²³

That 'papering over' is crucial to the next fifteen years' developments on the Western side — an area whose literature does not justice to the richness of evidence to be found.²⁴ One factor that leaps to the eye from all the data requires attention that I can only indicate here; the impresarios' union was not only commercially drawn, but demonstrated deep-rooted cultural

¹⁹ Ivanian, *Kogda govoriat muzy*, p. 337.

²⁰ Tomoff (*Virtuosi Abroad*) misidentifies the UK throughout as 'England'.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

²² Ivanian, *Kogda govoriat muzy*, p. 341.

²³ Gilburd, *To See Paris and Die*, pp. 39, 47.

²⁴ In addition to Harlow Robinson, *The Last Impresario: The Life, Times, and Legacy of Sol Hurok*, New York, 1994 and Nicholas, 'Fellow Travellers', p. 103, n. 15, see Christopher Fifield, *Ibbs and Tillet: The Rise and Fall of a Musical Empire*, Aldershot & Burlington, VT, 2005.

kinship, Jewishness, sidelining them from national identifications and replicated repeatedly in their clientele. Whether it was intentional or not, the overlap between Hurok and Hochhauser in interests, market selection and positioning in negotiation, overrode the usual business rivalry and postures inherent in their industry, and the evidence indicates that instead a mutual preference for marginality, each contracted to governments with unspecific endowments of responsibility and deniability, became core to their ability to create a large unofficial space in which to develop the Soviet trade. Certainly Jewish identity appears a significant factor in the developments in the transatlantic music industry from which Hurok and Hochhauser's pathway into high government decision-making can be traced: a rivalry between Hurok and Columbia Artists in New York, a transatlantic collaboration between Hurok (b. 1888) and his London peer Harold Holt (b. 1885), and Holt's later partnering in Britain with the much younger Hochhauser (b. 1923). Among numerous complications and modifiers, the Ukrainian-born Hurok, the South African-born Holt and the Hungarian-Czech Hochhauser were all Jewish emigrants, with clienteles significantly made up of Jewish and Russian émigré artists, to which I return later.

By his late twenties Hochhauser was Holt's associate, but Holt's death in 1953 provided the younger man with a breakthrough opportunity when that year a Soviet group of musicians was presented by the British-Soviet Friendship Society in London, among whom was the twenty-two-year-old violinist Igor Oistrakh, whose father was the luminary David Oistrakh. Hochhauser seized the chance to catch his eye by rapidly arranging for Igor two bonus solo appearances at the Royal Albert Hall and the Royal Festival Hall, handsomely publicised and well received.²⁵ Surprised and grateful, Igor recommended to his father that Hochhauser present the latter's Western debut tour, in London in November 1954. In *Virtuosi Abroad*, Tomoff emphasizes the importance of 'face' in negotiating with the Soviets,²⁶ and Hochhauser's reverential treatment of the Oistrakhs' debuts gave him a head start in the embryonic business of Soviet star touring. Most impressively, Hochhauser had reunited David in London with the conductor of his Leningrad debut in 1928, Nicolai Malko, now an émigré.²⁷

²⁵ Victor and Lilian Hochhauser, author interview, 26 April 2001, London.

²⁶ An early US contender, Peter Lawrence, proposed to ease Soviet artists discreetly into the American market. Tomoff, *Virtuosi Abroad*, pp. 152f. Igor Moiseyev, heading the Soviet flagship dance ensemble, said Hurok would never make such a *faux pas*. Robinson, *The Last Impresario*, p. 358.

²⁷ Viktor Iuzefovich and Igor' Oistrakh, *David Oistrakh. Besedy s Igorem Oistrakhom*,

Two years later Oistrakh took equally favourable impressions of Hurok when he made his debut US tour under the rival Columbia Artists; debriefed at the CC, he compared Columbia's Frederick Schang unfavourably with Hurok, who had been wooing him for future tours²⁸ — 'the typical businessman' versus 'the simple music-lover'.²⁹ More research is needed on the Columbia and Hurok rivalry over the Soviet trade, but there were surely Cold War identity games to be played between the white-establishment-corporate-America imaging and the sentimental semiotics of a solo Slav entrepreneur revisiting the songs of his youth. However, the ideological posturings disguised the advantages of freelance agency to all three governments in the porous new arena created by 'peaceful co-existence'. Hurok was officially named in the Lacy-Zarubin agreement as the US government's inside man, and thereby, without any accountability spelled out, and with the bonus of his Russian roots, acquired priceless ranking status with the Soviets as government surrogate. 'By being mentioned in this historic document, Hurok gained unprecedented leverage and prestige which he would exploit to brilliant effect for the next ten years,' writes his biographer, Harlow Robinson, quite fairly.³⁰ When Hurok's status was renewed in the 1959 agreement, State Department officers commented on his brazen confidence: 'In fact [Hurok's staff] are convinced that it is they who do the work of the State Department!'³¹ Yet what was implied also was a licence granted for informal practices and personalized interest — Nye's model of the soft power agent. Clearly no state agent would go to such devoted lengths as Hurok would to land such risky trade without guarantees — in his own words: 'If I was in this business for business, I wouldn't be in this business.'³²

Arts biographies and press make much of Hurok's magnetic reputation as the colossus of showbiz, but his credibility at the highest government levels, in particular with the Moscow leadership, can be more objectively analysed. Important though hitherto unexplored material exists in the

Moscow, 2008, p. 77. Hochhauser also presented the violinist with a manuscript letter from Chaikovskii to the dedicatee of his violin concerto, Adol'f Brodskii.

²⁸ On the Columbia tour of nineteen concerts in nine cities, Oistrakh wrote to his father that his bow was worn out but he had no time to get it restrung. *Ibid.*, p. 84. However, his fee (largely untaxed) enabled him to buy the first of his three Stradivariusus. *Ibid.*, pp. 136–37.

²⁹ Tomoff, *Virtuosi Abroad*, p. 161.

³⁰ Robinson, *The Last Impresario*, p. 354.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 386.

³² Donal Henahan, 'Hurok Plans for Debut Of Bolshoi Opera Here', *New York Times*, 28 August 1970, p. 14.

archives of the Royal Opera House (ROH), Covent Garden, proving that Hurok had accumulated advantage inside British cultural diplomacy for years via his covert steering hand on one of the government's leading arts flagships, Sadler's Wells Ballet, the resident company of the ROH. This material provides a substantial explanation of the ease with which he won government credibility on all three sides.

In the 1956 Soviet-UK exchanges between the Bolshoi and Sadler's Wells ballet companies, the ROH was the government's primary diplomatic instrument, both host for the diplomatic manoeuvres and producer of the reciprocal arts organization, the ballet company. Meanwhile there were further conflicts of interest from which the Board chose to avert its eyes. Though it has escaped the attention of Royal Ballet historians,³³ Board minutes through the 1950s spell out an increasing concession of influence to Hurok, financially and also artistically, in both the management of foreign ballet touring, and progressively within the ROH itself.³⁴ After its momentous US debut in 1949, Sadler's Wells' north American tours with Hurok had won prestige and profitability that delighted the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Cripps. Ballet had proved 'a first-class dollar earner. You have no idea what pride that has aroused in the fastnesses of the Treasury Chamber', he wrote in 1949.³⁵ The following year's tour was nearly five months long (leaving short commons for the home audiences) and netted a half-million-dollar profit.³⁶ The ROH had been vastly outspending its taxpayer subsidy for years, and by 1957 its debt was nearly £500,000 when, after another very profitable US ballet tour (the Sadler's Wells Ballet became The Royal Ballet in 1956), Webster proposed a new line in the budget for 'extra-mural earnings'³⁷ — that is, Hurok tours, which were given scheduling precedence in the performance seasons.

The new prioritizing decisively altered the relationship of impresario to organization, as described by Webster's then deputy, John Tooley (appointed his successor in 1970):

³³ Alexander Bland, *The Royal Ballet: The First Fifty Years*, Garden City, NY, 1981, and Zoë Anderson, *The Royal Ballet: 75 Years*, London, 2006. Nor did the arch-exposer of untold stories find it: Norman Lebrecht, *Covent Garden, the Untold Story: Dispatches from the English Culture War, 1945–2000*, London, 2000.

³⁴ The Royal Opera House Archives (ROH), London, BSC(56), 20 February 1956, and CGC(56), 20 March 1956.

³⁵ Bland, *The Royal Ballet*, p. 99.

³⁶ Anderson, *The Royal Ballet: 75 Years*, p. 112. Equivalent to \$5 million now.

³⁷ ROH, CGC(57), 17 December 1957. By 1961 the debt topped £650,000 — CGC(60), 22 November 1960. Since a sell-out for the Bolshoi or Kirov represented £130,000 in ticket sales, some Board complacency is perhaps explicable.

For the first tours, Hurok was hired as the company's agent and was paid a weekly management fee. This gave Covent Garden the lion's share of the income, but it was not to last. With rising costs and diminishing margins, it was decided by the mid-1950s that it was no longer safe for Covent Garden to take the financial risks of touring, and the arrangement was reversed.³⁸

Under the new relationship, the risk became artistic instead: Hurok, writes Tooley, 'was concerned only with immediate maximization of ticket sales, [...] a short-sighted attitude, which was later to cost the company dear'.³⁹ By early 1961, Board minutes show, the Royal Ballet's founder-director Ninette de Valois was protesting about dire experiences on the latest American tour, as Hurok had forced production economies and cast changes on the road in response to box office. De Valois rebuked Webster:

The present method is virtually a handing over of the ballet for a large sum of money; this sum has been agreed upon months before the implications concerned with it have come to light.⁴⁰

Webster finally conceded that the ROH had effectively abdicated management of touring 'because expenses had been guaranteed by Hurok'.⁴¹ Even more remarkable is the lack of any noted Board concern. (Four years later the extent of Hurok's grip on the ROH's most important functions would be shown in the scandal of the premiere of Kenneth MacMillan's celebrated ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, where Hurok insisted Fonteyn and Nureyev supplant the intended young cast, to maximize profits on the US tour. MacMillan and his original Juliet, the ballerina Lynn Seymour, resigned from the Royal Ballet, with longer-term consequences.)

Between the Foreign Office's political requirements and Hurok's commercial demands, then, the Royal Ballet had been licensed as a trading commodity, leveraging national prestige for Anglo-Soviet government diplomacy and cash towards opera house debts. Since the Soviets could rationally identify the Royal Opera House as serving UK government functions, as the Bolshoi Theatre served Soviet state diplomacy, Hurok

³⁸ John Tooley, *In House: Covent Garden, 50 Years of Opera and Ballet*, London, 1999, p. 129. Tooley made handshake deals with Hurok over lunch at the Savoy Grill: 'There was nothing in writing except for scribbles on the tablecloth.'

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁴⁰ ROH, BSC(61), 22 February 1961.

⁴¹ ROH, CGC(59), 26 May 1959; BSC(59), 22 October 1959; CGC(59), 27 October 1959; BSC(60), 17 March 1960.

could be identified as the UK government flagship's second paymaster, as well as the Americans' appointed surrogate in the exchanges. That quasi-official positioning for the figure of the impresario, therefore, was endorsed, and remained effectively unchallenged even after Furtseva's death.

The Hochhauser penetration into official negotiations, by contrast, rested on his private relations with artists, initially the Oistrakhs. But that informality of entrée was just as effective, as is documented in Foreign Office records (whose implications are unnoticed by Waldron). Christopher Mayhew believed that progress on Soviet-UK exchange had stagnated and proposed winding up his own Soviet Relations Committee,⁴² and in January 1960 the FCO Culture Department set up a Department for East-West Contacts under Richard Speaight for direct contact with Zhukov's State Committee for Foreign Cultural Relations, to implement the 1959 agreement and make improvements for the 1961 iteration.⁴³ FCO correspondence shows Soviet and British bureaucratic confusion on discovering that impresarios, chiefly Hochhauser, had already obtained frontline trading powers with little answerability.

The British initially viewed the challenges as largely attitudinal at the Soviet end: 'the Russians had become much more timorous and touchy over cultural affairs than... a year ago.' Zhukov appeared to be chafing to leave his job, and the Culture Ministry might be broken up.⁴⁴ However, when Speaight went to Moscow to introduce himself a few weeks later an embarrassing lack of structural underpinning on the British side was revealed. His first impression was that Culture Minister Mikhailov 'was out to make himself disagreeable'. Speaight then realized that impresarios already possessed an opaque leverage:

Mr Mikhailov made it clear that he did not share our satisfaction and was evidently determined to find some ground for complaint. First he said that his colleagues of the Zhukov Committee had complained that the British Council were not being helpful over the exchanges. [... He] switched over

⁴² Christopher Mayhew and Lyn Smith, *A War of Words: A Cold War Witness*, London, 1998, pp. 72–74.

⁴³ Richard Langford Speaight was Director for East-West Contacts 1960–66. Georgii Zhukov was chairman of the State Committee for Foreign Cultural Relations 1957–62 (not, as Cauter has it more than once, chairman of VOKS. Cauter, *The Dancer Defects*, pp. 30, 230).

⁴⁴ London, The National Archives (TNA), Foreign and Commonwealth Office Cultural Relations Dept, FO924/1299, 'Cultural relations between UK and Soviet Union', RLS 2, 1, 2 January 1960.

to the failure of our impresarios to produce the British soloists provided for in the Cultural Agreement... We explained that these tours were *the responsibility of the impresarios* [...] *neither the Ambassador nor I nor [cultural attaché Kenneth] James knew anything of this*. The Ambassador asked Mr Mikhailov to let us know in future when there were difficulties over arranging tours of this sort through our impresarios [...] *we could not help over problems of which we were not aware*.⁴⁵

This is a telling admission of a fundamentally unengaged negotiation, neither government being in control of the process. The FCO, bogged down between unsatisfactory or embryonic Soviet and British government bodies and the impresarios' expert enterprise, took a pragmatic line, as the US had with Hurok. Details would be 'agreed directly between the relevant British organizations and impresarios and corresponding Soviet organizations'.⁴⁶ Once again, the word 'relevant' was doing some heavy, unspecified lifting, and according to the negotiating notes, that lack of specificity caused 'serious difference' between the Soviet and British sides. Speaight's debriefing once again dissociates the British government from agency: 'It was not appropriate to list all projected tours arranged by impresarios because these were not governmental matters.'⁴⁷

In an interview with me, the Hochhausers said that they already felt that by the late 1950s they were occupying the driving seat, steering both official and their own interests:

Lilian Hochhauser: We started exchanges with [the Soviets] in 1953, so therefore this idea of the cultural agreement between the two countries followed our lead, if you like, because we were already four years into it... We told the British what to put into the cultural agreement. [...]

Victor Hochhauser: *A priori* all our activities were under the Anglo-Soviet cultural agreement, so I had a kind of blessing. I operated, they knew, under approval; every time I went to the ambassador, it would be made under the government agreement, not a personal capacity.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ibid., RLS 21, 4, 21 April 1960. Emphasis mine.

⁴⁶ London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office: Treaty Series no. 35, 1961, 'Article IX in Agreement on Relations in the Scientific, Technological, Educational and Cultural Fields, 1961–63'.

⁴⁷ TNA, FCO Cultural Relations Dept, FO 924/1393, 'First Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Exchanges in the Fields of the Arts and the Cinema held in the State Committee of the USSR for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries at 3.30pm on January 5th 1961'.

⁴⁸ Hochhausers, 2001 interview.

By 1960 Mikhailov and Zhukov were apparently ready to quit, so how should Furtseva's arrival end, or marshal, this disorder in a way productive for the Soviet interests? Inheriting Mikhailov's policy line and Party command chains, she could have simply shut the bumptious impresarios out. Instead, she signalled a major shift from the expected line.

The motivation for Khrushchev's decision to appoint Furtseva (and remainder Mikhailov to the far-flung embassy in Indonesia) is obscure. Contemporary CIA intelligence speculated that his Secretariat shuffles were about replacing ineffective managers, with Furtseva as a supposed disappointment. This line is adopted by the Sergei Khrushchev/Taubman school of historians,⁴⁹ but it is ill-supported by Khrushchev and Brezhnev's remarks at the 4 May Presidium that Furtseva's appointment would strengthen a policy area that, by implication, needed more authority and results; any ineffectiveness is her predecessor's, then.⁵⁰ Besides, the reshuffle was explicitly a strategic weakening of the Party Secretariat in relation to the executive Presidium — on which Furtseva remained, the only Minister of Culture to do so.

So there are mixed signals here. Although the ministerial post was a step down from a CC Secretary (Furtseva's successor Demichev would take the same path), she left a sinking Secretariat, retaining her Presidium status — thus visibly enhancing the status of the Culture Ministry — and transferring her considerable Party authority to Khrushchev's new pet interest in global relationship-building. These facts expose the absurdity of the pervasive story that Khrushchev used the culture appointment to disgrace her for her Party indiscipline and suicide attempt after being dropped from the 1961 Presidium — the story's assumption being that culture was a ghetto of powerlessness (and, at the populist level, the doom of the hubristic woman who aspired to male power). Disconcertingly, even historians have not noticed that this relies on events in May 1960 postdating those of October 1961.⁵¹ Further, the notion of banishment is confounded by Furtseva's retention of ministerial office and full CC membership for fourteen years (a longevity exceptional in her political

⁴⁹ Washington, Central Intelligence Agency, 'Soviet Staff Study: The Succession to Khrushchev', 4 March 1960 (Caesar XII-60), p. 6; William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era*, New York, 2003, p. 758, n. 54.

⁵⁰ Fursenko (ed.), *Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954–1964*, no. 217, 4 May 1960. Both Sovmin and the culture sector would be strengthened, Brezhnev commented.

⁵¹ Furtseva's Russian biographies take this moralistic line, feeding from her mysterious death, which may have been suicide, but the factual solecism first occurs in Edward Crankshaw, *Khrushchev*, London, 1966, p. 269.

peer group), four Lenin Prizes, Supreme Soviet membership, and a well documented prominence as a global performer of Soviet political interests at the highest level throughout.

In any case, the new minister's first actions fulfil the new-broom indications given by Khrushchev and Brezhnev in the Presidium, and they concern Sviatoslav Richter. Tomoff holds that Mikhailov should primarily be credited for the pianist's long-awaited release to the USA,⁵² yet that is refuted by Richter's widow, Nina Dorliak, who put on filmed record that it was Furtseva who instigated his liberation. In Bruno Monsaingeon's 1998 film documentary, *Richter, l'insoumis*, she states: 'Reshenie vyekhat' v Ameriku, v zapadnuu stranu, eto reshil okonchatel'no Khrushchev po pros'be Furtsevoi' ('the decision to go to America, to a Western country, was finally decided by Khrushchev at the request of Furtseva') — Khrushchev finally released Richter at Furtseva's request.⁵³ This ought to be definitive; however, in Monsaingeon's widely cited Anglophone book-of-the-film, Dorliak's specific statement is replaced by a generalized remark attributed to Richter — Monsaingeon concedes that he adapted the film's transcript considerably for the book.⁵⁴

Regardless, Furtseva's approval of Richter's release to the West is a surprise in the context of events. Hurok's signing came only days after Khrushchev's display of apparently unappeasable fury with the Americans at the Paris Summit on 16 May 1960, caused by the discovery of a U2 spy plane overflying the USSR. Some Western observers thought his behaviour performative, forced by his Kremlin instability to throw a bone to the conservative opposition;⁵⁵ that does seem somewhat supported by the new Culture Minister's immediate assurance to Hochhauser and Hurok,

⁵² Tomoff, *Virtuosi Abroad*, p. 133. CC archives show that between 1956 and 1959 Mikhailov made three unsuccessful attempts to persuade the CC, at Dorliak's urging. E. S. Afanasieva and V. Afiani (eds), *Ideologicheskie komissii TSK KPSS 1958–1964*, Moscow, 1998, no. 103, 7 December 1959.

⁵³ Bruno Monsaingeon, *Richter, l'insoumis*, 160m, Paris, 1998, La Sept Arte, Disc 2, 8m 9–20s. Khrushchev mentions Furtseva being 'pleased' when he approved Richter touring the West. Khrushchev, *Memoirs*, Vol. 2, pp. 79–80.

⁵⁴ Sviatoslav Richter and Bruno Monsaingeon, *Sviatoslav Richter: Notebooks and Conversations*, London, 2001, p. 102.

⁵⁵ NATO Secretary-General Paul-Henri Spaak and West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer told the *New York Times*'s Cyrus Sulzberger that Khrushchev was playing to the military and Stalinist galleries, intending to keep Western channels open. C. L. Sulzberger, *The Last of the Giants*, London, 1972, pp. 667, 670. Also Central Intelligence Agency, Studies in Intelligence, Sherman Kent, 'The Summit Conference of 1960: An Intelligence Officer's View' <<https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/00604106>> [accessed 17 June 2023].

a day after the tantrum, that arts tours would not be affected. Yet Richter would seem to have personally torpedoed any prospect of his shedding his *nevyeznoi* tag when, a fortnight later, he played for the mourners at Boris Pasternak's unauthorized funeral on 2 June.⁵⁶ As CC Secretary for ideology, Furtseva had signed off the CC's persecution of Pasternak over the Nobel Prize, and although Richter's German family background had long been held as the immutable block, in 1959 the KGB raised his friendship with Pasternak as an additional obstacle.⁵⁷ It would have been consistent with both Furtseva's record and Soviet messaging had she reconfirmed the block to punish his defiance. Still, four days after Pasternak's funeral Hurok announced Richter's expansive three-month debut tour of America, while Ol'ga Ivinskaja was on her way to a lengthy jail sentence.

Without current access to Soviet records, the timing and justification for the momentous decision cannot be firmly identified — momentous because it dispensed with either ideological conformism or consistency with geopolitical roleplaying as the first criterion for touring. The sudden bypassing of obstacles shows the intriguing contradictoriness that would be Furtseva's reputation. It also indicates a gear-change in power. Victor and Lilian Hochhauser sensed an upgrade with Furtseva's appointment:

Lilian Hochhauser: ...she had a little more, what shall I say, authority. Normally speaking I'm sure that individual Ministers did not have an authority to say 'yes'. She obviously had this authority.

Victor Hochhauser: Mikhailov didn't have this authority.⁵⁸

In combination, Dorliak's view and the Hochhausers' experience form quite significant inferential evidence of a Khrushchev-Furtseva decision-making axis that had not had a Khrushchev-Mikhailov equivalent. It appears more private and experimental, less risk-averse and less accountable — in CC discussions Furtseva's Ministry of Culture figures much less often than Mikhailov's.⁵⁹ One might deduce that if Khrushchev intended Furtseva to strengthen Soviet culture's contribution to his heteronymous foreign policy by new, less orthodox means, her position change was not quite

⁵⁶ Christopher Barnes finds that Furtseva condemned the actor Boris Livanov for attending, but does not mention Richter. Barnes, *Boris Pasternak: A Literary Biography*, Vol. 2, Cambridge, 1998, p. 373.

⁵⁷ Fursenko (ed.), *Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954–1964*, no. 189, 27 February 1959.

⁵⁸ Victor and Lilian Hochhauser, author interview, 3 December 2018, London.

⁵⁹ In CC minutes on culture 1958–64 Mikhailov as Culture Minister figures fourteen times in two years, Furtseva as Culture Minister four times in four years.

the demotion it seems, but a productive redirection for an aide with natural performance skills, who could talk tough convincingly against the bourgeois enemy, while behaving in obscurely inventive ways to keep Western doors open and stay ahead of the drag of the apparat and his anti-reform foes.⁶⁰

Indeed, the exciting flowering of Soviet-West arts touring after Furtseva's appointment, notwithstanding German division, the Cuban missile crisis, spy scandals and the Kennedy assassination, is proof of burgeoning success productively handled, not of decline in a ghetto. In the 1950s the hard currency gains potentially involved were only emerging — the risk always being the impresario's. The Moiseyev and Bolshoi dance troupes' debuts made the Soviets up to \$1 million profit and nearly as much again for Hurok, but with up to nineteen trailer trucks and travel and accommodation for two hundred for several weeks, the upfront risk for the impresario was gigantic.⁶¹ Whereas a Oistrakh or Gilels solo tour brought the Soviets \$100,000 and was far more profitable — and easily extendable — for Hurok. Furtseva made two strategic changes that stabilized the touring as a business: she agreed to Hurok's request that soloists be prioritized over companies and orchestras, who bore more political and box office risk in Cold War ructions; and she established the cyclical sequence of the arts competitions of 1958 (the Tchaikovsky for music) and 1959 (the Moscow Film Festival) — joined by ballet in 1969 — which promoted the Soviet Union as the world superpower in the universal arts languages, while generating clockwork triggers for lucrative foreign exposure that overrode Cold War turmoil. These kept her intray overflowing with public appearances and foreign invitations as the queen of a Soviet cultural flowering, yet had the heterodox effect of implicitly denying the imperialist one-upmanship of the cultural agreements by celebrating individual achievement. The latter repercussion would characterize and define the golden age.

Khrushchev and Brezhnev left no assessments of Furtseva's value to them, nor any explanation of why they blocked repeated manoeuvres by

⁶⁰ Nye identified the ability to communicate heteronymously as a core political accomplishment, addressing foreign faces but domestic ears, and vice versa. Nye, *Soft Power*, p. 108. Hochhauser's and Hurok's press statements mastered this art both ways.

⁶¹ Robinson, *The Last Impresario*, pp. 346, 367; Jasper Parrott and Vladimir Ashkenazy, *Beyond Frontiers*, London, 1984, p. 73. Robinson reports Ivanian's claimed figures for the Moiseyev tour: \$1million profit to the USSR, \$800,000 to Hurok. Ashkenazy writes that Hurok paid \$3–4,000 per Gilels or Oistrakh concert pre-Goskontsert, and they bought violins and pianos; after Goskontsert began taking 80 per cent of fees, Ashkenazy, though priced at \$800–\$1,000 per concert, got less than \$150 and had to buy his own meals.

others to dismiss her over the years (though her courage and loyalty in the 1957 Kremlin crisis was surely a factor). However, as the only woman in her milieu, her confidence under the Western gaze may well have been an advantage in Khrushchev's eyes, conveying a modern female imagery that reflected well on his reformed USSR. Not only did no other superpower have a woman in leadership (only Madame Mao rivalled her, though Jiang was after all a 'wife') but the handsome, sporty Furtseva could compete in Western femininity terms. Photographs show that she hobnobbed as easily with film stars as with presidents, and handled international press and photocalls with the aplomb of what today would be called a media personality.⁶² In the Kremlin her gender had been a disadvantage which she disguised ingeniously in her verbal self-expression,⁶³ but in the sphere of world culture 'the Soviet queen' (whom Shostakovich called 'Catherine III') had her own mini-cult, not accessible to her male colleagues. I hypothesize that Furtseva's intelligent adaptability for imagemaking abroad was a factor in her resilience through two leaderships and four governments in a job that had no inherent stability.

Another inference from the pattern of Khrushchev's outward reproof of her and private protection is that she was supporting his Western soft power objectives effectively. Following the 22nd Congress, notwithstanding the many reports that her career was over, within the Presidium he thwarted Kozlov and Suslov's move to expel Furtseva from office and Party — he remarked that despite her dreadful insubordination, she was always on top of the tough issues ('v ostrykh voprosakh vseгда ostro derzhala');⁶⁴ similarly unexpectedly, he retained her after the Manezh gallery row a year later.

A substantial clue to her value to Khrushchev comes in spring 1963, when she lost her beloved cinema sector to Goskino. While widely narrated as a further blow to her status, I have found no attention paid to Khrushchev's simultaneous rejection of another CC move to eliminate her office altogether (and fire her, implicitly), and his counter-gesture of handing her total control of Western touring contacts and deals.⁶⁵ This

⁶² Between 1956 and 1974, 659 news articles mention Furtseva in digital archives of *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Guardian/Observer*, *New York Times* and *Washington Post* — an average of forty-two a year — and dozens more in other press.

⁶³ Analysis of her speeches shows her distinctive use of linguistic and oratorical performativity, especially — though not only — concerning her gender.

⁶⁴ Fursenko (ed.), *Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954–1964*, no. 244, 9 March 1962. She was allowed to plead sickness and her only public punishment was losing her 1962 Supreme Soviet seat.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, Nos. 287 & 288, 25 April 1963. Khrushchev also demoted Zhukov's Committee

significant act seals her ability to steer her Western operation largely away from peer scrutiny, and the surprise shown in the CC exchanges indicates that Khrushchev sprung the move without notice, thus preempting a full set of supervisory preconditions on the tricky business. (This would explain the unaccountability manifested in her 1972 CC report, to which I will come.)

In interpreting Khrushchev's behaviour one strays close to speculation, but the above reading is both likely and consistent with facts. After all, Furtseva had sufficient authority to protect Hurok and Hochhauser in their monopoly for a dozen years, without accounting for it to the CC. Though Hurok's biographies pay little attention to the London end, and the Hochhausers' papers are unavailable, their dominating combination undoubtedly alarmed some. Furtseva's aide, Alla Butrova, told me that she had used London trips to find ways to break the Hochhauser monopoly — the Hochhausers confirmed to me that they were aware.⁶⁶ Goskontsert's Larisa Netto, under a new boss cross-appointed from the KGB Fifth Directorate, Vladimir Golovin, recalled being instructed in the late 1960s to bring Columbia in and neutralize Hurok.⁶⁷ Columbia's success was very limited, and Hochhauser retained control in London.

What Furtseva's interests were in this off-piste alliance remain to be discovered. Gossip portrays her as greedy for jewels and luxuries — Vishnevskaya portrayed her as a bribe-taker, fleecing touring artists — yet photographs and witness evidence about Furtseva's lifestyle show few jewels and no particular ostentation. Robinson characterizes her relations with Hurok as that of 'old friends', and the uniqueness of her position surely left her short of those (her friend Nami Mikoian described her as a '*zakrytyi chelovek*' [closed person], who never used the intimate 'you' even with friends), but Victor Hochhauser told me he found her cold, and he would never have taken her gifts or bribes. For other reasons, then, in the English musical arena Furtseva allowed plenty of movement for Soviet artists and musical enterprise, as Cameron Pyke has explored in his revealing book on Britten, who had a calculated but rewarding working relationship with her for a decade.⁶⁸ Under the Britten-Furtseva axis Shostakovich and his

for Foreign Relations from its global remit to merely Soviet republics.

⁶⁶ Alla Butrova, author interview, 9 July 2008, Moscow. Butrova was an interpreter in the 1959 Soviet-US cultural negotiations, subsequently joining the Culture Ministry. Furtseva inherited her, and she accompanied her on some dozen Western trips.

⁶⁷ Robinson, *The Last Impresario*, pp. 438–39. Golovin, recalled as 'a real nasty apparatchik' by Hochhauser and 'crude' by Hurok, after a few years terrorizing arts people became Uzbek KGB chief in 1970.

⁶⁸ Pyke, *Benjamin Britten and Russia*, p. 170, n. 108.

circle — chiefly Rostropovich, Richter and Vishnevskaya — generated exciting activity at British classical music festivals and record labels. Pyke highlights — for the first time in scholarship, I think — the Hochhausers' hidden agency in that momentous Anglo-Soviet development, illicitly delivering opera scores across official borders to enable Shostakovich and Britten premieres at Covent Garden and the Bolshoi, and contriving to obtain Furtseva's authorization for disapproved scores to be played abroad. Pyke also insightfully discusses her way of separating her relations with Britten, which were reluctantly approved by Soviet musical leaders, from her interaction with Soviet culture bureaucrats — a typical Furtseva convolution enabling peripheral brokerage and initiatives that an obstructive centre could not intercept.

Furtseva's own 'otherness' in power does not appear to have made her fearful, and there is ample evidence and testimony of tactics she employed both to bring herself into the group and yet to pursue her own line (CC minutes show her much more rarely consulting with the *otdel kul'tury* than her predecessor). For example, she cloaked her sometimes strikingly bold decisions about the foreign tours with implied establishment support by convening informal fortnightly advisory councils. On the most intensely curated element of the touring, classical music, she consulted the Composers' Union general secretary Tikhon Khrennikov and Dmitrii Kabalevskii, yet the impresarios programmed little of their music on US and UK tours, which suggests swallowed pride and realism all round.⁶⁹ After all, the impresarios could have been forced only to take exemplary Party servants, rather than troublemakers like Rostropovich and Richter to whom Furtseva then permitted long leashes inconceivable in the Mikhailov era. Lord Harewood (arranging the great 1962 Edinburgh Festival Shostakovich celebration) was most surprised in 1961 when she told him that she could not influence, let alone control, Richter and Evgeny Mravinsky.⁷⁰ Her declaration explicitly empowers the two individuals in a world context, and grants a permit — implicitly for herself, too — beyond Party control. Mravinsky had premiered Shostakovich's out-of-favour Eighth Symphony on the Leningrad Philharmonic's London debut in autumn 1960, thanks to Victor Hochhauser's intercession with Furtseva on his behalf. ('We can't play it, but you can ask her', Mravinsky told him. 'No problem', said Furtseva.

⁶⁹ Bolshoi Theatre director Boris Pokrovskii and conductor Kirill Kondrashin both remarked on her uncommon interest in the artists' experience. Butrova told me Furtseva found Khrennikov 'illiberal' and usually opposed him.

⁷⁰ George Lascelles Harewood, *The Tongs and the Bones: The Memoirs of Lord Harewood*, London, 1981, p. 201.

Hochhauser told me Furtseva put foreign cultural kudos and currency gain ahead of official domestic attitudes.)⁷¹ Richter, only two years into his new Western permission, was permitted to plan his own private music festival in France with Western musicians.⁷² More significant still appears her intervention over Rostropovich when he issued his inflammatory open letter supporting Solzhenitsyn as he left on tour in October 1970.⁷³ The KGB proposed that Furtseva have the cellist kidnapped in Prague and brought home, and cancel Vishnevskaya's imminent recording with Herbert von Karajan. CC minutes show that Furtseva avoided both, arguing that such action would play to anti-Soviet interests.

The figure who above all signals the disruption of the cultural exchange space under Furtseva is Rudolf Nureyev. The paradigm shift emerges in Soviet and British government documents of reactions and actions over the two years following his defection in June 1961. In process was a re-identification of a little-known Leningrad ballet defector and minor political irritant in a commanding new position as the globally celebrated partner of the prima ballerina of one of the Soviet Union's most prized touring catches, the Royal Ballet. Foreign Office (FCO) archives show that in the days after Nureyev's defection the dancer had few friends.⁷⁴ The leading British ballet critic Arnold Haskell penned a column, 'A Sorry Affair', describing 'this crazy, mixed up dancer' as failing his colleagues by wrongly imagining a future outside his native company.⁷⁵ Hochhauser actually requested FCO advice whether he could take legal action against Nureyev for dancing with a Paris company the very ballet he should have been performing with the Kirov Ballet in London. They all hoped the Soviets would 'get Nereyev [*sic*] back'. Possibly because in Britain defection was a wholly negative construct, hitherto associated only with the spies Burgess and Maclean, East-West Relations director Speaight's view was unmarked by any moral compunction:

⁷¹ Hochhausers, 2018 interview. Hochhauser presented Western premieres of nearly a dozen Shostakovich works; for the first violin concerto Oistrakh asked him to go to Furtseva and 'she said, no problem. In fact there was never any real problem in having any works performed which were considered somewhat under a cloud, and she realized it was nonsense'.

⁷² Richter launched the Fêtes Musicales de Touraine in Tours on 23 June 1964.

⁷³ Tomilina, 1965–1972, Nos. 222–23, 225 & 226, 16 & 26 November 1970; Galina Vishnevskaya, *Galina: A Russian Story*, London, 1984, p. 407.

⁷⁴ TNA, FO 924/1399, 1961, 'Defection of Rudolf Nureyev from Kirov Ballet in Paris'. Geopolitical strains over the recent Vienna summit give context for what appears a rather unsavoury first set of reactions.

⁷⁵ The August 1961 edition of *Dancing Times*, cited in Diane Solway, *Nureyev, His Life*, New York, 1998, p. 174.

The one thing we should want to avoid was having Nureyev come here and then try to defect again... From our point of view it would be better if he stayed in Paris and saved us the risk of a possible second defection.

Meanwhile a colleague raised a still more utilitarian option: 'I assume he [Nureyev] is of no use or interest as a defector [...] he may be expected to bolt back at some stage in the future, I suppose.'⁷⁶

Evidently Hochhauser and the Foreign Office gauged the dancer only in business or propaganda terms, nor was the Soviet government reaction particularly excited.⁷⁷ However, less than two years later every value had changed. Hurok was negotiating his seventh Royal Ballet tour to the US, for summer 1963, on which Nureyev would partner Fonteyn, the prime attraction. Now the Royal Ballet's identification with an anti-Soviet renegade strained British cultural diplomacy, while their parading him in America disturbed both US-Soviet relations and Hurok's multimillion-pound business with Soviet and British governments too. Webster and Hurok prevailed on Khrushchev to allow Nureyev's presence on the RB tour without disturbing the delicate balance of political interests.⁷⁸ The CC was informed that Furtseva had given Hurok a fierce dressing down for his insolence, which certainly ensured the right impression was given of a minister toeing the line and a foreign agent being put back in his box. The CC's response to the dilemma, though, suggests some burgeoning awareness of cultural *realpolitik*. To the KGB proposal to send out hitmen to break Nureyev's legs during the Royal Ballet tour,⁷⁹ the ideology *otdel* responded (whether naively or ironically) that it would be '*netselesoobraznym*' (inappropriate) in the context of Anglo-Soviet *rapprochement* to go to such lengths.⁸⁰ The peacekeeping sequence backlights Khrushchev's transfer a few weeks later of the tricky Western business to Furtseva's sole charge; I infer that he valued keeping such obvious contradictions of formal interests and actual dealings out of apparat sight.

Two months later we find Furtseva defusing another potential Nureyev bomb after the Athens Festival booked both the Royal Ballet and Richter — a political minefield for a new Greek administration negotiating fresh

⁷⁶ Ralph Murray, later a BBC governor.

⁷⁷ Victor Hochhauser denied any memory of this to me in 2001 — I had not then seen the FO documentation on it and did not pursue it.

⁷⁸ Robinson, *The Last Impresario*, pp. 394–95. The source for this is apparently Ashkenazy. Parrott and Ashkenazy, *Beyond Frontiers*, p. 123.

⁷⁹ Patricia Sullivan, 'Obituaries: KGB Archivist, Defector Vasili Mitrokhin, 81', *Washington Post*, 30 January 2004, p. B08.

⁸⁰ Afiani, 1958–1964, no. 197, 14 March 1963.

relations with the USSR. Furtseva reported to the CC that she had called Richter in and offered him an alternative approved tour, but he had a fortuitous Salzburg Festival invitation already to hand.⁸¹ One might construe some unspoken understanding in such a smart diplomatic outcome, where Hurok's relations with Nureyev, Richter, the Royal Ballet and the Soviet government (via Furtseva) stayed intact, as did Soviet-British (and Soviet-Greek) relations, and where Richter's new-born credit with Party authorities was enhanced, as was Furtseva's perceived reliability in handling thorny cultural dilemmas.

Twice, therefore, post-Nureyev terms had superseded pre-Nureyev terms — and the product being most carefully protected was not the ideological framework for exchange, but a wayward individual artist, whose pivotal value to intergovernmental relations thanks to his new hybridization was recognized all round. However, the finely balanced network of understandings and mutual agendas supporting Khrushchev and Furtseva's heteronymous cultural games could only absorb one disturbing element, Nureyev, and he only became absorbable once subsumed within the Royal Ballet, a leading asset in the formal exchange programme. Ashkenazy, for instance, was told in no uncertain terms by Hurok not to defect.⁸²

Khrushchev's ouster in October 1964 placed all this delicate trading of favours and understandings in peril. An FCO folder for 1965 documents an extraordinary episode of mutual teamwork by Furtseva and Hochhauser, demonstrating that they shared the instability, through their mutual dependency, and protected their nexus by playing against the UK government. Hurok and Hochhauser had developed their duopoly only with Furtseva's patronage, and with her mentor gone, and her own lack of a Supreme Soviet seat since the 1961 Congress, she was extremely vulnerable (as her aide, Alla Butrova, confirmed to me). It was essential to recover her career by proving her irreplaceability in an indispensable strand of Soviet foreign and ideological policy, and vital for her client impresarios to impress the new Brezhnev regime of their irreplaceability, even should she be disposable.

Though space here does not allow me to exhibit the sequence fully, the adroit conjuring trick by which in 1965 Hochhauser and Furtseva wrong-footed the British government opened in February with the signing of the new Anglo-Soviet agreement, and Furtseva's open invitation to the new UK Minister of the Arts, Jennie Lee, to visit the USSR, about which

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, no. 213, not later than 15 August 1963.

⁸² Parrott and Ashkenazy, *Beyond Frontiers*, p. 122.

the Foreign Office was reluctant: 'We do not want to look as if we are too easy to get.'⁸³ Hochhauser told the Foreign Office he had been nudged that Furtseva might like to visit London with the Bolshoi Ballet (which he was presenting that July in a less than ideal venue, a business risk aside from the Furtseva patronage problem). But the Moscow embassy could not confirm Hochhauser's nudge through their local channels, and the FCO could not risk being rebuffed. Over the next four months a crescendo of bluffs, denials and misunderstandings climaxed in the Soviet Culture Minister being hosted grandiosely by the British government on a six-day official visit, and gracing the Bolshoi opening, helping Hochhauser to a hard-won commercial (if not critical) success. The FCO and British Embassy's bemusement at how they ended up lavishing so much expense and protocol on so superficial an outcome is funnier than it should be, but the outcome was far from trivial for the minister-impresario nexus. Hochhauser reinforced his reputation with the Soviets as a *nonpareil* fixer of commercial and propaganda wins, and as a weighty advocate with the UK government; Furtseva's continuation as Culture Minister and restoration to the 1966 Supreme Soviet were assured by winter.⁸⁴

In Furtseva's combination with Hochhauser, each of them required to come in from the shadowy margin and remind the centre of their importance. One of the most expressive codings of the network's transgressive character is the touring's branding. The data lies in Western concert advertisements, from which the impresarios' self-identification, the negotiability of state labelling, and the marketing licence Furtseva ceded to her Western agents can all be deciphered. The advertisements prove that the branding was fully conceded to Furtseva's favoured impresarios. Throughout the golden age Hurok and Hochhauser consistently branded Soviet artists as their own clients: 'Victor Hochhauser presents' or 'S. Hurok presents' Richter, Oistrakh, the Bolshoi Ballet, the USSR State Orchestra. But on the rare occasion they got in, Columbia Artists returned the branding to the state. For example, in the *New York Times* of 9 September 1973, two advertisements appeared for Richter's US concerts; on page 135, listed under 'S. Hurok Presents the World's Greatest', his recital on 22 October, while on page 138 his 7 November recital is labelled: 'Columbia Artists presents in association with the Ministry of Culture of the USSR

⁸³ TNA, FO 371/182819 and FO371/182820, 1965, 'Arts and culture: includes exchange of Ministerial visits (Madame Furtseva/Miss Jennie Lee)'. Lee's courtesy visit to the USSR that autumn was the sole British gain.

⁸⁴ The USSR Supreme Soviet was reelected on 12 June 1966, the second Kosygin government was installed on 3 August 1966.

under the USSR-US cultural exchange agreement. The full spelling out of the protocol warned who was boss; effectively, Columbia wanted to signal that only they are serving the Soviet state interest — Hurok was othered.⁸⁵ The tactic did not work because they missed the underlying shift Furtseva and her impresarios had engineered.

The commodification of the artists was of course core to the marketing, remade as objects by the producers, the Soviet government and the impresarios. Yet the consequence of Furtseva's shift to individualized values was that for the chosen touring artists, victim status was replaced by heroic status. Hyperbolic identification as 'the world's great Soviet' (not to mention 'the world's greatest') cellist/pianist was often incorporated in large lettering, Soviet capability being subsidiary (even redundant) to the message of individual global excellence. Thus, through the triangular interaction of minister, impresarios and artists, validation now came from the world, not from ideological superiority.

Though I have taken issue with Tomoff in *Virtuosi Abroad*, his 2002 paper on unofficial brokering in the 1930s Soviet musical world brings valuable insight and context to the 1960s developments.⁸⁶ For the prime driver of the golden age was the generous advocacy of the Soviet elite by their global peers, authorizing them as musicians and also, increasingly publicly, as Jews, encapsulated in the circle of violinists: David Oistrakh in the USSR, Yehudi Menuhin in London and Isaac Stern in New York. Hurok joked about the 'Kosher Nostra', and Stern quipped that cultural exchanges between the Soviet Union and the USA were simple: 'We send them our Jewish violinists from Odessa, and they send us their Jewish violinists from Odessa.'⁸⁷ My systematization exercise uncovers other familial clues among the toured artists — a Shostakovich clan, Genrikh Neigauz piano students, an Odessa-Moscow rivalry among the Russian violinists, and from 1960 a Britten circle.

These intense art circles overlap each other in communal reinforcement and supranational identity as a world elite, and one can understand the Soviet government's nervousness when such highly authorized performers went abroad. Igor Moiseyev spoke glowingly of the Americans he met on his debut tour, and in 1962 Mravinsky, as CC records show, was reported

⁸⁵ In the event, Richter withdrew from the tour, suffering from severe mental ill-health. Monsaingeon, *Sviatoslav Richter*, p. 140.

⁸⁶ Kiril Tomoff, "'Most Respected Comrade...': Patrons, Clients, Brokers and Unofficial Networks in the Stalinist Music World', *Contemporary European History*, 11, 1, 2002, pp. 33–65.

⁸⁷ Robinson, *The Last Impresario*, p. 337.

by one of his violinists to have said he wished he could live in the West.⁸⁸ His wholly unexpected, and unexplained, withdrawal from conducting Shostakovich's 13th symphony followed weeks later. Rostropovich's words would reverberate throughout the Western world and change many minds. Surely the accumulating influence of such global exposure added historical momentum to the performers' expressions and actions, significantly aiding the shattering of the monolithic system sixteen years later.

And for that potentiality Furtseva looks answerable, but never did answer. Although there are plenty of her Party speeches and statements on the record, ideological boilerplate for congresses, excitingly delivered (by many accounts, she was a gifted orator), her self-accounting is rare. This makes her report to the CC on cultural exchanges in April 1972 something of a treasure.⁸⁹ It consists of a narrative, *Spravka o kul'turnykh svyazakh s SShA*, and lists of exchanges between performance collectives, soloists and exhibitions from 1955 to 1972. (These crosscheck pretty accurately with my own database.) She filed the report after her lavish ten-day trip to the USA in January 1972 with a vast folk arts exhibition, helping the next US-Soviet cultural negotiations along by socializing with President Nixon, flirting cumberdously with Henry Kissinger, and developing her opaque relationship with the huckster oil tycoon and art dealer Armand Hammer.⁹⁰ The *spravka* was written for bureaucratic reference, rather than for delivery from the rostrum with her fabled oratorical flourishes; this was not a performance of self but a performance of her ministerial performance, a strategic narrative instrument, where the unwritten is as important as the stated.

The most striking thing is her announcement of her overturning of the longstanding reciprocity principle in the international exchange framework. As Culture Ministry policy, she announced a deliberate imbalance favouring Soviet artists abroad and minimizing Russian exposure to foreign artists, which she asserted retrospectively as winning both the propaganda and currency aims intended by the exchange frameworks. Yet she offered no explanation of the means or implications. And evidently none were sought — the *pometry* show that the report was filed without follow-up.

⁸⁸ Afiani, 1958–64, no. 188, 15 February 1963.

⁸⁹ Tomilina, 1965–72, no. 265, 19 April 1972.

⁹⁰ The diary of Furtseva's CIA protection officer confirmed the pomp with which the Americans treated her. Sue Ann Baker, *Behind the Shades: A Female Secret Service Agent's True Story*, Roseburg, OR, 2015. Soon after, Hammer and Furtseva conducted an illicit Goya-Malevich painting swap, allegedly involving a suitcase containing \$100,000 for Furtseva and a \$750,000 profit for Hammer.

This implies slack supervision of her Western work at the CC, and not much sense of accountability on her part, which is certainly consistent with Khrushchev's indications in 1963. But her narrative shows how far, within that unsupervised space, she had manoeuvred the trade away from the official exchange framing still in force.

As is characteristic in her speeches, she used emotive manipulations to reconcile irreconcilables. What should appear to be career-threatening, that is, her unilateral abandonment of the official principles, turns into its opposite — it is socialism in practice.⁹¹ This might have been a sincere intention: a year later she would re-emphasize the ideological orthodoxy of her internationalism in a substantial monograph, *Razvitie kul'tury v SSSR*, specifically invoking Leninism as the engine for cultural expansionism at home and abroad.⁹² However, her 1972 report disrupts expected identifications, claiming her Western agents as victims of American anti-Soviet elements — the firebombing of Hurok's New York office by Jewish activists — and passing over Rostropovich's wilfulness, implicitly because of his bankability and renown. She adopts a suitably alarmist rhetoric for the CC that the US is breaking every rule in the book, yet she rows back from an ultimatum that would destroy the business. She implies the official reciprocity mission of the agreements as unfit for purpose, even as unLeninist; instead Soviet advantage has been won by detaching the arts trade from state identifications. And Furtseva has surreptitiously reidentified her impresarios as Soviet assets.

Pace Tomoff, this was not a concession to the capitalist system, for the impresarios were not capitalists but merchants. Hurok and Hochhauser were trading human talent on a new Silk Road, crossing borders oblivious to the contemporary binarism of the Cold War, conveying timeless narratives of human kinship and artistic belonging. Money aside, there was love and sometimes self-sacrifice involved. It is harder to decide about Furtseva, for somewhere underneath this paradigm shift lies her motivation, which is still unclear. Her inconsistent administering of the Party line, especially where it involved her 'favourites', surfaces throughout her career, and led

⁹¹ Caroline Humphrey's argument about the sanctioned uses of 'creativity' in bureaucratic expression to assist 'fast-footed adaptation to external circumstances' appears a good way to read what Furtseva was doing here. Caroline Humphrey, 'The "Creative Bureaucrat": Conflicts in the Production of Soviet Communist Party Discourse', *Inner Asia*, 10, 2008, pp. 5–35.

⁹² Henry Lane Hull, in a nuanced MERSH entry for her, characterizes her as a 'classic Marxist' internationalist. Joseph L. Wiczynski (ed.), *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian & Soviet History*, Vol. 12, Gulf Breeze, FL, 1976, pp. 47–48.

some to dub her a *liberalka*,⁹³ while others, such as Mayhew, found her rebarbative.⁹⁴ By contrast, Arthur Miller, Lord Harewood and Lord Eccles glimpsed self-awareness, even empathy, and her mercurial evasiveness suggests her as a consummate player of soft power reconceived in Soviet terms. Her insistence on herself as a socialist servant, and on the correctness of her hard push of the Western arts trade, powers her 1972 self-justification to the CC. Yet in the rapid changes of official narrative from Khrushchev to Brezhnev, as in the fluctuations of international events, Furtseva's persistent survival of criticism and attacks, aided by her clear Western popularity, comes across as subversive of her expected loyalties.

Mayhew concluded that he himself, a longtime Cold War warrior, had become changed by contact with cultural people and creativity.⁹⁵ Furtseva certainly changed, and it is likely that ageing, her fracturing family life, and the shifting attitudes to her gender may also have remoulded the ruthlessly conforming 1950s apparatchik into an adept modern political operator. There may be entry points to her subjectivity through her formation in the first Soviet generation and its ungendered outlook, for it is plausible (as Miller picked up in his encounter with her)⁹⁶ that she became disenchanted with the distance modern Soviet Communism had travelled from the principles she grew up with. At any rate, her personal investment in her eccentric and subversive clientelism — even her capture by it — is strongly implied in the reaction of her successor, Petr Demichev. The CIA received a report that the new minister found in his department:

deeply entrenched corruption, cronyism, and self-serving intrigue on all levels [inherited] from his erratic and sometimes emotional predecessor, Yekaterina Furtseva. Under Furtseva the Ministry had a reputation for Byzantine intrigue, protectionism, sycophancy and cabalism.⁹⁷

The Pushkin Museum director Irina Antonova once remarked that Furtseva had a passion for large-scale projects, credit to her long-hewn reputation abroad — ‘ona umela riskovat’ (she knew how to take risks).⁹⁸

⁹³ V. V. Ogryzko, *Ministry sovetskoi kul'tury*, Moscow, 2019, p. 179.

⁹⁴ Mayhew and Smith, *A War of Words*, p. 76. ‘A tall, bosomy, bureaucratic lady [...] I disliked her very much.’

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 78–79.

⁹⁶ Inge Morath and Arthur Miller, *In Russia*, London, 1969, pp. 20–23.

⁹⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, 1975, Staff Notes: Soviet Union/Eastern Europe, ‘25 Feb 1975, Demichev Tackles Corruption’, pp. 3–5 <<https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp86t00608r000400070038-1>> [accessed 1 February 2024].

⁹⁸ Galina Dolmatovskaya, *Zhenshchina na mavzolee*, 1 December 2002 <<https://www.peoples.ru/state/politics/furceva/history1.html>> [accessed 16 June 2023].

On 12 June 1974 Police Colonel Boris Biriukov's duties were to supervise the transfer onto a Moscow-Leningrad train of Egypt's Tutankhamun treasures, and to ensure the safe delivery of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* to the Pushkin Museum. Both exhibits were Furtseva's doing, and allowed millions of Soviet citizens to see the outside world's most celebrated art treasures (only fifteen seconds per person, said *Izvestiia*, but still a moment for a lifetime).⁹⁹ Her final deals, paying out in 1975 after her death, were equally imperious — the Tate Gallery's first showing abroad of its Turners, and a stunning exchange of Scythian gold objects from Russia and a hundred Metropolitan Museum 'masterpieces'. Perhaps a cultural manifestation so Byzantine in its scale would have to be Byzantine in its contrivance.

⁹⁹ V. Zakhar'ko, 'My znaem vas, Mona Liza', *Izvestiia*, no. 136, 12 June 1974.