The Cultural Cold War, “Westernized” Youth, and Jazz in the Soviet Union, 1945-64

Carnival Night (Karnaval’naia noch’) was the most popular Soviet movie of 1956, the year N. S. Khrushchev delivered his Secret Speech condemning I. V. Stalin’s rule. This musical film tells the story of a New Year celebration at a House of Culture, a Soviet club institution. On the eve of this holiday event, a new director arrived at this club, comrade Ogurtsov. He turned out to be a hidebound, humorless bureaucrat, who expressed immediate discontent with the festival program for the festivities. Ogurtsov banned the performance of several unorthodox numbers, for example the House of Culture’s amateur ensemble, whose large complement of saxophones suggests a controversially jazzy overtone. Yet the young workers of the House of Culture used trickery to subvert Ogurtsov’s intentions. The House of Culture’s ensemble put on fake beards and gray wigs to get on stage, and performed a jazzy number heavy on saxophones and brass instruments. By the end of the movie, the young employees of the House of Culture ensured a fun, entertaining New Year celebration, and showing Ogurtsov for a fool.¹ This seemingly light-hearted and entertaining musical is actually fraught with tensions that reflect broader cultural conflicts occurring in that time within Soviet society, as well as the playing out of the cultural elements of the Cold War conflict on the USSR’s domestic front. My paper explores these two themes via an investigation of jazz in the first two decades of the Cold War in cultural recreations institutions, especially youth amateur jazz ensembles.

In juxtaposing Ogurtsov against the employees of the House of Culture, the movie participated in the wide-ranging, public Soviet cultural wars between those closer to the liberal end of the Soviet political/ideological spectrum, mostly younger, and those nearer the

¹ For more on this movie and its context, see Josephine Woll, Real Images: Soviet Cinema and the Thaw (New York: I. B. Tauris, 200), 51-56.
conservative one, largely older. These battles took place against the background of the recent period of ideological militancy and conservative triumph in the postwar Stalin years, lasting from the end of World War II in 1945 to Stalin’s death in March 1953, which saw the suppression of anything seen as unorthodox. In contrast, historians have traditionally depicted the period known as the “thaw,” lasting from March 1953, continuing during Khrushchev’s rule from 1955-64, and ending in the late 1960s, as denoting a broad, if not fully consistent, ubiquitous, or complete, liberalization and de-Stalinization of the USSR. In recent years, several historians have powerfully challenged the extant consensus on the “thaw.” For example, Julianne Fürst and others argued for strong continuities between the postwar Stalin and post-Stalin years and downplayed the impact of Stalin’s death. In turn, academics such as Stephen Bittner minimized

2 Liberalism for Soviet communism reflected an interpretation of communist ideology and position within public policy that held four closely related ideals. These include favoring persuasion over coercion, satisfying consumption desires over building up heavy industry, popular participation and initiative from below over discipline and strict adherence to orders from above, and tolerance for some elements of non-Soviet cultural influence, all as a means of managing society and progressing to communism. Soviet conservatism, in turn, held the opposite positions in all of these. My use of the term spectrum in referring to liberals and conservatives is meant to convey that this struggle did not represent a static conflict between two fixed, defined camps, but an in-flux tension whose parameters changed over time. Still, we can trace the debates over the underlying issues back to the struggle between the more liberal Right and conservative Left during the early Soviet years and even the pre-revolutionary period, which continued to play a central role in the Soviet Union throughout its existence. For the NEP, particularly in relation to youth, see Michael David-Fox, Revolution of the Mind: Higher Learning among the Bolsheviks, 1918-1929 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 83-132. For continuing, if mostly submerged, conflicts between liberals and conservatives in the postwar Stalin years, see A. V. Pyzhikov, Khrushchevskai “ottepel’” (Moscow: OLMA-PRESS, 2002), 15-40.


the significance of the liberal vs. conservative struggle. By tracing the breaks and continuities in policy on jazz over the postwar Stalin and post-Stalin era, this essay weighs in on such debates.

The Soviet culture wars during the time period examined proved closely intertwined with the impact of the Cold War on the USSR itself, as one of the crucial fronts centered around "western" cultural influence, with music seen as "western," most notably jazz, at the fore of these struggles. In a recent incisive analysis, David Caute underlines the importance of the cultural, and thus ideological, conflict in the confrontation between the two superpowers. He convincingly argued that the cultural component of the Cold War proved ultimately decisive to determining its outcome as the Soviet Bloc population eventually came to prefer "western" culture. A number of excellent recent works, by scholars such as Alexei Yurchak, Sergei Zhuk, and Bill Risch, also emphasized the importance of "western" popular culture in the Soviet Union. They explored the L. I. Brezhnev years, 1964-1982, focusing on rock'n'roll, the "western" music most popular among young people during that time. Yet, we lack an archivally-informed investigation of the

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evolution of jazz, the "western" youth music of the postwar Stalin and Khrushchev years.\textsuperscript{10} By exploring jazz in youth amateur ensembles during the first half of the Cold War, the years Caute identified as key to the outcome of the cultural struggle between the superpowers, the current paper contributes to expanding the boundaries of current scholarship on Soviet popular culture.\textsuperscript{11}

This essay closely examines the enactment of government policy on jazz in urban cultural recreation institutions, and its everyday life impact on young amateur jazz musicians. In doing so, it draws from archival, published, and private sources on Moscow and Saratov, a mid-size regional city representative of the urban youth experience in the European parts of Soviet Russia.\textsuperscript{12} My thesis holds that the Stalinist leadership consciously politicized jazz soon after World War II as part of a broader conservative turn which stressed ideological militancy and patriotism and banned anything seen as foreign and especially "western" from the category of “Soviet.” This initiative, intended to mobilize society for the escalating Cold War and improve the ability of the authorities to ensure social control, forbid the model communist citizen, New Soviet Person, to bear any taint of "western" culture, and resulted in the alienation of young jazz


\textsuperscript{12} The archives include the Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial’no-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI), especially the Komsomol collection; Tsentral’nyi arkhiv gosudarstva Moskvy (TsAGM); Tsentral’nyi arkhiv obshchestvenno-politicheskoi istorii Moskvy (TsAOPIM); Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF, State Archive of the Russian Federation). Published sources include youth newspapers at the national, regional, and local levels, and instruction booklets for workers in cultural recreation institutions. Private sources include interviews and memoirs. The interview base consists of fifty-five interviews that I conducted in 2008-09 with individuals who participated in organized youth popular culture activities in the period from 1945 to 1968, as well as some published interviews. This work only give the first name and first letter of the last name, date interviewed, and date of birth for non-public figures to protect anonymity, unless these individuals specifically gave permission to be cited by name.
enthusiasts.\textsuperscript{13} Stalin’s death and the rise to power of the post-Stalin leadership, however, brought a shift that, in association with a thawing of Cold War relations, resulted in increasing tolerance for jazz as the liberal approach increasingly won out over the conservative one. In consequence, the model image of the New Soviet Person broadened to tolerate some elements of previously forbidden "western" culture, with the jazz enthusiasts becoming more enthusiastic about the Soviet system itself. Thus, my paper goes against recent trends to highlight the large-scale, pervasive changes associated with the ascendance of a new leadership, and the continuing importance of paying attention to the conflicts between liberals and conservatives for hegemony.

**Youth and Jazz in the Postwar Stalin Years**

My focus on cultural recreation institutions reflects their importance to all forms of state-funded popular culture activities in the Soviet Union, rendered as cultural-mass work (\textit{kul’turno-massovaia rabota}) in official discourse, which I translate as “state-sponsored popular culture.”\textsuperscript{14} This sphere consisted of various forms of popular culture with mass participation sponsored by the Party-state complex, either the government directly or Party-managed social organizations such as trade unions, generally taking place in clubs. According to the historiography, the generic term club referred to a wide variety of Soviet cultural recreation establishments that, originating in the worker’s clubs in late imperial Russia, survived and prospered in the NEP and Stalin years, though we lack an archive-based account of the evolution of clubs after 1953.\textsuperscript{15} The


\textsuperscript{14} See, for example, the title of the following booklet providing guidance to state-sponsored popular culture workers and activists: M. E. Nepomniashchii ed., \textit{Entuziasty: Sbornik o peredovikakh kul’turo-prosvititel'noi raboty} (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiiia, 1959).

\textsuperscript{15} On clubs in the Civil War years, see Gabriele Gorzka, “Proletarian Culture in Practice: Worker’s Clubs, 1917-1921,” in John W. Strong, \textit{Essays on Revolutionary Culture and Stalinism} (Columbus: Slavica Publishers, 1990),
clubs provided the resources and equipment needed for cultural entertainment, as well as club workers who managed the variegated popular culture activities. In cities, the clubs belonged for the most part to trade unions, but also a variety of other institutions, such as the Ministry of Culture (MOC), city and district Party organizations, higher education establishments, etc. These institutions ranged from massive, wealthy establishments, frequently called Palaces of Culture or Houses of Culture, to smaller, typically one-story buildings of a few rooms with a concert/movie hall referred to simply as clubs, and down to one-room “red corners” (krasnye ugolki) in dormitories, factory shops, and large apartment buildings. The events and activities organized at these officially-sponsored institutions provided the key public spaces and resources for entertainment, socializing, play, relaxation, and romance, thus constituting a crucial site of activity for the population, in particular for young people who lacked much access to other alternatives such as expensive restaurants. Particularly in regard to performing music, jazz and other genres, clubs organized amateur ensembles, with “most participants young people,” which performed in the clubs, as well as cafeterias, factories, restaurants, movie theaters, etc. In addition to clubs, local branches of the Komsomol, the Soviet mass youth organization, most directly managed and helped organize youth-oriented state-sponsored popular culture.

The multifaceted history of jazz in Soviet clubs before 1945 spans the spectrum from hostility, to suspicious tolerance, to full-fledged welcome. It dates back to the NEP, 1922-28,
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when the liberalization of the social climate after the militancy of the Civil War opened up space for less ideologized, more entertaining music. At first confined to elite intelligentsia circles, jazz became increasingly prevalent in clubs throughout this period, despite strident criticism from the more ideologically militant, conservative political Left for its lack of ideological discipline and association with “foreign bourgeoisie.” Nonetheless, by the end of the NEP, both swingy and smooth jazz acquired widespread popularity among urban middle class audience, especially young people, as well as some workers, and had significant official sponsorship. The period of Cultural Revolution, 1928-31, a time of ideological militancy and coercive methods, witnessed an attack on jazz as Stalin gained power and supported the conservative Left position in Soviet music. Still, by 1932, despite no change in leadership, the Stalinist authorities shifted its approach as part of a broader relaxation of ideological militancy and turn toward satisfying popular desires, dismissed previous concerns with jazz. Millions of people listened to jazz and danced the foxtrot, tango, and rumba to jazz played both by amateur ensembles and professionals such as Leonid Utesov, reputedly a particular favorite of Stalin. Yet in late 1936, the conservative turn associated with the Great Purges and the hunt for foreign spies strongly impacted jazz, again condemned as bourgeois music. Some band leaders were arrested, while professionals such as Utesov, as well as the amateur ensembles that remained after the purge, had to make their jazz more “Soviet” by adding strings and “folk” instruments. The World War brought another period of loosening and even welcome for jazz, as Utesov and a new star, Eddie Rosner, entertained the troops and lifted their morale with American-style jazz tunes.\(^\text{18}\) Overall, as we see, the meanings assigned to jazz shifted with the needs of the Soviet leadership as part of general policy trends, between the conservative, Leftist perspective of ideological discipline and

coercion against jazz for its association with "western" popular culture, and the liberal, Rightist ideal of tolerance and satisfying popular desires. The years from 1932 to 1936 and 1941 to 1945, together with Stalin’s appreciation for Utesov, underlines that liking jazz was not inherently antithetical with being a good communist or patriot in the view of the Stalinist leadership.

The situation quickly changed after the conclusion of the war. Despite the widespread expectations of a postwar relaxation of wartime strains, the postwar Stalin years witnessed continued heavy pressure of the population in the form of an extensive, rapid, and exhausting postwar reconstruction focused on heavy industry instead of light, consumer-oriented production; just as significantly, it combined with a militant re-ideologization of Soviet society, with suppression of any dissent. The Stalin regime justified this course by claiming the need to prepare for another potential World War in the context of an intensifying Cold War struggle. Many historians attributed a darker motive as well to these actions, namely Stalin’s desire to keep the country in a state of perpetual mobilization for war in order to maintain social cohesion in the face of atrocious living conditions and ensure strict discipline from Soviet citizens.19

In the sphere of culture, this conservative turn expressed itself in the campaign against “cosmopolitanism,” a label used by official discourse to condemn anything seen as alien. Beginning in 1946 and reaching its apogee in 1948, this campaign, led by A. A. Zhdanov, overtly aimed at "western" influence in the USSR, and covertly also targeted Soviet Jews.

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Concomitantly, it promoted Soviet and particularly Russian nationalism and conservative interpretations of Marxism-Leninism.\(^\text{20}\)

Despite the crucial role of jazz in mobilizing Soviet patriotism during the Great Patriotic War, it gradually acquired the status of music *non grata* in the Soviet Union. Still, this proved far from a foregone conclusion, as though ideological conservatives expressed strong criticism of jazz already from 1946, the crucial decree by the Party Central Committee (PCC) banning jazz came on February 10, 1948, significantly later than most decrees of the anti-cosmopolitan campaign. This well-known resolution condemned V. I. Muradeli’s opera *Great Friendship* (*Velikaia druzhba*) and other Soviet works and composers, such as D. D. Shostakovich. The PCC stated that Muradeli and the other composers wrongly took a “formalist path,” promoting “atonality, dissonance, lack of harmony,” and as a result “transform music into cacophony,” which “strongly recalls modern bourgeois culture.”\(^\text{21}\) The historiography demonstrates that this decree resulted in a widespread initiative meant to suppress all music seen as "western," especially jazz, despite its popularity, and went as far as arresting some prominent jazz musicians, such as Rosner, and sending them to the Gulag.\(^\text{22}\)

The extensive actions taken against jazz by the Stalinist leadership represented a deliberate choice to make jazz a central component of the cultural Cold War struggle on the domestic front. The PCC resolution representing the triumph of Soviet conservatism in the


\(^{21}\) RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 1069, ll. 42-45.

sphere of music, meaning didactic leadership from above instead of satisfying popular desires, favoring coercion over persuasion, and intolerance of anything "western." Moreover, the decree, as did the broader anti-cosmopolitan campaign, narrowed the boundaries of who could be considered a truly Soviet citizen, New Soviet Person, setting up the category of “Soviet” as inevitably and inherently opposed to anything smacking of "western" influence.

To illuminate how this decree impacted youth-oriented amateur arts collectives in urban areas, we need to first examine the top decision-making bodies of the two Soviet social organizations most responsible for state-sponsored youth popular culture: the Komsomol and the trade unions. The Komsomol hierarchy clearly heard the signals. A March 4, 1948 internal policy document of the Komsomol Central Committee (KCC) Propaganda department stated that all branches of the Komsomol are “obliged to fully and unquestionably implement” this PCC resolution. The 1950 Fifth KCC Plenum resolution disparaged the occasional “elements of lack of ideology, lack of culture, and vulgarity” in amateur arts, while the Moscow city Komsomol committee condemned “bowing down” before the “west” in the same year. Komsomol newspapers criticized clubs that played "western" music and hosted "western" dances.

While the Komsomol had oversight of youth policy, and thus had a major say in how young people participated in amateur arts activities, the trade union bureaucracy owned and managed most of the urban clubs, thus having the most direct voice in determining the shape of urban cultural recreation overall. Here, it is instructive to compare two major Plenums of the Soviet organization in charge of trade unions, the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (ACCTU). Thus, in its 1951 Plenum, the ACCTU drew attention to the fact that in some trade union-managed amateur arts collectives, “there are still ideologically lacking (bezideinye) and

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23 RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32 , d. 630 , l. 120.
24 Postanovleniia chetvertogo plenuma TsK VLKSM, 7; TsAOPIM, f. 635, op. 11, d. 31, l. 24.
25 See Moskovskii komsomolets, January 19, 1950, “Club or a dance square (Klub ili... tansploshchadka)?
antisocial pieces performed,” the language typically used to condemn music seen as inappropriate, such as jazz. However, the previous major ACCTU Plenum, in 1945, lacked a strong statement condemning such music, demonstrating the impact of the anti-cosmopolitan campaign. The PCC, therefore, strongly condemned jazz in 1948 and the KCC and ACCTU made their own policy-making statements confirming and extending its decree for those aspects of the Soviet system which they managed.

The anti-cosmopolitan campaign had an immediate impact on state-sponsored popular culture. The most revealing case study here comes from the Moscow House of Folk Art (MHFA), which had oversight over the content of Moscow’s amateur arts. This institution stood on the front lines of the battle against "western" elements in the cultural recreation network. In 1949, it condemned “certain wind orchestras which limit their repertoire mainly to marches and western european-style music/foxtrot, tango/,” which “avoid the approval of their repertoire” in the MHFA. For 1951, the MHFA found the activity of *estradnye* (popular) ensembles “noticeable decreased.” We may speculate that the ban on "western" music in their repertoire was the culprit, as estradnye ensembles played both jazz and other popular music. An in-depth 1952 internal policy report on dancing in Moscow notes that “beautiful musical ball dances have almost fully pushed out the vulgar music of western foxtrots and tangos.” Yet still, the report goes on to criticize those “dance poachers who distort the tastes of Soviet youth” by “propagandizing degenerating western foxtrots, languid tangos, and vulgar rumbas.” It claims that youth complained about such dances, for example quoting a letter to the newspaper *Komsomol'skaia pravda* by three young people who blew the whistle on a dance square

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26 GARF f. R-5451, op 24, d. 900, l. 12.
27 Ibid., d. 278, ll. 7-17.
28 TsAGM, f. 2987, op. 1, d. 1, l. 1.
29 Ibid., d. 13, l. 20.
30 Ibid., d. 20, ll. 3, 24-25.
where “a jazz ensemble performs cosmopolitan ‘foxtrots’ and ‘crying’ tangos.” Intriguingly, the authors of the report acknowledge that “getting rid of western dances is made difficult by the position of certain club and park directors who, seeking to attract more visitors to the dance squares and fulfillment of the financial plan, allow western dances.” The MHFA’s vigorous efforts against "western" music and dance place it far on the conservative side of the liberal-conservative spectrum.

The evidence from such official sources indicates that the anti-cosmopolitan campaign some successes in managing to push jazz and foxtrot to the margins of state-sponsored popular culture. Still, these dances and music remained popular among many youth, and the few directors and employees of cultural recreation institutions willing to bear the pressure brought by the MHFA hosted "western" music and dances in return for the financial incentive of fulfilling the plan. Furthermore, we should not discount the motivations of promoting a more liberal vision of communism as playing some role in the more tolerant stance toward "western" dances by these cultural industry workers, combined with love for a dance style from their youth. Consequently, "western"-themed popular culture still retained a foothold in state-sponsored popular culture institutions on the eve of Stalin’s death, yet one constantly assailed by conservatives.

These sources, though, do not allow us an in-depth glimpse into how the anti-cosmopolitan campaign’s edicts against jazz played out in the everyday life of young jazz enthusiasts who eventually became amateur jazz musicians, a virtually unstudied subject. Previous historiography did shed some light on the tensions between the postwar Stalinist system, and a specific group of "westernized" youth known as stiliagi. Stiliagi, or “style-obsessed,” was a term that the Party used to homogenize and deprecate the behavior of young

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31 RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 710, ll. 6-8.
men and more rarely women enamored with western European and American popular culture.\textsuperscript{32}

Appearing in the USSR in the mid-1940s, and at first overwhelmingly the children of the top Soviet elite, stiliagi danced "western" dances such as boogie-woogie and foxtrot, listened to jazz, wore "western" fashions, admired abstract art, used anglicized slang, and drank whiskey and cocktails. Despite some limited press criticism, the postwar Stalin Party leaders expressed few concerns with stiliagi, though at the local level some conservative officials repressed stiliagi.\textsuperscript{33}

Still, with rare exceptions, jazz musicians did not self-identify as stiliagi, as they considered jazz music itself much more important than cultural practices associated with western Europe and America.\textsuperscript{34} In a case in point, one of the most famous jazz musicians in the Soviet Union, the Moscow-based G. A. Garanian, clearly differentiates “jazz enthusiasts (dzhazovye liudi)” from stiliagi, who in his words had their own way of dressing, slang, everything, “all with an air of superiority”: he states that he did not really have any contacts with the stiliagi cliques.\textsuperscript{35}

Other jazz musicians confirm this difference: for example, A. A. Kuznetsov, a Moscow jazz musician, stated that “I was not among the stiliagi.”\textsuperscript{36} Therefore, such youth need a separate treatment, which this paper provides.

\textsuperscript{32} This term was popularized by an (in)famous article by D. Beliaev in the satirical newspaper Krokodil, March 10, 1949, “Stiliaga.”


\textsuperscript{34} Kozlov is one exception, a prominent jazz musician who did consider himself a stiliaga: A. S. Kozlov, "Kozel na sakse": i tak vsiu zhizn' (Moscow: Vagrius, 1998).

\textsuperscript{35} Interview on February 4, 2009, with G. A. Garanian, born 1934.

\textsuperscript{36} Interview on February 21, 2009, with A. A. Kuznetsov, born 1941. A Saratov jazz musician, F. M. Arons, also indicated that he did not consider himself a stiliaga, though he wore some American-style clothing: interview on May 18, 2009, with F. M. Arons, born 1940.
These jazz enthusiasts recall the significance of the PCC decree. Garanian describes the PCC’s 1948 resolution as a crucial break point after which the authorities did not allow jazz.\textsuperscript{37} I. P. Zhimskii, who became a prominent jazz musician in Saratov during the “thaw,” noted that the resolution resulted in the “harassment (pritesnenie)” of jazz ensembles. As well, the campaign targeted the instrument most symbolic of jazz: “saxophones were replaced by clarinets.”\textsuperscript{38} A. I. Avrus, not a jazz enthusiast but a Komsomol official involved in the Saratov State University (SSU) Komsomol from the late 1940s to the late 1950s, recalls that in Saratov in the postwar Stalin years, “there was a struggle against jazz.”\textsuperscript{39} Another jazz musician in Saratov, L. A. Figlin, stated that even “the word jazz was banned,” and “playing jazz, with saxophones, was called cacophony” by official discourse.\textsuperscript{40}

Even so, young people fascinated with jazz had recourse to a number of options in their efforts to access this music in the postwar Stalin years, some of these quite legal. For example, V. N. Iarskaia, a jazz singer during the “thaw,” recalls how in the postwar Stalin years she repeatedly watched “Happy-Go-Lucky Guys (Veselye rebiata),” a Soviet jazz comedy from the time when the regime permitted jazz in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{41} Both she and a jazz entrepreneur, V. E. Kleinot, also recall the significance of trophy films captured in Germany during the war and shown on Soviet screens in the postwar years for jazz enthusiasts.\textsuperscript{42} Zhimskii relates that plenty of old records survived the ban on jazzy music, and middle-class young people whose parents had gramophones danced to these tunes at home. Crucial to this was the fact that many well-educated, intelligentsia adults dismissed the ban on jazzy music – the music they grew up with in

\textsuperscript{37} Interview on February 4, 2009, with G. A. Garanian, born 1934.
\textsuperscript{38} Interview on May 27, 2009, with I. P. Zhimskii, born 1936. For more on the attack on saxophones in particular, see Starr, \textit{Red and Hot}, 216.
\textsuperscript{39} Interview on May 28, 2009, with A. I. Avrus, born 1930.
\textsuperscript{40} Interview on May 25, 2009, with L. A. Figlin, born 1938.
\textsuperscript{41} Interview on May 30, 2009, with V. N. Iarskaia, born around 36.
\textsuperscript{42} Interview on February 14, 2009, with V. E. Kleinot, born 1941.
the 1930s – as nonsense, even “dancing foxtrot and tango” themselves, in Zhimskii’s words.\footnote{Interview on May 27, 2009, with I. P. Zhimskii, born 1936.} Not only future jazz musicians, but ordinary young people such as Svetlana S. who did not express a particular fascination with jazz danced to jazzy tunes by Utesov and others, despite knowing full well about the anti-cosmopolitan campaign.\footnote{Interview on February 19, 2009, with Svetlana S., born 1937.}

Yet true jazz enthusiasts, especially those who had no gramophones, took illegal paths to access the newest jazz music, listening to jazz on foreign radio stations broadcasting into the Soviet Union. Soon after World War II, "western" radio stations financed by the US and British governments started to broadcast propaganda messages, including not only news but popular culture as well. Despite Soviet state efforts to jam these radio stations, some signals got through to jazz enthusiasts.\footnote{For more on these radio stations and efforts to jam them, see Michael Nelson, War of the Black Heavens: The Battles of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997), xii-xvi.} The most prominent radio station for jazz proved the US State Department’s \textit{Voice of America} (VOA), where in the early postwar years Leonard Feather’s \textit{Jazz Club USA}, and from 1955 Willis Conover’s \textit{Jazz Hour} enabled many future jazz musicians to listen to their favored music.\footnote{On jazz broadcast into the Soviet Union, see Starr, \textit{Red and Hot}, 210, 228.} \textit{Iarskaia} describes how in the early 1950s, she listened to what she called “American music” on the VOA: her parents allowed her to do this as “they were democratic.”\footnote{Interview on May 30\textsuperscript{th}, 2009, with V. N. Iarskaia, born around 1936.}

In turn, K. A. Marvin, who later became a prominent Saratov jazz musician during the post-Stalin years, recalls trying to listen to Benny Goodman and Louis Armstrong on VOA.\footnote{Interview on May 13, 2009, with K. A. Marvin, born 1934.} Arons relates how, while still quite young, he managed to catch jazz on VOA, and he “understood already back then, that this is a very interesting music. [he] literally jumped in place.”\footnote{Interview on May 18, 2009, with F. M. Arons, born 1940.}
Jazz Club USA and Jazz Hour allowed many young people access to jazz. Yet, listening to this music on foreign radio stations inevitably had a significantly bigger, more overtly politicized element than listening to jazz or dancing to foxtrot on old records. The United States government-sponsored popular culture on Voice of America constituted a very direct form of challenge to the Soviet Union on the cultural front of the Cold War, and one quite effective in reaching its goals, as through listening to and liking jazz, many young people became exposed to and came to appreciate other elements of "western" culture.50

In addition to listening to jazz, legally and illegally, some estradnye ensembles proved willing to introduce jazzy elements into their repertoire despite the risk of punishment if discovered. Garanian recalls that his participation in college amateur arts enabled him to access the piano after hours, which he used to figure out the notes of the jazz pieces he memorized from the radio. This involved a risk as, according to him, if the administration found out that a student musician “began to play jazz,” then “the student might have been kicked out.”51 Still, in SGU’s geological department, Marvin recalls joining an amateur collective in 1952 which sought to play jazzified songs, “although this was frowned upon.”52 Figlin got his start in a large, twenty-people estradnyi ensemble in a medical institute in Saratov in the early 1950s, which had “elements of jazz.” The ensemble managed to play jazzy compositions by using a deception: “listing a different name and author” for the censorship.53 Thus, in some regions, music with jazzy elements survived the anti-cosmopolitan campaign’s ban on "western" influence in state-sponsored popular culture, particularly by the early 1950s, when the vigor in implementing the

51 Ibid.
52 Interview on May 13, 2009, with K. A. Marvin, born 1934.
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decree seems to have somewhat abated in certain locales away from Moscow.\textsuperscript{54} Still, introducing
even a modicum of jazzy elements depended on more liberal, tolerant local officials, and federal
policy clearly continued to tilt against this music.

Despite the difference between the stiliagi and the jazz enthusiasts, the anti-cosmopolitan
campaign, which set the model New Soviet Person as inherently opposed to anything deemed
"western," and in particular the 1948 PCC decree, which definitively associated jazz with
western Europe and America, resulted in both of these groups being labeled "deviant."\textsuperscript{55} The
Stalinist leadership politicized and disparaged the jazz enthusiasts’ cultural tastes, regardless of
whether the young people saw themselves as good Soviet citizens or not. The Party leadership’s
actions caused the young amateur jazz players to become marginalized – the “Other” – in the
Soviet system in 1948, not because of something they actively did, but because of a change in
state policy. Young people had to do illegal things to get access to jazz music, and if they wanted
to introduce jazz elements into amateur arts, they had to find various illegal tricks to avoid
censorship and risk potentially severe punishment. The PCC decree, in effect, functioned to
create "deviance" where none existed beforehand, and inevitably alienated these youth from the
Stalinist leadership for its blatant repression of their favored leisure-time activity. Such

\textsuperscript{54} The Baltics proved an especially safe haven for jazzy music: Starr, \textit{Red and Hot}, 228-32.
\textsuperscript{55} For the powerful effect of labeling a group as deviant, see the historiography on the “labeling theory,” which
posits that “deviants” become “deviant” when those with power successfully attach this label to them: Emile
History} (New York, 1994); 345-98, Stuart H. Traub and Craig B. Little eds., \textit{Theories of Deviance} (Itasca, 1985),
277-332; Emile Durkheim, \textit{The Rules of the Sociological Method}, George E. G. Catlin ed., Sarah A. Solovay and
alienation, though, did not rise to the level of resistance in the sense of political opposition, in contrast to some other youth who formed underground groups dedicated to political reform.56

**Youth and Jazz in the “Thaw”**

To what extent and in what direction did the content of amateur arts concerts and dances at youth evenings change during the early “thaw?” The immediate post-Stalin developments in Soviet music show that after 1953, with the ending of the anti-cosmopolitan campaign and the hesitant warming of Cold War relations, the pressure on "western"-themed music started to subside, and it slowly emerged from the margins of the Soviet musical scene. Historiography describes music with jazzy overtones beginning to play on the radio, professional estrada ensembles including syncopation and brass music, and formerly prominent jazz musicians coming to Moscow and Leningrad from their places of exile or imprisonment.57

These processes powerfully impacted the sphere of state-sponsored youth popular culture. We can see this clearly in examining an institution that previously adamantly opposed "western" music: the MHFA. As described above, its annual report for 1951 listed a significant decrease in activity as the only problem associated with estradnye ensembles. However, soon after Stalin’s death the situation changed, as the section in the MHFA report for 1954 devoted to estradnye ensembles states:

Estradnye ensembles are becoming more and more widespread, especially in Moscow colleges. Yet it has to be acknowledged that both in their repertoire, and manner and style of performance, many of them seek to emulate western jazz ensembles, are too caught up in rhythmic complexity, do not pay attention to the clearness of the sound, and sometimes deliberately play off key, abuse saxophone and tuba glissandos, and thus lose the character of light, elegant music, and transform into a bad dance ensemble. There is an

intensive struggle taking place to clean up these ensembles of everything superficial and alien to the Soviet listener.\textsuperscript{58}

The passage demonstrates that the MHFA fought hard against the growing number of jazzy estradnye ensembles. The MHFA did not fare well in this battle, as its report for 1955 indicates that “the number of estradnye concerts continues to increase,” disparaging their play as “emulating bad jazz ensembles.”\textsuperscript{59} Indeed, out of thirty-six estradnye ensembles that took part in an amateur arts competition in the mid-1950s, the MHFA complained stated that only three did not play “in the style of a western jazz ensemble.”\textsuperscript{60} We can conclude that the MHFA conservatives fared poorly in their struggle in keeping jazzy elements out of estradnye amateur ensembles. The MHFA’s reports enable us to empirically ground the transformations alluded to by “Carnival Night,” and underline the shift associated with Stalin’s death.

Private sources support the narrative arc presented by the MHFA’s archive. In Moscow, Garanian describes how in the mid-1950s, his semi-underground jazz group, the “Golden Eight,” joined one of the most prestigious youth ensembles at the time, in the Central House of Artists (CHA), under Iurii Saul’skii.\textsuperscript{61} In Saratov, Avrus recalls how after Stalin’s death and especially the Secret Speech, much space opened up for jazz, and jazz-oriented amateur arts collectives began to appear.\textsuperscript{62} Zhimskii recalls new jazz-oriented collectives forming already in 1954-55.\textsuperscript{63} The official SGU newspaper even featured Zhimskii in an overall friendly cartoon in 1958, which did not hesitate to use the term jazz with a positive connotation (see Figure 2, below).

\textsuperscript{58} TsAGM, f. 2987, op. 1, d. 39, ll. 29-30.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., d. 45, ll. 25-26.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., d. 58, l. 23.
\textsuperscript{61} Interview on February 4, 2009, with G. A. Garanian, born 1934.
\textsuperscript{62} Interview on May 28, 2009, with A. I. Avrus, born 1930.
\textsuperscript{63} Interview on May 27, 2009, with I. P. Zhimskii, born 1936.
Leninskii put’, April 5, 1958, “Friendly cartoons (Druzheskie zharzhy).”
What motivated these liberalizing changes? One reason consisted of satisfying youth desires for cultural consumption: as scholars such as Christine Varga-Harris have argued, the post-Stalin authorities offered the Soviet population a new social contract of consumerist benefits for state legitimacy.\textsuperscript{65} Yet another, crucial cause for the growing acceptability of "western" music consisted of a general revision in outlook, promoted particularly by Khrushchev, which took a less confrontational stance toward the United States.\textsuperscript{66} Accepting more jazzy music in state-sponsored popular culture sent a strong signal to domestic audiences that the superpower adversary of the Cold War did not constitute an implacable enemy. It fit well with Khrushchev’s newly-expressed thesis that armed conflict between the USSR and US was not inevitable by any means, and that the struggle between socialism and capitalism can be resolved via peaceful competition. These transformations in the tolerance for jazz embody how the shifts in foreign policy by the Soviet Union played out on the domestic scene. In the process, they illuminate the evolving impact of the cultural front of the Cold War on the life of the Soviet population.

As demonstrated by MHFA and “Carnival Night,” conservatives bitterly opposed these alterations. Another fascinating example comes from a debate by the jury of an amateur arts competition over the estradnye ensembles performance at the 1957 Moscow International Youth Festival.\textsuperscript{67} The discussion centered on Saul’skii’s HFA ensemble, where Garanian played at the time. A more conservative jury member censured the ensemble’s musical piece for its “style of


an American jazz ensemble,” adding that “the very fact of giving an award to this ensemble will mean that other jazz ensembles will see this as an indulgence, that [jazz] is now permitted!”

Leonid Utesov, the professional jazz musician of the 1930s who sat on the jury, took a more liberal view. He stated: “we should not think of the [HFA] collective as flawed” as a result of the “several sharp techniques used from the arsenal of American jazz ensembles.” Utesov insisted that “we need such music, and it needs to be joyful and full of life.”

The HFA youth ensemble ended up getting a bronze medal, which undoubtedly demonstrated the acceptability of jazz to many other young musicians, as the more conservative jury member feared. Utesov’s very presence on the jury committee exemplifies the transformations of the “thaw.”

The very debate between the two jury members represents the contestation on the institutional micro-level of struggles between liberal and conservative, Rightist and Leftist, approaches in regard to "western" music. Tolerance for and advocacy of jazz, associated with Soviet liberalism, resulted in such conflicts forming part of a broader struggle for hegemony between conservatives and liberals in Soviet popular culture, which arguably has similarities to the contests for hegemony in the popular cultures of capitalist states. Still, in capitalist contexts, scholars such as Tony Bennett and Stuart Hall describe the primary battles as taking place over issues associated with social class. In contrast, due to the overwhelming importance of ideology in the Soviet Union, the principal contests there were fought over differing interpretations of Marxism-Leninism.

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This does not mean that liberal, Rightist policies always won out during the “thaw.” In fact, soon after the Moscow Festival, the authorities disbanded the HFA youth collective in late 1957. This constituted part of a broad suppression of "western" music that responded the fallout from Khrushchev’s Secret Speech, most notably the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, combined with the fear of excessive "western" influence as a result of the "western" youth flooding Moscow streets during the Festival. Still, this proved a short-lived conservative zigzag, as already in 1958, the PCC passed a new decree that cancelled the 1948 PCC decree censuring "western" music. The PCC’s new decree resulted in a renewed flowering of youth jazz ensembles, and even resulted in the opening of youth cafes that openly played American-style jazz in the early 1960s. Another conservative zigzag against jazz in 1962 followed the Cuban Missile Crisis, but it again proved relatively short-lived. Such turns occurring after major international fiascoes for the Soviet Union further demonstrate the close ties between jazz and the Cold War.

At the same time, they illustrate that Rightist and Leftist approaches to "western" music, and policy more broadly, did not emanate from two basic, static camps in the Soviet system. Instead, the viewpoints of officials represented points on a liberal-conservative spectrum with a broad range of possibilities, which evolved over time in response to major events, especially in the Cold War competition. While some individuals closer to the Rightist and Leftist poles of the spectrum never shifted in their advocacy of more liberal or conservative methods, the position of others proved in constant flux in response to changes in the social conditions or their tactical needs in competitions for power and influence. Many officials who stood close to the center than the poles on the spectrum could appear conservative when reigning in what they perceived as

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70 Interview on February 4, 2009, with G. A. Garanian, born 1934.
71 On the evolutions of jazz in these years, see Starr, *Red and Hot*, 235-88.
liberal excess, and vice versa. Perhaps no one illustrates this better than the General Secretary, Khrushchev, who permitted more jazzy music in 1956, suppressed it in late 1957, and permitted it again in 1958. Still, overall the “thaw” meant many more victories for liberal than conservative values, and an overall Rightist approach to shaping Soviet policy, including in regard to jazz.

Such policies resulted in the liberalization of the model of New Soviet Person. The authorities continued to censure stiliagi, perceived as excessively influenced by “western” culture, and even launched an intensified campaign against them in the early post-Stalin years. Yet while stiliagi continued to remain “Other” within the Soviet system, the “thaw”-era government proved willing to stretch the boundaries of ideal New Soviet People to include tolerance of certain elements of “western” influence, such as jazz music. In expanding these normative limits, the authorities brought previously marginalized young amateur jazz players into the realm of social acceptability. Alienated from the top leadership under Stalin, these youth now developed significant enthusiasm about the liberal vision of communism espoused by the post-Stalin Kremlin, as they saw its support for their jazz playing. This made such young people more invested into the system since it proved increasingly willing to fulfill their desires for jazz, and particularly supportive of the central leadership in its contests with conservative lower-level officials.

Conclusion

The more nuanced, subtle approach to "western" cultural influence by the more liberal “thaw”-era authorities, characterized by a mixture of co-optation of jazz and suppression of the extreme stiliagi, denoted a shift in the meanings associated with the New Soviet Person in the

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“thaw.” By eliding the previous binary established by the conservative postwar Stalinist leadership between loving some aspects of "western" popular culture and being a model communist, it enabled young jazz enthusiasts to consider themselves good Soviet citizens while listening to jazz, and inspired enthusiasm for the liberal vision of the communist future. This provided the basis for what Yurchak identified in the later Brezhnev years for rock'n'roll, when some Soviet youth expressed passion simultaneously for both Lenin and Led Zeppelin.\textsuperscript{73}

As this paper illustrated, the changes in policy toward jazz reflected the impact of the cultural elements of the Cold War on the Soviet domestic front. Concomitantly, it resulted from broader, long-term contests between Rightist and Leftist viewpoints for hegemony in Soviet popular culture, and more broadly as well. All of this evidence highlights the importance of Stalin’s death and the changes associated with it to the everyday experience of Soviet youth, especially jazz enthusiasts, while demonstrating the continuing crucial role of the conflict between liberals and conservatives to the Soviet Union.

\textsuperscript{73} Yurchak, \textit{Everything was Forever, until It Was No More}, 219.