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## Politics At Play: The 1985 World Festival Of Youth And Students And Its Role In Soviet And Cold War History

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**POLITICS AT PLAY: THE 1985 WORLD FESTIVAL OF YOUTH AND  
STUDENTS AND ITS ROLE IN SOVIET AND COLD WAR HISTORY**

by

**MICHAELA LEWALSKI**

**THESIS**

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS**

2020

MAJOR: HISTORY

Approved By:

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Advisor

Date

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## **DEDICATION**

To Benjamin,  
who helped me through it all

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people who helped me reach this milestone in my academic career through varying degrees of academic and personal support. Without them, this work would have never materialized, and therefore it is only right that I mention them here. It is impossible to express the fullness of my gratitude in words, but I will do my best.

First, I must thank Dr. Laura Kline. When I was a freshman at Wayne State University, I knew that I wanted to spend my undergraduate years learning a new language, but I had not yet decided which one that would be. Within my first minutes of sitting in Professor Kline's "Introduction to Russian Culture" course, I made my decision. Professor Kline instilled within me a love for Russian culture that I know will never fade, as well as a desire to learn as much as possible about this widely misunderstood country. She has encouraged my interests from the beginning, and she never fails to teach me something new and fascinating each and every time I talk to her. Her passion and drive for what she does is admirable beyond compare, and it has been an honor to work under her in a variety of ways throughout all of my years at Wayne State.

I have the utmost gratitude and respect for Professors Sylvia Taschka and Andrew Port. They both pushed me to complete some of my best academic work to date, and also expressed their belief in my abilities at points in my life when I needed the encouragement the most.

I am extremely thankful for Professor Paul Kershaw, who agreed to act as my second reader during this hectic semester marked by COVID-19. Professor Kershaw was the first to tell me that I possess the abilities to successfully pursue a PhD in History, and

offered to help me on that path if I were to choose it. Even though I was—more often than not—too doubtful of my own answers to raise my hand in his class, he never hesitated to call on me to speak, maintaining the belief that I would have something valuable to add to the conversation. I have always greatly valued his insights, and feel privileged to have been able to receive feedback from him on this thesis.

My biggest academic thank you, without a doubt, goes to my primary advisor, Professor Aaron Retish. While Professor Kline sparked my love for Russia, Professor Retish ignited my love for History. His “History of the Soviet Union” course was the first History class I took at Wayne State, and it shaped the rest of my years in college. I was not a History major as an undergraduate, and he asked me several times during this course with him why that was the case, seeing something in me that I had never imagined was there. When I decided that I wanted to start pursuing a master’s degree in History through Wayne State’s Accelerated Graduate Enrollment Program, I had still only taken the one History course with Professor Retish. He vouched for me to the department, and it was this recommendation that allowed me to start the journey that has led me here. It has been an absolute honor to know and work with Professor Retish in classes and on this project. He is a brilliant teacher, a brilliant thinker, and an extremely caring individual. I am beyond appreciative for all of the guidance that he has provided and all of the support that he has shown me over the past few years.

There are also wonderful individuals in my personal life who have contributed to my successful completion of this thesis and are certainly worthy of acknowledgement. First, I must thank Tonimarie Catalan, one of my best friends of almost a decade. Not only

has she always made her support of me and my studies clear, but she also helped me access materials that were vital for this work. I also have great gratitude for Elisabeth Simonovich and Zachary Szymanski, who both expressed excitement over my research and have insisted since the beginning that they wanted to read my thesis when it was complete. Finally, words are not adequate to express the gratitude I have for my biggest supporter, best friend, and life partner, Benjamin Durisin. I thank him, first and foremost, for finally being the person to truly teach me how much more there is to life than school. However, at the same time, I thank him for making school and this entire thesis process infinitely easier to handle. He patiently listened as I tediously tried to re-word single sentences and he was always there to provide feedback on any new revelation that I had. His encouragement never wavered. From the moment that I started working on this project, I knew that dedicating it to him was the only option.

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## INTRODUCTION

In July of 1985, Soviet news sources praised their nation's scientists for dispelling all of the clouds hanging in the sky above Moscow. The Soviet state and its citizens wanted to ensure that everything was in order prior to the arrival of thousands of foreign guests, and this included the weather.<sup>1</sup> Although it had been raining for days, Moscow did indeed have clear skies as approximately 26,000 youth from 157 countries in the world gathered in Central Lenin Stadium for the opening ceremony to the Twelfth World Festival of Youth and Students. The Olympic-style opening performance took place on July 27 in the same stadium that had been used for the opening and closing ceremonies of the 1980 Moscow Olympics five years prior. The spectacle included a procession of delegates from each country, a symbolic lighting of the festival flame, and performances by Soviet dance, gymnastic, and circus groups. This stadium gathering was the first of several over the course of the next week. In the eight days from July 27 to August 3, the youth of the world participated in countless activities, competitions, performances, and discussions that took place all over the city, including Soviet folk dances, festival relay races, painting consultations with renowned Soviet artists, a chess game in which the world chess

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<sup>1</sup> Mike Davidow, *Youth Fights for Its Future: A U.S. Correspondent Speaks about the 12th World Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1986), 43; "Geophysical Experiments in Controlling Weather," *TASS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, August 1, 1985; *Hello 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko (Central Documentary Film Studios, Moscow, 1985), Adam Matthew Digital, [http://www.socialismonfilm.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/N\\_508075\\_12TH\\_WORLD\\_YOUTH\\_FESTIVAL\\_OPENING](http://www.socialismonfilm.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/N_508075_12TH_WORLD_YOUTH_FESTIVAL_OPENING); S. Kolesnikov, "Nakanune Vsemirnogo foruma iunosti," *Pravda*, July 26, 1985; T. Snegova, "Romashka nad stadionom," *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, August 15, 1985.

champion played one thousand chess masters simultaneously, and political conversations about anti-imperialism, peace, and the future of the world.<sup>2</sup>

In the Soviet Union, politics and culture went hand in hand. Perhaps no topics in Soviet history exemplify this relationship better than those that relate to Soviet “mega-events.” The term “mega-event” refers to events of international scale that are accompanied by significant media coverage and widespread impacts in the realms of tourism, economics, and the host country’s infrastructure.<sup>3</sup> The Soviet mega-events that historians have widely studied include the Sixth World Festival of Youth and Students that took place in Moscow in 1957, and the 1980 Moscow Summer Olympics. The final mega-event of the Soviet system, and the one that thus far has been largely overlooked by scholars, was the Twelfth World Festival of Youth and Students, which was held in Moscow in 1985. The larger implications—both domestic and international—of the 1985 Moscow festival preparation, festival events themselves, and the festivities’ aftermath, is the subject of this paper. It argues that the 1985 World Festival of Youth and Students was a public ceremony that the Soviet Union used to prove its domestic stability and its role as a leader in the fight for world peace to its own people, its counterparts in the West, and its allies and potential allies in the South and East. The symbols and concrete measures that the Soviet Union used—and the reactions it received to both its internal conditions and attempts at internationalism—were dependent on the audience in question. The differences reflected

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<sup>2</sup> *The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko (Central Documentary Film Studios, Moscow, 1985), Adam Matthew Digital, [http://www.socialismonfilm.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/N\\_508076\\_12TH\\_WORLD\\_YOUTH\\_FESTIVAL\\_MOSCOW](http://www.socialismonfilm.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/N_508076_12TH_WORLD_YOUTH_FESTIVAL_MOSCOW).

<sup>3</sup> Terri Byers, Trevor Slack, and Milena M. Parent, *Key Concepts in Sport Management* (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2012), 102.

the different relations and politics at stake during this important year in Soviet and Cold War history that was characterized by a transition displayed in the festival itself.

Even when situating the 1985 Moscow festivities in the context of other Soviet mega-events, the youth festival remains wholly unique and significant to historical study. Like the others before it, this mega-event speaks to universal ideas about the interplay between culture and politics, and the domestic and the international, during times of political tensions. However, one of the important ways in which the 1985 World Festival of Youth and Students differed from the 1980 Olympics was the emphasis on youth. Youth represented the future of the Soviet Union, and therefore a successful youth festival was indicative of a successful future for the Soviet state and its people. Related to this, the 1985 event took place just months after the appointment of a new Soviet leader, and the Soviet state had to ensure that its stability and future path were unquestionable in the midst of the unparalleled international scrutiny. Mega-events in general put the host country on display for all in the world to see, but in 1985, the Soviet Union had a great deal to prove. In this way, the 1985 youth festival tells a different story than both the 1980 Olympics and 1957 youth festival because of the pivotal year in which it was held. The festival must be studied in conversation with the previous World Festivals of Youth and Students and other related historiographical themes in Soviet and Cold War history to fully understand its implications, but at the same time, it should be recognized as holding a place in history not quite like any other.

## **The World Festivals of Youth and Students**

The first World Festival of Youth and Students took place after the Second World War in an attempt by international youth organizations to promote world peace amongst the members of the younger generations of the world. In a World Peace Meeting held by members of these international youth organizations, young people of the world began making plans for the first festival, which was to be held in Prague in 1947. The festival has taken place every few years since, originally being held every other year, and becoming more sporadic as time went on. The tradition continues today, with the most recent festival having taken place in Sochi, Russia in 2017. The World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) and the International Union of Students (IUS) head the events, although each festival is also subject, above all, to the decisions made by the planning committee of the host country. For example, the Komsomol was the driving organizational force behind both the 1957 and the 1985 Moscow youth festivals. The Komsomol, or the All-Union Leninist Young Communist League, was independent of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), but was a political organization of Soviet youth that worked closely with the state and the CPSU to promote communist ideals and organize youth activities throughout the Soviet Union. All of the international festivals have included cultural events, athletic competitions, and political forums where delegates have had the opportunity to discuss prominent issues affecting the world and threatening peace, including topics such as imperialism, apartheid, nuclear weapons, and the environment. Although over the years the festivals have been attended by delegations from all around the world, including capitalist and socialist countries from the West, East, and South, the festivals of the Cold War era

were known to be socialist events with close ties to the Soviet Union. The first five festivals were hosted by Soviet satellite states, the sixth was hosted by the Soviet Union itself, the seventh and eighth were hosted by Austria and Finland respectively, who, at the time, were on friendly terms with the Soviet Union, the following two were again hosted by Soviet satellite states, and the eleventh festival was hosted by Cuba under Fidel Castro.<sup>4</sup> In the first decades of the festivals, participants were indeed primarily members of communist or democratic youth leagues, but in the 1960s and 1970s, the political backgrounds of festival participants expanded to include other leftist organizations, liberals, and even some conservative groups, all of these youths joining together to fight the common enemy of imperialism.<sup>5</sup> Still, during this time, the WFDY and IUS were widely considered to have simply been Soviet front-organizations, under the jurisdiction of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.<sup>6</sup> It is undeniable that the Soviet Union itself had a large presence at each festival and widely broadcasted its support for the festival movement as a whole. In the Global South and Far East, countries gave a significant amount of media attention to the festivals and their own delegates who attended as well. Meanwhile, the West, and the United States most notably, tended to give very little attention to the festivals, and some countries even tried discouraging their citizens from attending, claiming there to be danger and rampant propaganda waiting for them at the events. The Twelfth World Festival of 1985 was intended to be held in a Western country—with France standing as the top

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<sup>4</sup> Vladimir Aksenov, Andrei Ogorodnev, and George Wood, *Looking Forward to the 12th World Youth Festival* (Moscow: Novosti Press, 1985), 13-16; Davidow, *Youth Fights for Its Future*, 55-60.

<sup>5</sup> Pia Koivunen, "Overcoming Cold War Boundaries at the World Youth Festivals," In *Reassessing Cold War Europe*, edited by Sari Autio-Saraso and Miklóssy Katalin, 175-92 (London: Routledge, 2013), 178.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

option—but when it became clear that no Western country was willing to take on the festival, the Soviet Union stepped in and offered to host the festival for a second time, not having done so since 1957.<sup>7</sup>

As a whole, the festival movement was much more important to the Soviet Union than it was to the United States or the rest of the West. In a newspaper article reflecting on the 1985 festival a few weeks after its end, the Soviets revealed their own reason behind their investment in the festival movement, saying:

The experience of the XII World Festival with particular clarity showed that mass theatrical performances and festivals are one of the most effective forms of propaganda and political, aesthetic and ethical education of the masses, especially young people. These presentations harmoniously combine political rally and collective rest, and present the functions of enlightenment and entertainment. We see here a synthesis of the set spectacle and amateur activity of the masses, an alloy of ritual and game improvisation. For the participants and the audience, the mass performance is primarily an act of collaborative creativity and a way of self-expression.<sup>8</sup>

The Soviet state believed that the festivals were an effective way to instill specific ideas into the youth of the world, particularly because they seamlessly combined education and entertainment. This explanation ties into the idea of the Soviet Union as a “propaganda state,” as described by historian David Brandenberger. In his book *Propaganda State in Crisis: Soviet Ideology, Indoctrination, and Terror under Stalin, 1927-1941*, Brandenberger states that the Soviet system distinguished itself “by its co-option and harnessing of mass culture, educational institutions, and press for the purpose of popular

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<sup>7</sup> *Soviet Active Measures: The 12th World Youth Festival in Moscow* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 1985), 8.

<sup>8</sup> A. Silin, “Ploshchadi nashi palitry: Itogi i uroki kul'turnoi programmy festivalia,” *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, August 22, 1985.

indoctrination.”<sup>9</sup> Brandenberger defines indoctrination as a “persuasive process by which ideology is inculcated in the popular mind by means of propaganda and a pervasive political culture,”<sup>10</sup> and propaganda as a term that means a “deliberate and concerted attempt to use political sloganeering, imagery, and iconography in order to advance a systemic message designed to influence and shape popular beliefs, attitudes and behavior.”<sup>11</sup> Although his work focuses on the Stalin era, Brandenberger’s definitions of indoctrination and propaganda are general and neutral, and therefore valid in the study of later years in the Soviet Union as well. In other words, using Brandenberger’s analysis of the ideas of mass culture, ideology, and propaganda, the Soviet role in the festival movement can be seen as a form of propaganda and a way for the Soviet Union to attempt to control the domestic and international world. In her book, *Enemy Number One: The United States of America in Soviet Ideology and Propaganda, 1945-1959*, Rósa Magnúsdóttir similarly argues that the World Youth Festivals were an opportunity for the Soviet state to prove the superiority of socialism and show that the Soviet Union was worthy of its superpower status. She continues on to say that the United States decided to largely ignore the festivals—acknowledging them only to critique—because by presenting itself as an alternative system, the Soviet Union was already acknowledging the United States, making “enemy number one omnipresent in the Soviet showcasing of socialist culture.” The United States was able to employ an expansive strategy, capitalizing upon a

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<sup>9</sup> David Brandenberger, *Propaganda State in Crisis: Soviet Ideology, Indoctrination, and Terror under Stalin, 1927-1941* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 5.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

situation in which it received international recognition without trying.<sup>12</sup> Ideologically, the Soviet Union's use of the international festivals was also connected to the idea of worldwide communist revolution, which was a motivation that the United States and the West did not have.<sup>13</sup> Overall, the United States and West also simply did not have the same “need” to prove and promote themselves on the international stage—as well as their respective domestic stages—in the post-World War II, Cold War world.

The Sixth World Festival of Youth and Students that took place in Moscow in 1957 was the precursor to the 1985 Moscow festival, and it was an influential event for both the Soviet people and the rest of the world. Historians have delved into the subject of the 1957 festival, studying it in relation to “the Thaw” era of Soviet history, which was a period of relative openness that took place under Khrushchev and was characterized by efforts to “de-Stalinize” the Soviet system. Researchers have primarily focused on how the festival sparked the “Westernization” of Soviet youth that continued throughout the remaining decades of the Soviet Union's existence. The Soviet Union opened its doors after years of Stalinist isolationist policy, and in turn the Soviet youth were exposed to fashion, music, dances, and ideas that they had not known previously. Youth counterculture in the Soviet Union grew after the festival, and even model members of the Komsomol were intrigued by Western culture. Some scholars have argued that this “Thaw generation” helped contribute to the eventual breakdown of the Soviet Union because its exposure to Western

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<sup>12</sup> Rósa Magnúsdóttir, *Enemy Number One: The United States of America in Soviet Ideology and Propaganda, 1945-1959* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 111.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.



culture ruined important ideas and images put forward by the Soviet state.<sup>14</sup> Historians have also looked at how Western festival delegates were pleasantly surprised by what they encountered in Moscow and while interacting with the Soviet people, for it greatly contrasted what they had been told about the repressive Soviet state.<sup>15</sup> The overall purpose of the 1957 festival, according to the Komsomol general secretary at the time—Aleksandr Shelpin—was to “attract new strata of young people to the struggle for peace, to propagate abroad the successes of the Soviet Union and its peace-loving politics.”<sup>16</sup> The 1957 festival was Soviet cultural diplomacy at work, and serves as one of the best examples of the Soviet Union’s international cultural efforts.

The 1985 World Festival of Youth and Students was—in a way similar to the 1957 festival—considered to be a mass public spectacle of great domestic and international significance. The 1985 festival was an eight-day event that started on July 27 and lasted until August 3. The festival slogan was “For Anti-Imperialist Solidarity, Peace, and Friendship!” which was the same phrase used for the previous two World Festivals of Youth and Students, and that would be used for the following two as well. Although the 1957 Moscow festival still stands as the youth festival with the largest number of participants, the 1985 festival was among the biggest, with approximately 26,000 delegates and 157 countries represented. Each day of the festival had a different theme, including a

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<sup>14</sup> Stephen V. Bittner, *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw: Experience and Memory in Moscow's Arbat* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2008); Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> Anthony Cash, “Moscow Summer Nights: Impressions of the 1957 International Festival of Youth and Students,” *The East-West Review* 14, no. 38 (June 30, 2015): 14.

<sup>16</sup> Pia Koivunen, “The 1957 Moscow Youth Festival: Propagating a New, Peaceful Image of the Soviet Union,” In *Soviet State and Society Under Nikita Khrushchev*, edited by Melanie Ilic and Jeremy Smith, 46–65 (London: Routledge, 2009), 47.

day to mark the fortieth anniversary of the defeat of Nazi fascism and Japanese militarism in World War II, a day to express solidarity with countries of the Global South, and a day to honor the Soviet Union as the host of the festival. Events included a performance of *Swan Lake* by the Bolshoi Ballet, a “Relay for Peace” race, and an “anti-imperialist tribunal” during which imperialism was “put on trial,” but there were hundreds of events that took place on each day of the festival and—as the Soviets were proud to proclaim—it would have taken years to see and participate in everything that the festival offered.<sup>17</sup> Historians have yet to begin studying the 1985 festival in earnest, and therefore there can be little discussion of the historiography of the festival itself. A single article written about the Twelfth World Festival of Youth and Students discusses the festival as a “swan song” to other Soviet mega-events, and argues that the festival both reinforced and defied Western expectations.<sup>18</sup> Beyond that, while there is little about the festival, much more can be said about several historiographical themes that run throughout the study of the last Soviet mega-event. These include the ideas of late socialism, youth culture, and internationalism in the Soviet Union. Such themes provide the necessary context for understanding not only the festival in and of itself, but its lasting impact and importance.

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<sup>17</sup> *The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko; *The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival: Till We Meet Again*, directed by A. Opryshko (Central Documentary Film Studios, Moscow, 1985), Adam Matthew Digital, [http://www.socialismonfilm.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/N\\_508074\\_12TH\\_WORLD\\_YOUTH\\_FESTIVAL\\_CLOSING](http://www.socialismonfilm.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/N_508074_12TH_WORLD_YOUTH_FESTIVAL_CLOSING).

<sup>18</sup> Aleksei Dmitrevich Popov, “Poslednee sovetskoe megasobytie: XII Vsemirnyi festival’ molodezhi i studentov 1985 goda v Moskve,” *Noveishaia istoriia Rossii* 8, no. 4 (2018): 1027.

## **Late Socialism in the Soviet Union**

The 1985 Moscow Festival must be understood within the context of the “late socialism” period of the Soviet Union. The Soviet era of late socialism usually refers to the late 1960s through the first half of the 1980s, which was the post-Stalin era of relative stability. The period is often discussed in reference to its problems, which included those of political, economic, and social natures. The Soviet economy essentially stopped growing during the 1970s. There was rampant political corruption, the black market grew, and improving the availability of consumer goods was an ongoing battle. However, not everything was as bleak as many believe and as some historians have made it seem. The problems were obvious, but the standard of living for the average Soviet actually improved during this time, and Soviet society is thought to have reached “maturity.” Education and professionalism were strong, and life was generally stable, for this period was not marked by the burden of revolution, rapid change, a world war, or attempts to fix a Stalinized system.

1985 is a particularly interesting year in the context of the late Soviet Union, for it was a year of transition. Most who discuss the late Soviet Union talk about the late 1960s until 1985, and then 1985 to 1991. 1985 is a year that is put into two different categories—the general period of late socialism, and the era of Gorbachev reforms. For the first months of 1985, Konstantin Chernenko was the leader of the Soviet Union. However, his death in March then led to the appointment of Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev’s time in power is characterized by his policies of openness and economic restructuring. These ideas did not exist in full force in 1985, but Gorbachev did begin reforms in this year, which included a

renewed alcohol program for Soviet citizens and attempts to lessen the international tensions of the Cold War. The latter has implications for the youth festival, as does this entire idea that the Soviet Union in 1985 belonged to two different eras.

Historians have made a variety of arguments about late socialism in the Soviet Union and what it meant for the Soviet state and people. Some historians have described the period as one of stagnation—both economic and societal—and have also focused on ideas such as political corruption, dissidents, and general discontent.<sup>19</sup> Others have argued for the idea of stability instead of stagnation, focusing on how Soviet socialist society matured as a whole during this time.<sup>20</sup> In his studies, anthropologist Alexei Yurchak has made the important assertion that the idea of stagnation versus stability is more complicated than most think, and that the Soviets overwhelmingly did not expect the Soviet Union to fall during the era of late socialism, although it was not altogether unsurprising at the same time. Yurchak argues that Soviet citizens knew of their system’s troubles, but still believed it to be immutable and expected it to last for years to come.<sup>21</sup> In her doctoral dissertation, Courtney Doucette pushes back against Yurchak by using public letters written during the Gorbachev years to show that Soviets were demanding improvements and reform and therefore did not accept the unchanging nature of the Soviet structure blindly.<sup>22</sup> Gorbachev’s time in power and reforms have inspired many other studies as well, with

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<sup>19</sup> Edwin Bacon and Mark Sandle, eds., *Brezhnev Reconsidered* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

<sup>20</sup> Neringa Klumbytė and Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, eds., *Soviet Society in the Era of Late Socialism, 1964-1985* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014).

<sup>21</sup> Alexei Yurchak, “The Cynical Reason of Late Socialism: Power, Pretense, and the *Anekdot*,” *Public Culture* 9, no. 2 (January 1997): 161–88; Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*.

<sup>22</sup> Courtney Doucette, “Perestroika: The Last Attempt to Create the New Soviet Person,” *Rutgers University Library*, 2017. <https://rucore.libraries.rutgers.edu/rutgers-lib/53586/>.

some scholars, such as political scientist Archie Brown, studying how Gorbachev the man altered the course of the Soviet Union,<sup>23</sup> and others, like historian Stephen Kotkin, arguing instead that long-term economic factors were the primary cause of the reforms and collapse that took place under Gorbachev.<sup>24</sup> The 1985-1991 period of Soviet history is not ever necessarily regarded as a break from any of the problems of the period of late socialism that preceded it, but is known for its rapid reform and blatant efforts to improve the Soviet Union as a whole.

1985 is the transitional year that belongs to both the last socialist period and the Gorbachev years, and one of the things that this paper tries to do is show that this transition was displayed in the festival itself, for the festival and its surrounding circumstances—in their domestic implications as well as their international—were a reflection of the former period as well as of the upcoming years. In contrast to the works and scholars listed above, this paper focuses less on the idea of the eventual Soviet collapse, and more on the ways in which the Soviet Union and the Cold War were still functioning in their final years. It discusses notions of both stagnation and stability, but instead of examining Soviet citizens' opinions on the system in which they lived, it looks at the ways in which the Soviet state was still trying to establish narratives domestically and internationally. The 1985 international youth festival was a mass public spectacle defined by these attempts.

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<sup>23</sup> Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>24</sup> Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

## Soviet Youth Culture

Youth culture in the late Soviet Union is a related theme that is an integral part of studying the 1985 youth festival in Moscow. The “culture” of post-Stalin youth in the Soviet Union varied its form with each different group that existed. Komsomol members made up a large portion of Soviet youth, and although they may have dabbled in Western culture, they, for the most part, were citizens who abided by general Soviet state expectations. A youth counterculture was present as well, which included the “*stiliagi*”—youth who purposefully embraced Western culture. There were also dissidents and hooligans whose actions were wholly separate from anything relating to the West, and law-abiding young individuals who were not necessarily involved in the Komsomol. The Soviet state valued youth, and to help ensure that they were raised in the correct image of Soviet servitude, the state and Komsomol had a hand in most leisure activities and the education that young people received in school.<sup>25</sup> During his short time as leader of the Soviet Union in the early 1980s, Konstantin Chernenko initiated Komsomol and education reform in the attempt to improve the molding of youth Soviet citizens and encourage more active participation of youth in Soviet society. Part of these reforms included allowing the Communist Party to have a more visible hand in Komsomol activities, which was important for the youth festival because it meant that there was no question as to the Soviet state’s involvement in the festival planning.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Hilary Pilkington, *Russia’s Youth and Its Culture: A Nation’s Constructors and Constructed* (London: Routledge, 1994); Gleb Tsipursky, *Socialist Fun: Youth, Consumption, and State-Sponsored Popular Culture in the Soviet Union, 1945-1970* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016).

<sup>26</sup> Konstantin Chernenko, “Uchastnikam mezhdunarodnoi vstrechi trudiashcheisia molodezhi 'Za pravo na trud, za pravo na zhizn',” *Izvestiia*, October 29, 1984; “Grishin Address,” *Moskovskaia pravda (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, January 13, 1985; “Vernyi pomoshchnik partii,” *Sovetskaia*

Scholars have long been interested in the impact of youth culture on the late Soviet Union, and the impact of the late Soviet Union on youth culture. Much of the scholarship on youth culture in the late Soviet period revolves around the influence of Western culture on Soviet youth. Soviet youth interactions with the Global South are much less often considered, which is something that Tobias Rupprecht laments in his discussion of the 1957 Moscow festival in his book on Soviet relations with Latin America after Stalin.<sup>27</sup> A bit of work has been done on Soviet youth interactions with others in the Eastern bloc, but the arguments once again tend to boil down to ideas of Westernization. Rachel Applebaum, for example, studies the “friendship project” that existed between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, and she argues that while the project was successful in the way that it increased contact between the youth in both countries, it ended up undermining Soviet goals in the end because Soviet youth were exposed to more Western culture as Czechoslovakia began moving closer toward the West.<sup>28</sup> Late socialist youth culture as a whole was actually a topic of study before the Soviet Union even ended, with James Riordan being one scholar who studied Soviet youth and youth sports during the late Soviet era, drawing on his own experiences in the Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1980s. In his works about Soviet youth culture, he also centers his arguments around the idea of a “Western infiltration” of Soviet youth, asserting that growing generational tensions and the

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*kul'tura*, May 19, 1984; “Vstrecha K. U. Chernenko s rukovoditeliami molodezhnykh organizatsii sotsialisticheskikh stran,” *Izvestiia*, November 6, 1984.

<sup>27</sup> Tobias Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin: Interaction and Exchange Between the USSR and Latin America During the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 51-57.

<sup>28</sup> Rachel Applebaum, *Empire of Friends: Soviet Power and Socialist Internationalism in Cold War Czechoslovakia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019); Rachel Applebaum, “The Friendship Project: Socialist Internationalism in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia in the 1950s and 1960s,” *Slavic Review* 74, no. 3 (2015): 484–507.

rise of politically active and unruly youth were the result of such influences.<sup>29</sup> Other Western researchers during the Cold War discussed the Soviet Union as undergoing a “youth crisis” in the early 1980s. The Department of State issued reports about the unruly, Westernized youth and the measures that the Soviet Union was taking to regain control, discussing the 1985 festival as part of this process.<sup>30</sup>

This paper looks at the ways in which the Soviet Union portrayed its own youth during the festival process, as well as the ways in which foreign powers reacted to and politicized those portrayals. The Westernization of Soviet youth is discussed, but examining the details of this process is not the focus, for the paper is more about official Soviet measures and the ways in which the Cold War thrived off of the very notion that the Soviet Union may have been losing control over its own citizens and future. The festival, while an international event, is shown as also having been a way in which the Soviet state attempted to prove its control over its domestic sphere to Soviets and foreigners alike. Since youth were the future of the Soviet Union, the way in which their standing was perceived played an important role in this process.

### **Soviet Internationalism**

In addition, and in relation, to the domestic-oriented themes of late socialism and Soviet youth culture, Soviet internationalism is another essential concept involved in the study of the 1985 Moscow festival. While the term “internationalism” can include political and economic initiatives, this paper primarily looks at Soviet cultural internationalism, or

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<sup>29</sup> Jim Riordan, *Soviet Youth Culture* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989); Jim Riordan, “Soviet Youth: Pioneers of Change,” *Soviet Studies* 40, no. 4 (1988): 556–72.

<sup>30</sup> *Soviet Active Measures*, 1-2.



“cultural diplomacy,” and how the Soviet Union’s foreign youth initiatives fit into this concept. Soviet attempts at cultural internationalism included participation in cultural events and performances around the world, publishing Soviet newspapers in different languages in various countries, opening Soviet schools to foreign students, hosting youth exchanges and tourism opportunities, establishing “friendship” alliances with countries of the Eastern Bloc and Global South, and more.<sup>31</sup> As a whole, the Soviet Union maintained a different dynamic with the West than it did with the Global South or with the Eastern Bloc. When addressing the West in a cultural internationalist sense, the Soviet Union stressed the importance of working towards cooperation despite political tensions, within the Eastern bloc the Soviet Union stressed similarities, and in regard to the Global South, the Soviet Union broadcasted its solidarity in the fight against imperialism and capitalist structures. All of these ideas are made obvious in the preparation for the 1985 festival, the festival itself, and the aftermath of the festivities.

The questions associated with Soviet internationalism in the post-Stalin, late socialist stage of the Soviet Union have drawn in a number of historians. Often, scholars have argued that Soviet attempts at internationalism and cultural exchange ended up undermining Soviet intentions, because as Soviet citizens had more exposure to other cultures, they became hungrier for change. This idea comes up in works dealing with the 1957 World Youth Festival and the Westernization of Soviet youth.<sup>32</sup> The same arguments

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<sup>31</sup> Robert Hornsby, “The Enemy Within? The Komsomol and Foreign Youth Inside the Post-Stalin Soviet Union, 1957–1985,” *Past & Present* 232, no. 1 (2016): 237–78; Robert Hornsby, “The Post-Stalin Komsomol and the Soviet Fight for Third World Youth,” *Cold War History* 16, no. 1 (September 2015): 83–100.

<sup>32</sup> Koivunen, “The 1957 Moscow Youth Festival,” 46–65; Margaret Peacock, “The Perils of Building Cold War Consensus at the 1957 Moscow World Festival of Youth and Students,” *Cold War History* 12, no. 3

and ideas are present in works about Soviet internationalism in the Eastern Bloc, like Rachel Applebaum's work on Czechoslovakian-Soviet exchange.<sup>33</sup> However, the scholars that study Soviet relations with the Global South tell a different story. In his book *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin: Interaction and Exchange Between the USSR and Latin America During the Cold War*, Tobias Rupprecht asserts that Soviet internationalism is often regarded as a failure by Western scholars, but the super power's internationalism looked very different from the perspective of the South. He, in his discussion of Latin America's participation in the 1957 Moscow youth festival, also challenges his readers to consider for whom the festival was intended. He asserts that although it is most often studied in its Western implications, the festival was just as much to reassure Soviet citizens of the Soviet Union's standing on the world stage and to "win over" the Global South.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, Robert Hornsby is a scholar who discusses foreign youth initiatives in the Soviet Union and also focuses on the Cold War "fight for the Third World" that resulted in Soviet relationships with the Global South looking much different than those maintained with the West.<sup>35</sup>

This paper seeks to not neglect any side, looking at how Soviet internationalism differed between the West, East, and South throughout the events of the 1985 festival, both

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(February 22, 2012): 519-20; Kristin Roth-Ey, "Loose Girls on the Loose?: Sex, Propaganda and the 1957 Youth Festival," In *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, edited by Melanie Ilic, Susan Reid, and Lynne Attwood, 75-95 (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Gleb Tsipursky, "Coercion and Consumption: The Khrushchev Leadership's Ruling Style in the Campaign against 'Westernized' Youth, 1954-1964," In *Youth and Rock in the Soviet Bloc: Youth Cultures, Music, and the State in Russia and Eastern Europe*, edited by William Jay Risch, 55-70 (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015).

<sup>33</sup> Applebaum, *Empire of Friends*; Applebaum, "The Friendship Project."

<sup>34</sup> Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin*.

<sup>35</sup> Hornsby, "The Enemy Within;" Hornsby, "The Post-Stalin Komsomol."

in Soviet approach and in foreign reaction. It examines the significance of the rhetoric, symbolism, and spectacle used by the Soviet Union to attract foreigners, showing that the Soviet Union varied the symbols and measures that it used with each of its target audiences, and arguing that both these Soviet attempts at internationalism and the reactions it received reflected the surrounding international political conditions. The Cold War's East-West dynamic that has guided much of the scholarship on Soviet internationalism is certainly present in this paper, but the work also delves into Rupprecht's question of for whom the festival was intended. It attempts to show that the 1985 Soviet festival was a mega-event with implications for all regions of the world, for it was a time during which the international collided with the domestic, and the cultural and political were inseparable as well.

This work examines the importance of the 1985 World Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow both domestically and internationally. The themes of late socialism, youth culture, and internationalism guide the work and are present in each chapter. The focus of the first chapter is Soviet internationalism, and it explores Cold War tensions and cultural diplomacy. The chapter analyzes Soviet youth cultural relations with the West, East, and Global South, and also grapples with Soviet cultural internationalism more broadly, looking at why the Soviet Union chose to focus on certain themes and the degree to which such attempts to appeal to foreigners were successful. The second chapter turns to the domestic situation in the Soviet Union, lending itself most heavily to the themes of late socialism and Soviet youth culture. The chapter explores the periodization of the year 1985, as well as the problems of late socialism and the way in which they were interpreted

by both the Soviet Union and its foreign counterparts. Prominent ideas that make their way into both chapters and thus serve to unite them even further include Soviet anti-imperialist policy, the legacy of World War II, Soviet views on Zionism and policies towards their own Jewish citizens, and the legacy of previous Soviet mega-events like the 1957 World Festival of Youth and Students and the 1980 Moscow Summer Olympics. Primary sources for this paper include film footage of the festival, newspapers, government reports, diary entries, participant memoirs, and more. The Twelfth World Festival of Youth and Students that was held in Moscow in 1985 is not a well-known event today—at least in the West—and may not have had the same impact as other mega-events around the world throughout the years, but one of the intentions of the display of research in this paper is to show that the festival did have great significance in its own time and reflected much larger themes in Soviet and Cold War history. The study of it now can help in understanding crucial aspects of the late Soviet Union and its international relations, which are far from irrelevant when attempting to examine international relations today in their proper context.

## CHAPTER 1: SOVIET INTERNATIONALISM AT WORK

Working on an international mission was an important part of Soviet practices, values, and goals for most of the country's history, and Soviet internationalism was at the heart of the Twelfth World Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow in 1985. While internationalism can refer to principles of international cooperation and the common good in general, this chapter looks at internationalism as it relates to culture, meaning that it examines the ways in which the Soviet Union attempted to utilize culture to promote international cooperation, and create or reinforce international appeal. In this view of the term, internationalism is essentially equivalent to "cultural diplomacy," and is a form of "soft power"—meaning that it is separate from military and economic "hard power"—that seeks to share ideas and spread appeal abroad by means of cultural events and exchanges. Cultural diplomacy became a tool used by both sides of the Cold War, especially in the years following Stalin's death and general policy of isolationism. Much of Soviet cultural internationalism revolved around youth. It included Soviet youth traveling to other countries to spread Soviet arts and ideas, and also included invitations being extended to the youth of other nations to visit and study in the Soviet Union.<sup>36</sup> The tradition of the World Festivals of Youths and Students perfectly fit into ideas of Soviet cultural internationalism. Even at the festivals that the Soviet Union did not host, the country was able to display Soviet abilities through its delegates who competed in art and sports competitions. The Soviet World Youth Festivals of 1957 and 1985 provided an opportunity for the Soviet Union to practice internationalism on an even greater scale, for the country's

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<sup>36</sup> Hornsby, "The Enemy Within;" Hornsby, "The Post-Stalin Komsomol."

foreign audience was able to witness Soviet life and culture from the inside. The goal of the Soviet Union during these events—and in the context of all of its attempts at cultural diplomacy—was to show the other countries of the world that the Soviet Union was a leader in culture, ideology, and competition. Mega-events that are international in nature, like the Olympics or the World Festivals of Youths and Students, preach equality and peace for all, but host countries always work to balance these pure international ideas with their own national intentions. Cultural diplomacy, or internationalism, serves as an opportunity for a nation to prove its willingness to cooperate and collaborate internationally in matters of education, arts, and more, but it is also intended to reinforce the position of the user on the world stage. The 1985 Moscow World Festival of Youth and Students was the Soviet Union's last mega-event, and last large-scale display of cultural power and appeal.

The 1985 Moscow youth festival was laden with themes and symbols that played into the Soviet Union's attempts at internationalism. Although Soviet displays of cultural power varied in their forms and applications, there were certain ideas to which the Soviet Union often seemed to return. One example of this is that, when addressing its foreign counterparts, the Soviet Union often referred back to past periods of cooperation. For example, the Soviet Union—and actually post-Soviet Russia as well—on numerous occasions, referenced the “lessons of international cooperation from World War II.” However, perhaps contrary to popular belief, the late Soviet Union did not exclusively rely on the legacy of its past, instead also putting forward notions of the present and the future. In regard to the former, the Soviet Union tended to make references to modern technological advancements, and for the latter, specifically by the mid-1980s, the Soviet

Union often spoke of the importance of ushering in a new era of international peace and cooperation, devoid of the threat of nuclear war. Additionally, in such cases of internationalism in which the Soviet Union stressed the idea of the past, present, or future, the power also emphasized its own role within each of those contexts. The Soviet Union made it clear that World War II would not have been won without them, that the Soviet Union was a leader in the technological and scientific advancements of the day, and the Soviet Union would be the force leading the world into a new era of peace. These general ideas of the Soviet Union referencing the past, present, and future, and the Soviet Union discussing international cooperation at the same time as Soviet power, were evident in the internationalism of the Moscow youth festival. They were present in the central festival themes, as well as the specific symbols and performances that were visual displays of these themes. The first part of this chapter examines the themes and symbols themselves, while the second section looks at the concrete ways in which the Soviets utilized these ideas and appealed to specific regions of the world before and during the festival.

### **Themes**

Anti-imperialism was a central focus of the festival, and it contributed to the image that the Soviet Union wished to put forward of itself. Anti-imperialism had been a key component of the Soviet Union's internationalism since its inception, for Lenin had labeled imperialism as the "highest stage of capitalism" in 1917,<sup>37</sup> and at the early Communist International meetings during the 1920s—during which communist groups around the

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<sup>37</sup> Vladimir Lenin, "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism, 1917," *Marxists Internet Archive*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/>.

world would gather under the direction of the Soviet Union—combatting imperialism was a reoccurring topic.<sup>38</sup> At several of the international youth festivals prior to that which took place in Moscow in 1985, anti-imperialism was part of the festival slogan, showing that it was still a matter of importance for countries of the post-World War II world. The 1985 youth festival continued with the anti-imperialism tradition, the theme pervading through virtually everything. The festival honored the memory of World War II and the defeat of Nazi fascism and Japanese militarism, and this concept was connected to anti-imperialism in the way that the festival labeled imperialism as “modern fascism.”<sup>39</sup> The festival hosted an anti-imperialist tribunal, in which imperialism was “put on trial,” and there were also multiple “rallies of solidarity” with the regions of the world who were being subject to imperialism in its various forms. An anti-imperialist platform was a way for the Soviet Union to appeal to the other countries of the world—most notably the countries of the Global South—by investing in a common mission and expressing solidarity and support for the nations’ current struggles. The Soviet Union also made clear its role as a leading force in the struggle against imperialism, ready to help lesser prepared nations defend their freedom and ready to confront the United States and NATO-led imperialist forces, simply by highlighting that it was the Cold War superpower that was willing to direct its extensive resources towards the fight for peace. However, in the interest of appealing to international audiences, the Soviet Union had to make clear that it “did not require superiority,” “was not striving for anything,” and was not intending to “encroach on the security of any

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<sup>38</sup> Jacob A. Zumoff, *The Communist International and US Communism, 1919-1929* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2015).

<sup>39</sup> Popov, “Poslednee sovetskoe megasobytie,” 1021.



country, East or West.”<sup>40</sup> The prominent anti-imperialist theme of the Twelfth World Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow allowed the Soviet Union to express its willingness to cooperate with nations over a prominent, ongoing issue, at the same time that it allowed the Soviet Union to express and display its own power and abilities to do such a thing. The festival was an international cultural event during which the Soviet state was able to make this political point.

1985 marked forty years since the end of World War II, and this anniversary played an important role in festival events. World War II had a place of great importance in Soviet history and memory. Soviets labeled World War II their “Great Patriotic War,” and it was a source of pride, honor, and victory for the country as a whole.<sup>41</sup> The anniversary of the end of the war meant that 1985 contained large-scale celebrations all over Europe, and not least of all in the Soviet Union.<sup>42</sup> The Soviet Union held its own celebrations of the anniversary in May,<sup>43</sup> but the memory of World War II was also woven into the festival. On the second day of the festival there was an assembly held in Dynamo Stadium in Moscow, during which there were artistic reenactments of World War II events.<sup>44</sup> Veterans of the war were honored throughout the festival, with panel discussions being held with

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<sup>40</sup> “Tesnee iunosti riady: Navstrechu Vsemirnomu festivaliu molodezhi i studentov,” *Pravda*, November 3, 1984.

<sup>41</sup> Nina Tumarkin, “The Great Patriotic War as Myth and Memory,” *European Review* 11, no. 4 (2003): 595–611.

<sup>42</sup> “Pravda Describes Bloc, Other May Day Celebrations,” *Pravda (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, May 2, 1984.

<sup>43</sup> Ray London, “The World Travel Advisories from Tribune Correspondents,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 17, 1985; M. Spivak, “Novosti filatelii,” *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, May 4, 1985.

<sup>44</sup> Silin, “Ploshchadi nashi palitry;” *The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko.

them as the guests of honor,<sup>45</sup> and there was also considerable press prior to the festival in which Soviet youth were interviewed and asked what World War II meant to their specific families.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, the Soviet Union published articles about “the lessons of wartime cooperation” in which they discussed the importance of World War II as an example of the ways in which even polarized world powers could find common goals and cooperate against a common enemy.<sup>47</sup> Throughout all of this, the Soviet Union also highlighted its own crucial role in World War II, making it clear that the Soviet Union dominated and ensured success on the Eastern front.<sup>48</sup> Some scholars have described the Soviet Union’s emphasis on its own role in the war as a way in which the Soviet Union was trying to create a “messianic” image of itself on the world stage.<sup>49</sup> The World War II theme of the festival was tied to Soviet internationalism in the way that it harked back to not only a time of victory, but also of international solidarity, and it portrayed the Soviet Union in a positive, dominant light within that context.

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<sup>45</sup> “Second Day Events,” *TASS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 28, 1985; V. Sysoev, “Fashizm ne proidet!” *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, July 30, 1985; “Vstrechi mira i druzhby,” *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, October 24, 1984.

<sup>46</sup> Andrei Pleshchuk, “War and Peace Through the Eyes of Young People,” *Soviet Life*, August 1985.

<sup>47</sup> “Festival Message to World,” *TASS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, August 3, 1985; Vladimir Grigoriev, *World Youth Votes for Peace: On the Results of the 12th World Festival of Youth and Students* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1985), 28-29; “IUS Newsletter on the 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival of Youth and Students – August 1985,” Joseph A. Labadie Collection, Special Collections Research Center, University of Michigan; Pyotr Mikhailov, “The Lessons of Wartime Cooperation (Part 1),” *Soviet Life*, August 1985; Pyotr Mikhailov, “The Lessons of Wartime Cooperation (Part 2),” *Soviet Life*, September 1985; “Moskva priglashaet vnov’,” *Izvestiia*, April 5, 1984; “Obrashchenie k molodezhi i studentam mira,” *Pravda*, August 4, 1985; *Soviet Imperatives for the 1990s: Hearing before the Subcommittee on European Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Ninety-Ninth Congress, First Session, September 12, 1985* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1986), 86-88.

<sup>48</sup> “IUS Newsletter on the 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival of Youth and Students – March 1985,” Joseph A. Labadie Collection, Special Collections Research Center, University of Michigan; Popov, “Poslednee sovetskoe megasobytie,” 1020.

<sup>49</sup> Popov, “Poslednee sovetskoe megasobytie,” 1026.

In relation to the stress on the fortieth anniversary of the end of World War II is the emphasis that was also placed on the anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The bombings were brought up on multiple occasions throughout the festival. A Hiroshima survivor addressed festival delegates during the anti-imperialist tribunal and talked about the horror of nuclear warfare.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, “No More Hiroshimas” was projected in English in Lenin Central Stadium during the opening ceremony, and was the phrase heading a petition that delegates signed expressing their support of putting a stop to nuclear testing.<sup>51</sup> In this way, the youth festival was highlighting a shared tragedy of the past and using it to ask for improved cooperation and peace in contemporary times. In a symbolic and important act during the week of the youth festival, Gorbachev announced a moratorium on nuclear testing in the Soviet Union that would last until the end of the year. In his official statement, Gorbachev made it clear that his hope was to “facilitate the termination of the dangerous competition in building up nuclear arsenals” and to “set a good example.” He urged the United States to follow suit, claiming that a mutual moratorium by the two Cold War powers would set the very best example to all other states possessing nuclear weapons.<sup>52</sup> The announcement took place on July 30, the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, and the official start date for the

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<sup>50</sup> *Peace and Friendship: Our Happiness*, directed by Ivan Garin (Central Documentary Film Studios, Moscow, 1985), Adam Matthew Digital, [http://www.socialismonfilm.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/N\\_508303\\_PEACE\\_AND\\_FRIENDSHIP\\_YOUTH\\_FESTIVAL\\_85](http://www.socialismonfilm.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/N_508303_PEACE_AND_FRIENDSHIP_YOUTH_FESTIVAL_85); Robert Rozhdestvenskii, “Mir: Dlia vsekh i navsegda,” *Izvestiia*, July 27, 1985; *The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko.

<sup>51</sup> *Around the Soviet Union No. 211* (Central Documentary Film Studios, Moscow, 1985), Adam Matthew Digital, [http://www.socialismonfilm.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/N\\_507901\\_SOVIET\\_MAG\\_NO\\_211](http://www.socialismonfilm.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/N_507901_SOVIET_MAG_NO_211); *The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko.

<sup>52</sup> *The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko.

moratorium was August 6, the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima.<sup>53</sup> The Soviet Union's international audience recognized the symbolism of these dates and praised the Soviet Union for its commitment to the path of peace.<sup>54</sup> In this theme of Soviet internationalism, it is possible to recognize the memory of the past, the connection to the present, the successful appeal to the foreign masses, and the portrayal of the Soviet Union as not only a country hoping for peace, but as one ready to lead the way.

The tenth anniversary of the Helsinki Accords was another topic of focus during festival preparation and events. The Helsinki Accords of 1975 marked an attempt to improve relations between the two sides of the Cold War. Thirty-five countries signed the declaration to ease tensions, including the United States, Soviet Union, and all European countries except Albania and Andorra. The declaration did not have any particular political power, for it did not have the binding capabilities of a treaty, but it was a significant work for its symbolic implications.<sup>55</sup> Almost as often as the fortieth anniversary of World War II was mentioned in reference to the festival, there was a reference to the tenth anniversary of the Helsinki Accords. There was also a concert performance at the festival—titled “Europe is Our Common Home”—that featured live music from countries all across Europe and was dedicated to the agreement reached at Helsinki.<sup>56</sup> In building up the importance of the anniversary of a conference and document devoted to peace, the Soviet Union was using the recent past as a way to promote peace in the present day. The Helsinki

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<sup>53</sup> Popov, “Poslednee sovetskoe megasobytie,” 1021.

<sup>54</sup> “Importance of USSR Test Ban Proposal Reiterated,” *Bratislava Pravda (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, August 9, 1985.

<sup>55</sup> Michael Cotey Morgan, *The Final Act: The Helsinki Accords and the Transformation of the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

<sup>56</sup> Silin, “Ploshchadi nashi palitry.”

Accords had connections to the West and not the Global South, and in this way, references to the peacetime cooperation surrounding the Helsinki Accords was a way to appeal directly to the West. The Soviet Union did not even highlight its own importance in the Helsinki Accords in the same way that it did in relation to World War II or anti-imperialism, and this approach was meant to appeal to the West even more, for the Soviet Union was not obviously attempting to assert dominance. However, the Soviet state had an additional reason for emphasizing the Helsinki Accords. Historians have deemed the agreements reached in 1975 a “fatal triumph” for the Soviets. The state broadcasted the meeting to its people as a Cold War triumph that promised peace, but the conference involved the Soviet Union agreeing to citizen protection measures such as the freedoms of press, religion, and movement.<sup>57</sup> By 1985, the Soviet state’s lack of attempt to follow through with these policies had resulted in dissident activity—much of it conducted by youth—in Eastern Europe. For example, in Czechoslovakia there was an initiative called “Charter 77” that lasted from 1976 until after the fall of the Soviet Union. It involved the circulation of an illegal document that criticized the government for failing to take action on matters relating to human rights in the ways that it had promised several times over the years, including with the signing of the document at Helsinki.<sup>58</sup> In addition to promoting peace with the West, utilizing the anniversary of the Helsinki Accords was a way for the

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<sup>57</sup> Gerald R. Ford, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Gerald R. Ford, 1975* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1977), 1030-31; Charles Rhéaume, “Human Beings Over Systems: The Cue from Helsinki,” *International Journal* 63, no. 4 (2008): 979–89; Louis Sell, *From Washington to Moscow: US-Soviet Relations and the Collapse of the USSR* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 63-75.

<sup>58</sup> Jonathan Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent: Charter 77, The Plastic People of the Universe, and Czech Culture under Communism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 152-200.

Soviet state to try to exert control over a narrative that was proving to be problematic within the Soviet Union's own sphere of influence.

The United Nations declared 1985 “International Youth Year,” and this message of youth and solidarity became an important idea in the midst of the festival as well. Prior to the start of 1985, the United Nations established that the year, internationally, should focus on the concerns and betterment of the world's youth.<sup>59</sup> Countries all around the world held their own national youth festivals—and festivals between the youths of two nations, such as the Soviet-Afghan Youth Festival—in late 1984 and early 1985 in honor of the United Nations' declared Youth Year.<sup>60</sup> The Moscow festival was widely regarded as the highlight, and not just by the Soviets themselves.<sup>61</sup> However, there was an international event held in Jamaica in May that was seen as the “capitalist alternative” to the Moscow festival. The Soviet Union's press coverage of the Jamaican event—which officials believed to have been a CIA initiative—was overwhelmingly negative.<sup>62</sup> In the midst of

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<sup>59</sup> Naciones Unidas: Consejo Económico y Social, “Comisión de derechos humanos: 41st período de sesiones, acta resumida de la 25th sesión (segunda parte), celebrada en el Palacio de las Naciones, Ginebra, el jueves 21 de febrero de 1985, a las 18 horas,” (March 19, 1985).

<sup>60</sup> “GDR's Honecker Speaks on Peace at Festival,” *TASS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, June 9, 1984; “Komsomol Leader Greets Chinese Youth Day,” *Moscow International Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, May 4, 1984; “Moscow Notes Preparation for DPRK Youth Festival,” *Moscow International Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, January 31, 1985; “Soviet-Afghan Youth Festival Held in Tajikistan,” *Moscow Television Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, September 15, 1984; “WFDY Delegate Denounces Jamaica Youth Festival,” *TASS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, February 25, 1985.

<sup>61</sup> “Aliyev Comments on Youth Year, Moscow Festival.” *Moscow News (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 14, 1985; Grigoriev, *World Youth Votes for Peace*, 7; “IUS Newsletter on the 12th World Festival of Youth and Students – January 1985,” Joseph A. Labadie Collection, Special Collections Research Center, University of Michigan; “IUS Newsletter – March 1985;” “Moscow Hosts 12th World Festival of Youth and Students,” *Soviet Life*, August 1985; “Nhan Dan Commentary,” *Hanoi Domestic Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 27, 1985.

<sup>62</sup> Simon Anekwe, “600 End Youth Confab,” *New York Amsterdam News*, April 20, 1985; “Commentary on USSR, Jamaica Youth Meetings,” *Moscow World Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, March 16, 1985; “Festival Critics Attacked,” *Komsomol'skaia pravda (Foreign Broadcast*

festival preparations, and throughout the festival itself, that which was taking place in the Soviet Union was put in the context of the International Youth Year as a whole, although it remained decidedly separate from the Jamaican Conference. The Soviet Union aligned its own event and youth population with those of the world, showing international solidarity in the contemporary context. Youth were often the focus of Soviet internationalism, and the Moscow festival within the International Youth Year was a way for the Soviet Union to continue this tradition and try to appeal to those who they saw as the future generation of world leaders.

### **Symbols and Performance**

The opening ceremony of the festival was laden with performances and symbols, and this included a torch-bearing component. The opening ceremony of the Twelfth World Festival of Youth and Students was a spectacle of near-Olympic proportions. The delegations of each country processed into Central Lenin Stadium following their nation's flag, and afterwards the Soviet Union put on a show filled with circus performers, gymnasts, ballet dancers, and more. Images and words were projected onto one side of the stadium, and they included the festival daisy emblem and pleas to unite in the fight against nuclear war and in the protection of the environment. The modeling of the entire opening

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*Information Service Daily Reports*), July 25, 1985; "IUS Newsletter – January 1985;" "IUS Newsletter on the 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival of Youth and Students – February 1985," Joseph A. Labadie Collection, Special Collections Research Center, University of Michigan; "IUS Newsletter – March 1985;" "Jamaica International Youth Conference 'Fiasco'," *TASS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, April 12, 1985; "Jamaica Youth Conference 'Show' Denounced," *TASS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, April 1, 1985; "Komsomol's Mishin Interviewed on Youth Festival," *Sovetskaia Rossiia (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, June 14, 1985; *Soviet Active Measures*, 6; "TASS on CIA, USIA Campaign Against Youth Festival," *TASS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 22, 1985; "WFDY Delegate Denounces Jamaica Youth Festival."

ceremony off of Olympic traditions, and even using the choreographer who worked on the opening ceremony for the 1980 Moscow Olympics,<sup>63</sup> was significant in the way that the Soviet Union saw the Youth Festival as upholding the same values of peace and friendship as the Olympics. The 1985 Moscow festival took place directly after the controversial Olympics of 1980 and 1984. In the midst of the 1984 Soviet boycott of the Los Angeles Olympics, the Soviet Union and its satellite states discussed the idea that the United States was not upholding the Olympic ideals of youth, peace, understanding, and friendship—concepts that aligned directly with the rhetoric of the youth festival.<sup>64</sup> Additionally, like the Olympics, there was a torch-lighting aspect of the start to the festivities. Two torchbearers were selected to carry a torch from the Kremlin into the arena and light the festival flame, and they were the daughter of Yuri Gagarin—the first Soviet cosmonaut in space—and a mine worker from the Urals.<sup>65</sup> The choice of the torch-bearers can be seen as a flex of Soviet success and values, for the mine worker relates to the Soviet Union’s status as a champion of the working class, and Yuri Gagarin’s daughter, who at that time was an advanced university student, shows the progress of the Soviet Union in matters like space, technology, and education. The symbolism of Yuri Gagarin’s daughter was not lost on the Soviet Union’s foreign audience, for there was an American newspaper article later that criticized the fact that the Soviet Union was still relying on the legacy of Yuri as a way of

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<sup>63</sup> Marina Iur'eva, “Tanets rasskazyvaet o Sibiri,” *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, February 5, 1985.

<sup>64</sup> “Hungary Withdrawal Noted,” *TASS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, May 18, 1984; “Olympic Movement, NOC's Decision Defended,” *Rude Pravo (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, May 15, 1984; “Polish Olympic Committee Voices Concerns,” *TASS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, April 14, 1984; “U.S. Propaganda Denounced,” *TASS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, April 17, 1984; “USSR Coach Wants Olympics Transfers from Seoul,” *TASS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, October 30, 1984.

<sup>65</sup> *The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko.



establishing its dominance.<sup>66</sup> With the selection of the torch-bearers, the Soviet Union was invoking notions of traditional Soviet ideals and present and future Soviet advancements. All of this was done for an international audience that was meant to see the grand spectacle of the opening ceremony and recognize the cultural might of the Soviet Union.

The mascot for the festival was a woman dressed in traditional peasant clothing, and the “folk,” or “pastoral,” aspect of Russia reappeared throughout the festival. The festival mascot was named “Katiusha,” and was a typical representation of a traditional Russian young adult female peasant. Katiusha was present on the majority of festival souvenirs and merchandise,<sup>67</sup> and could be seen walking about the festival throughout the week of festivities.<sup>68</sup> Katiusha’s hat and skirt were depicted to look like the petals of the traditional World Festival of Youth and Students daisy symbol, tying a traditional Soviet image in with the international image of the festival.<sup>69</sup> “Katiusha” was also the name of a popular patriotic song of the World War II era and became the nickname for a rocket launcher used by the Soviet army in World War II as a result, which further speaks to the festival’s memorialization of their Great Patriotic War.<sup>70</sup> The idea of traditional Soviet “folk” images and experiences appeared elsewhere in the festival as well. The opening and closing ceremonies saw performances by Soviet folk groups and included the traditional

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<sup>66</sup> Jack Redden, “Soviets Still High on Yuri Gagarin,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 20, 1986.

<sup>67</sup> IUS Newsletter on the 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival of Youth and Students – June 1985,” Joseph A. Labadie Collection, Special Collections Research Center, University of Michigan.

<sup>68</sup> *The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko.

<sup>69</sup> “IUS Newsletter – June 1985.”

<sup>70</sup> James Von Geldern and Richard Stites, eds., *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, Poems, Songs, Movies, Plays, and Folklore, 1917-1953* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), 315; Steve Zaloga and James Grandsen, *Soviet Tanks and Combat Vehicles of World War Two* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1984), 150-153.

dances of different nationalities located within the Soviet Union.<sup>71</sup> There was a “folk festival” in Kolomenskoe that served as part of the program for the World Festival of Youth and Students, and it involved a large performance of traditional dances performed by Soviet citizens, as well as traditional dances performed by delegates from other countries. The folk festival was a stand-out memory for many youth festival delegates, with it being considered one of the most “colorful” and “remarkable” events, and a “gift to the spectators.”<sup>72</sup> With this idea of the “folk,” the Soviet Union had the opportunity to do several things. It rooted itself in its own traditions and values, showing appreciation for the work and cultures of its own peasants and the various nationalities under its control. Additionally, it connected these Soviet ideas to the international, by doing things like incorporating the international festival symbol into the image of Katiusha and having foreign dance groups perform alongside those of the Soviet Union. In this case, the Soviet Union was appealing to the diverse peoples and nationalities within its own borders, as well as the diverse foreign peoples that attended the festival.

Aside from the opening and closing ceremonies, the largest, most widely-attended performance of the festival was the performance in honor of World War II held in Dynamo Stadium. During the artistic reenactment of various aspects of World War II on the second day of the festival, there were people dressed up as Nazi soldiers, Allied soldiers, and concentration camp prisoners, images were projected for all in the stadium to see, and there

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<sup>71</sup> *The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko.

<sup>72</sup> *Around the Soviet Union No. 211*; V. Svirin, “Leto v Kolomenskom,” *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, July 20, 1985; *The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko.

were sound effects of planes and bombings for all to hear.<sup>73</sup> Delegates from all around the world were in attendance, and some were so affected by the performance that they could hardly watch. One delegate from Lebanon said that she had to avert her eyes, not only for what the performance said in and of itself, but for that fact that it reminded her of what was taking place in her own country and region.<sup>74</sup> All of this ties into the previously mentioned internationalist theme of World War II. The Soviet Union used the anniversary of World War II as a reminder of the world's shared horrors and important instance of previous cooperation. The legacy of the past was also being tied into the present struggles, which in turn played into the message of friendship and peace that the festival, and Soviet state specifically, hoped to put forth.

Also in honor of World War II, there was a ceremony performed at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Kremlin Wall. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier had long been considered a symbolic monument, for the soldier buried had fought in World War II, and the Soviets had honored and mourned the soldier without knowledge of his identity. This was supposed to show that the horrors of war and the fight for peace were universal ideas that transcended the individual, and even the national.<sup>75</sup> At the opening ceremony, the torch-bearers used the flame at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier to light the official festival torch.<sup>76</sup> On the next day of the festival—the day dedicated to World War II—the Soviet Union hosted a ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Delegates from

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<sup>73</sup> Silin, “Ploshchadi nashi palitry.” “Zhivi vseгда, planeta Zemlia!” *Pravda*, July 29, 1985; *The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko.

<sup>74</sup> “Zhivi vseгда, planeta Zemlia!”

<sup>75</sup> Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1995).

<sup>76</sup> *Around the Soviet Union No. 211; Hello 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko.

various countries laid down wreaths on the tomb, and veterans of the Great Patriotic War were honored.<sup>77</sup> Once again, the Soviet Union was using the memory of World War II as a way to connect to its international audience. They together honored the unknown victim of war, and together were attending a rally for worldwide peace. The Soviet Union used a monument with patriotic significance to send an international message. They even used the flame to start the festival as a whole, indicating how closely they saw the struggles of the present-day to be connected to those of the past.

The Soviet Union hosted a “bonfire of retribution” during the festival, in which they symbolically burned symbols of fascism and imperialism. The World War II performance on the second day of the festival actually ended with this ceremonial bonfire, the fire reminiscent of the burning of Nazi flags that took place on Red Square in 1945. A giant bowl in the center of the field of Dynamo Stadium was filled with items that represented war, oppression, fascism, colonialism, and other similar ideas. Examples included a swastika, a skeleton with an atomic bomb in its hands, a chain and shackles, and a Ku Klux Klan hood. While the World War II ceremony had shown how the combined forces of the Soviet Union, United States, and European Allied countries had resulted in victory, this bonfire showed that oppression had caused harm to those in all of these countries as well. The end of the World War II ceremony was supposed to relay that imperialism was modern fascism, and that all countries of the world had to unite to rid the world of such tragedies forever.<sup>78</sup> Certain elements of this bonfire are perhaps reflective of

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<sup>77</sup> Grigoriev, *World Youth Votes for Peace*, 22; *Peace and Friendship: Our Happiness*, directed by Ivan Garin; *The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko.

<sup>78</sup> Popov, “Poslednee sovetskoe megasobytie,” 1021.

a typical Cold War approach—for example, the Soviet Union had long been outwardly critical of United States racism, and therefore the Ku Klux Klan hood could be viewed as an attack against the United States—but even so, the Soviet Union’s official internationalist message was to promote unity against modern enemies, to make this message universally understood by countries of the Global South and West alike, and to warn against repeating the mistakes of the past.

The anti-imperialist tribunal—in which festival delegates from every country symbolically put imperialism on trial—was widely regarded as one of the most notable events of the festival. At the 1978 Havana festival, there had also been an anti-imperialist tribunal, and the event was repeated at the 1985 Moscow festival following its proven success and popularity.<sup>79</sup> The event was also particularly fitting for Moscow because it referenced the tribunals that were held after World War II.<sup>80</sup> The tribunal took place in Congress Hall of the Kosmos Hotel in Moscow, and it was not only described as one of the most “dramatic” events of the festival, but it was also the most widely covered from news sources all around the world.<sup>81</sup> The tribunal was meant to condemn actions in Hiroshima, Lebanon, Palestine, Nicaragua, and more. It was not officially intended to direct all of its energy against United States imperialism specifically, but speeches and debates heavily leaned that way. A delegate from Japan spoke about the aftermath of the World War II bombings,<sup>82</sup> a delegate from the Afghanistan with no hands spoke about his life in a war-

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<sup>79</sup> *Soviet Active Measures*, 4.

<sup>80</sup> Popov, “Poslednee sovetskoe megasobytie,” 1019.

<sup>81</sup> Davidow, *Youth Fights for Its Future*, 45.

<sup>82</sup> *Peace and Friendship: Our Happiness*, directed by Ivan Garin; Rozhdestvenskii, “Mir: Dlia vsekh i navsegda;” *The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko.

torn region,<sup>83</sup> delegates from Chile spoke out about being treated brutally by soldiers who had been trained by the United States,<sup>84</sup> delegates from Nicaragua and El Salvador discussed their current fight for freedom,<sup>85</sup> and others gave speeches as well. There was controversy when the Soviet chairperson intervened and redirected the conversation away from the topic of Soviet involvement in Afghanistan,<sup>86</sup> but even with that incident, the trial ended on a united note and the decision was unanimous—imperialism was declared guilty by all, and it was officially stated that “imperialism and peace, imperialism and freedom, imperialism and the future are incompatible.”<sup>87</sup> The Soviet Union was, once again, taking advantage of a political opportunity within the cultural events of the youth festival. The anti-imperialist tribunal was a political performance that discussed past problems, present struggles, and a hopeful future, and presented the Soviet Union as being clearly on the “right side of history.”

The themes and symbols of the festival promoted international unity and built up the image of the Soviet Union, and, in that way, were manifestations of Soviet ideas of internationalism. Cold War elements were certainly present in the Soviet Union’s internationalist approach to the West—and will be discussed next—but the Soviet Union’s and festival’s official intentions must be noted to understand Soviet internationalism more completely. In 1985, Soviet relations with the United States were particularly strained

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<sup>83</sup> Davidow, *Youth Fights for Its Future*, 41.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>85</sup> Grigoriev, *World Youth Votes for Peace*, 15-16.

<sup>86</sup> Pilar Bonet, “El Acta Final, debatida en el Festival de la Juventud de Moscú,” *El País*, August 1, 1985; “Controversy Over Afghanistan at Moscow Festival,” *Milan L’Unita (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, August 1, 1985; “Delegation Protests USSR Translation of Speech,” *Stockholm Domestic Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 31, 1985.

<sup>87</sup> C. Agafonov, “Utverzhdaem: VINOVEN!” *Izvestiia*, August 2, 1985.

because Reagan had escalated the Cold War during his first term in office and had yet to start the processes of cooling down tensions and increasing cooperation with Gorbachev that accompanied his second term. The continued hostility is precisely why the Soviet Union did things like focus on the World War II era of cooperation—the Soviet Union attempted to appeal to its foreign counterparts in the ways that made the most sense for them. The Soviet Union certainly did rely heavily on the legacy of past successes, but it also made modern references and united both the past and contemporary circumstances to the hope for a better future on an international scale. The cultural nature of the youth festival did not mean that the Soviet Union did not speak about political ideas, and that the Soviet Union did not act politically itself, for it undoubtedly used the festival as an opportunity to fine tune its image on the world stage. The themes, symbols, and performances of the festival were all carefully crafted in the attempt to prove that the Soviet Union was the world's leader in the fight for peace, but they were also simple enough in design that the ideas could be understood by people of all regions of the globe. In a newspaper statement about the upcoming festival, the Soviets stated that they wanted their “festival in defense of peace to be clear to everyone: Russians, Cubans, French, Africans. Therefore, we decided to create performances where not a single word has to be uttered.”<sup>88</sup>

In addition to the displays of symbols and performance during festival events, the Soviet Union used a variety of concrete and rhetorical methods—rooted in the aforementioned central themes—to appeal internationally to the West, Global South, and Eastern Bloc both before and during the festival experience. The internationalism took

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<sup>88</sup> G. Gogoberidze, “Programma na vse vkucy,” *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, July 9, 1985.

different forms when applied to each of these different regions, for they all had different opinions of the Soviet Union and different things to gain or lose by being on any established terms with the country, and the Soviet Union had different levels of cultural cooperation already in place with each region. With the West, internationalist operations were limited, but there were exchanges of workers and youth that did take place. In the Global South, the Soviet Union had Komsomol members who visited and taught the youth, and the Soviet Union also had various schools that welcomed foreigners from these countries within its own borders. Within the Soviet Union's sphere of influence—meaning in regard to the Soviet Union's satellite states—the Soviet Union had “friendship” programs in which the youth of the satellite states kept in close contact with Soviet youth. The Soviet Union's different approaches to internationalism were made evident in the preparations for, and presentation of, the 1985 Moscow youth festival, and the different foreign reactions that the Soviet Union received before, during, and immediately after the festival spoke to the political relations in place at this time.

### **Before the Festival – The West**

The Soviet Union took a number of concrete measures to appeal specifically to the West prior to the festival. During the time of the 1985 Moscow youth festival, the Cold War was at one of its hottest points and the festival movement as a whole was still widely regarded by Western capitalist countries to be a strictly socialist endeavor. However, the festival in theory was supposed to be aimed towards all of the world's youth, and the Soviet Union's international mission involved cooperation with willing Western youths who stood in opposition to the official stances of their governments, or who were at least open-



minded. Therefore, the Soviet Union advertised the festival to the Western world in a way separate from Cold War conflict. The Soviet Komsomol held meetings with the youth of Western countries prior to the festival. For example, the Soviets met with American youth in Baku in 1984.<sup>89</sup> The International Union of Students' festival newsletters were not only distributed in Western countries and in different languages like English, French, and Spanish, but they also included pieces written about how delegates from Western countries, like the United States and Italy, were preparing for the festival.<sup>90</sup> The Soviet Union did not exclude Western countries, from neither the festival itself nor the advertisements for it. However, pieces focused on the people rather than the governments, which was in contrast to that which was written about other regions of the world. The Soviet Union also published numerous articles about the festival in several editions of *Soviet Life*, a Soviet-sponsored magazine that was published in English and distributed in the United States. The articles focused on a number of things, such as the need to stand united in the fight to save the environment, but overwhelmingly there were, once again, articles about World War II and remembering the lessons that it taught the world.<sup>91</sup> Soviet contemporary relations with the West could not be positively referenced, but World War II—an era of not only cooperation against a common enemy, but an era of victory as well—was a reference that the West would understand and the Soviet Union hoped would resonate, contributing to the overall scheme of international coordination and friendliness that defined the festival.

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<sup>89</sup> "Soviet-American Youth Conference in Baku," *Komsomol'skaia pravda (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, September 1, 1984.

<sup>90</sup> "IUS Newsletter – January 1985;" "IUS Newsletter on the 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival of Youth and Students – May 1985," Joseph A. Labadie Collection, Special Collections Research Center, University of Michigan.

<sup>91</sup> Vladimir Aksyanov, "Participation, Development, Peace," *Soviet Life*, January 1985; Andrei Gromyko, "In the Interests of Peace," *Soviet Life*, April 1985.

The Soviet Union also used identifiable patterns in its rhetoric when appealing to the West prior to the festival. Once again, in the official festival setting, the Soviet Union was not “out to get” the United States and the rest of the West. In the aforementioned manners of advertising the festival and appealing to Western delegates, the Soviet Union very much employed an “us” mentality. When addressing and referencing citizens who stood in opposition to the positions of their own governments—such as United States youth who praised the festival movement despite the Reagan administration’s condemnation of it—the Soviet Union spoke of working together to fight modern problems facing the world such as racism, unemployment, and environmental protection, despite potentially different political and ideological views. On many occasions throughout the festival preparation process, the Soviet Union stressed the fact that the festival was an opportunity for youth of many different backgrounds and beliefs to gather in unity with a common interest and common goals.<sup>92</sup> The references to World War II harbored this same “us” sentiment as well, with emphasis on how both sides were in agreement during the war, both sides had suffered, and both sides were determined to not repeat such a global-scale catastrophe.<sup>93</sup> Internationalism attempts aimed from the Soviet Union and towards the West in this cultural setting promoted peace, not competition, despite the fact that, during this period, in all other aspects, the Soviet Union and the West—the United States in particular—were

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<sup>92</sup> Aksenov, Ogorodnev, and Wood, *Looking Forward to the 12th World Youth Festival*, 12; “IUS Newsletter – February 1985;” “Tesnee iunosti riady;” “Weekly 'International Roundtable,'” *Moscow Domestic Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 21, 1985; *The 12th World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko.

<sup>93</sup> “Weekly 'International Observers Roundtable,'” *Moscow Domestic Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 28, 1985; *The 12th World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko.

still very much in competition and conflict with each other. Such tensions were expressed in many different ways, one example being frequent Soviet press mentions of high United States unemployment rates, which greatly contrasted the Soviet stress on the workers' state.<sup>94</sup> The Soviet Union's attempts at internationalism in the spirit of the festival spoke to a sense of pride in past accomplishments and hope for the future, even if that future would have to wait until the governments of the Western world had shifted.

Despite attempts to attract the West to the festival, Cold War sentiments were still often evident in the Soviet Union's discussion of the West before the start of the festival. Although the festival movement was supposed to be officially separated from the politics like that which governed the Cold War, Cold War influence was inevitable. Internationalism in the Cold War era was not only intended to establish collaboration. Rather, as mentioned before, it also involved building up the image of the Soviet Union to its foreign audience, and this, more often than not, went hand in hand with condemning the enemy. When discussing imperialism in the festival context, countries tended to criticize the United States and the other countries of NATO. This idea was prominent in the preparations for the 1985 Twelfth World Festival of Youth and Students, throughout which any mention of imperialism was more often than not accompanied by a mention of the United States and NATO.<sup>95</sup> Additionally, the Soviet Union consistently criticized the

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<sup>94</sup> Chernenko, "Uchastnikam mezhdunarodnoi vstrechi trudiashcheisia molodezhi;" "Festival Critics Attacked;" Seth Mydans, "Soviet Schools: Is Skepticism Starting to Sprout?" *New York Times*, August 29, 1985.

<sup>95</sup> Aksenov, Ogorodnev, and Wood, *Looking Forward to the 12th World Youth Festival*, 16; "Baltic Protest Cruise Conflicts with 'Helsinki Spirit'," *TASS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 22, 1985; L. Chausov, "Golos molodezhi," *Pravda*, November 30, 1983; *The Coming Festival*, directed by Aleksei Uchitel (Lenin Documentary Film Studios, 1985), Adam Matthew Digital, [http://www.socialismonfilm.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/N\\_508305\\_FORTHCOMING\\_MOSCOW](http://www.socialismonfilm.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/N_508305_FORTHCOMING_MOSCOW)

Reagan administration throughout the mid-1980s and throughout the festival process.<sup>96</sup> However, such blatant criticisms of Western governments and imperialistic practices did not appear in this same form in festival sources meant for a Western audience. For example, in the *Soviet Life* magazines published in the United States, the anti-imperialist theme was made clear, and NATO was even mentioned, but the United States was not portrayed as the leading force of imperialism in the world in the same way that it was in most other Soviet sources about the festival.<sup>97</sup> So, while the Soviet Union was not officially against the West in regard to the festival movement, and the Soviet Union even geared internationalism methods towards its Western audience, the festival relationship between the Soviet Union and its Cold War adversaries was not completely separate from the politics of the day. Any way around it, the Soviet Union was more interested in appealing to the youth—and left-leaning youth at that—of these countries than it was at appealing to the governments with which it had obvious problems. Soviet internationalism did not completely ignore these larger forces though, for ideas like the importance of the lessons learned during wartime cooperation were relevant in the government-level political sphere.

There were some positive Western reactions to the initiatives and ideas put forward by the Soviet Union. Youth of the West eagerly prepared for the festival, a fact noted by the Soviet Union in their press for the festival. United States citizens—most of whom

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\_YOUTH\_FESTIVAL; “Nastupatel'nost' nashei ideologii,” *Pravda*, January 12, 1985; *Soviet Active Measures*, 1-12; “Tesnee iunosti riady.”

<sup>96</sup> “Festival Critics Attacked;” “Glavnaia zadacha sovremennosti,” *Izvestiia*, September 16, 1984; “IUS Newsletter – February 1985;” “IUS Newsletter – March 1985;” “Komsomol's Mishin Addresses Havana WFDY Meeting,” *Komsomol'skaia pravda (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, February 9, 1984; “Planete: Chistoe nebo,” *Izvestiia*, February 28, 1984; “Soviet-American Youth Conference in Baku;” “WFDY Delegate Denounces Jamaica Youth Festival.”

<sup>97</sup> Aksyanov, “Participation, Development, Peace;” Gromyko, “In the Interests of Peace.”

belonged to leftist groups—formed a festival committee and dealt with the “great interest” that came with this chance to actually visit the Soviet Union.<sup>98</sup> The Italian state expressed its support for the slogan and the theme of the festival,<sup>99</sup> and Finland expressed its desire to establish a nuclear-free zone in northern Europe in honor of the festival movement and its ideals.<sup>100</sup> French youth were reported as being excited to shake the hands of freedom fighters of the Global South.<sup>101</sup> In some of these cases, the positive reactions originated from the expected demographic of left-leaning youth, but there was also support from Western countries and governments more broadly. In the United States, the House of Representatives had wanted to express support for the festival, but the Reagan administration prevented this from happening.<sup>102</sup> So, while the American and Western positive reactions to the Soviet Union’s festival preparations were largely from the citizens themselves, there were also official voices in the mix. It is difficult to determine whether the positive reactions were the result of successful Soviet internationalism, or simply related to the curiosity of Westerners. However, there were some examples of the West reacting directly to Soviet initiatives, such as the Italian government’s comments on the Moscow festival’s slogan and themes, and Finland’s attempt to connect itself to the anti-nuclear message of the festival.

Despite a variety of positive reactions to Soviet internationalism, there were also negative reactions from the West. These negative reactions, like the negative Cold War-

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<sup>98</sup> “IUS Newsletter – January 1985.”

<sup>99</sup> “IUS Newsletter – May 1985.”

<sup>100</sup> “IUS Newsletter – February 1985.”

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> “West Pressures Youth Not to Attend Festival,” *TASS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 11, 1985.

style aspect of the internationalist approach of the Soviet Union, transpired as would be expected. Western governments, the United States' most notably, warned their youth of the dangers of going to the Soviet Union and being susceptible to their propaganda,<sup>103</sup> and Western media coverage focused its efforts on portraying the festival negatively, if at all. Rather than speak about the festival, its peaceful motives, or the Soviet Union's attempts to connect with the West by means of the remembrance of World War II, the Moscow festival hardly played a role in the Western media at all, and when it did, Western newspapers tended to be criticizing the internal conditions of the Soviet Union and thereby attempting to dissuade their citizens from attending. The United States, for example, had newspapers articles about Russian Jews who were only being allowed to emigrate because Moscow had to make room for its foreign guests,<sup>104</sup> about a lack of resources in the Soviet Union,<sup>105</sup> and so on. The United States Department of State published a report about the festival preparations and the supposed sorry state of Soviet youth during this time as well.<sup>106</sup> Soviet internationalism and festival attempts at cooperation largely did not penetrate beyond Cold War beliefs. Although not exclusively, it was primarily Western youth who were already more likely to think positively of the Soviet Union that had a positive reaction to the festival in the months leading up to its opening. Western governments and media largely reacted in the ways that would be expected—ignoring the

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<sup>103</sup> *Soviet Active Measures*, 1-12; *The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko.

<sup>104</sup> Celestine Bohlen, "Soviet Shift on Visas Raises Hopes, Concerns of 'Refusedniks,'" *The Washington Post*, April 18, 1985; Howard Tyner, "Soviet Emigration of Jews Increases," *Chicago Tribune*, April 10, 1985.

<sup>105</sup> Hornsby, "The Enemy Within?," 36.

<sup>106</sup> *Soviet Active Measures*, 1-12.

Soviet's attempts to construct the image of a common cause, hardly acknowledging the festival at all, and primarily focusing on the negative when it did.

### **Before the Festival – The Global South**

The Soviet Union also took concrete measures to appeal specifically to the Global South prior to the start of the festival. In the same sort of initiatives that the Soviet Union had with the West, festival journals were published in the Global South in the languages of the specific countries, which included Spanish and Arabic.<sup>107</sup> The Soviet Union also published magazines and journals in these other countries regularly, and around the time of the festival, published articles upon articles about the festival preparations. The Soviet Union made sure to congratulate countries like Papua New Guinea and Fiji on their first time participating in the World Youth Festival movement.<sup>108</sup> Additionally, the Soviet Union established deeper friendships with countries of the Global South in the months prior to the festival. The Soviet Union hosted “friendship” conferences and established alliances that connected Soviet youth with the youth of the Global South. Delegations of Komsomol members visited North Korea and other nations,<sup>109</sup> and delegations from these countries were invited to the Soviet Union as well. North Korea even set up an entire cultural station in Moscow prior to the festival, able to share its culture during the Soviet Union's display of its own because of the budding relationship between the two countries.<sup>110</sup> In contrast to

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<sup>107</sup> Aksenov, Ogorodnev, and Wood, *Looking Forward to the 12th World Youth Festival*, 36; “Youth Delegation to Attend Moscow Festival,” *Baghdad INA (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 2, 1985.

<sup>108</sup> “IUS Newsletter – January 1985.”

<sup>109</sup> “Youth League Delegation Ends DPRK Visit,” *Moscow International Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, May 22, 1984.

<sup>110</sup> “DPRK Book, Photo Exhibition Opens in Moscow,” *Pyongyang KCNA (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 25, 1985; “Korean National Club Inaugurated in Moscow,” *Pyongyang KCNA*

the Soviet Union's displays of internationalism as they were applied to the West, the Soviet Union's approach to the Global South involved focusing on modern problems and modern attempts at cooperation, rather than "the lessons of wartime cooperation." The Soviet Union worked on establishing strong youth relations with the countries of these regions of the world leading up to the festival, capitalizing upon the opportunity they saw. This was all a display of peaceful internationalism in which the Soviet Union portrayed itself as a leader of peace that was looking forward to a better future and was not above cooperating with the other countries of the world that were hoping for the same thing.

The Soviet Union also used particular themes and rhetoric when appealing to the Global South prior to the festival. The stress of virtually all of the written pieces distributed from the Soviet Union in the Global South was on fighting modern imperialism, in the forms of Zionism, apartheid, racism, and other related ideas. The Soviet Union played to its audience, discussing Zionism as a form of imperialism in conversations with the Middle East,<sup>111</sup> and focusing on apartheid and racism when addressing South Africa.<sup>112</sup> The Soviet Union made clear its support of the countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America that were presently engaged in their own struggles against imperialism, supporting the fights in El Salvador and Nicaragua, amongst other countries.<sup>113</sup> As mentioned in the previous section,

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(*Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports*), April 10, 1985; "Strong Soviet Support Welcomed By DPRK," *Moscow International Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 3, 1985.

<sup>111</sup> "IUS Newsletter – February 1985;" "IUS Newsletter – March 1985;" "IUS Newsletter on the 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival of Youth and Students – April 1985," Joseph A. Labadie Collection, Special Collections Research Center, University of Michigan; "Ponomarev Addresses International Youth Session," *Komsomol'skaia pravda (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, November 3, 1984.

<sup>112</sup> "IUS Newsletter – February 1985;" "IUS Newsletter – April 1985;" "Ponomarev Addresses International Youth Session;" *The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko.

<sup>113</sup> Aksenov, Ogorodnev, and Wood, *Looking Forward to the 12th World Youth Festival*, 15; "IUS Newsletter – March 1985;" "IUS Newsletter – April 1985;" "IUS Newsletter – May 1985;" "Presidential



it was also common for the Soviet Union to call out the NATO countries, especially the United States and Reagan administration, in their condemnations of imperialism. The Soviet Union portrayed itself as having a common enemy with these countries of the Global South, and being united not only in the struggle for peace, but also in the more concrete struggle against the influence of the West. “Peace and friendship” was a major slogan of the festival and was discussed in the present-tense in reference to the majority of the countries of the Global South, rather than something that they had to hope would be attained, as was the case with the West. In the midst of all of this, the Soviet Union was able to thread the needle of not officially promoting conflict with the United States and West while simultaneously doing things like condemning U.S. imperialism in places like Nicaragua by aiming all criticism towards the Reagan administration and the NATO apparatus, but making it clear that the Soviets believed that the hope for the United States and other NATO countries resided with the youth of these nations—the youth who were determined to unite in the struggle to bring about world peace. In all, the rhetoric and ideas that the Soviet Union put forward when trying to appeal internationally to the Global South were based on the present and a plausible future, which contrasted the past and hopeful future of the Western approach. Additionally, the Soviet Union’s approach to these countries was virtually completely positive. These were the nations that the United States and the Soviet Union fought to “win over,” and therefore the Soviet Union had nothing to

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Adviser Warns of Nicaraguan Invasion,” *Madrid EFE (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, December 3, 1984.

gain from harsh criticisms of these countries, and a great deal to gain from earning their trust.

Reactions to Soviet displays of internationalism prior to the festival were generally well-received in the Global South. In contrast to the West and much more in line with the Soviet Union, the Global South widely publicized the impending festival and the preparations of its own citizens in the meantime. Countries of Asia, Latin America, and Africa all published series of articles pertaining to their nations' selections of delegates, preliminary meetings, festival fundraising endeavors, travel arrangements, meetings between delegates and their countries' leaders, and more, some of the most notable countries in this regard being Cuba,<sup>114</sup> Ghana,<sup>115</sup> Cambodia,<sup>116</sup> Mongolia,<sup>117</sup> and North

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<sup>114</sup> "Delegates to Youth Festival to Be Chosen in February," *Havana Domestic Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, January 9, 1985; "Delegation Departs for Moscow," *Havana Television Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 9, 1985; Margarita Fernández Cervantes, "A Fidel lo recuerdo vivo." Interview by Marta Martínez Duliet, November 25, 2017, <https://soyfloridana.wordpress.com/2017/11/25/a-fidel-lo-recuerdo-vivo/>; "Fidel, Raul Castro Address Youth Delegation," *Havana Domestic Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 4, 1985; "Youth Festival Preparatory Committee Organized," *Havana Television Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, April 4, 1984.

<sup>115</sup> "Commentary on Upcoming Moscow Youth Festival," *Accra Domestic Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 12, 1985; "Four-Man Goodwill Delegation Leaves for USSR," *Accra Domestic Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, April 2, 1985; "Scholarships Offered," *Accra Domestic Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, June 21, 1985; "Soviet Women's Delegation Begins Visit," *Accra Domestic Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, June 21, 1985; "Youth Delegation Goes to Festival in Moscow," *Accra Domestic Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 24, 1985.

<sup>116</sup> "Chea Sim at Phnom Penh Meeting," *Phnom Penh Domestic Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 23, 1985; "Chea Sim Attends First Meeting," *Phnom Penh Domestic Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, June 13, 1985; "Delegations Leave for Moscow Youth Festival," *Phnom Penh SPK (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 1, 1985; "Editorial Notes Youth's Duty to Serve in Army," *Phnom Penh Domestic Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 3, 1985; "Heng Samrin Receives Delegates," *Phnom Penh Domestic Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 23, 1985; "Press Conference Held," *Phnom Penh Domestic Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 19, 1985.

<sup>117</sup> "Adiyaa Presides Over Youth Festival Meeting," *Ulaanbaatar Montsame (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, December 6, 1984; "MRYL Delegation Leaves for Moscow Visit November 2," *Ulaanbaatar Montsame (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, November

Korea.<sup>118</sup> Both the youths and the governments of these countries were ready for, and optimistic about, the opportunity before them. They expressed excitement over being able to send their own cultural delegates and share their heritages with the rest of the world, thereby displaying their own forms of cultural diplomacy.<sup>119</sup> The countries of the Global South also appeared to be invested in the Soviet approach and themes of the festival. They were ready to unite with the Soviet Union in the fights that they themselves were facing. The majority of these nations of the Global South were not established enemies of the Soviet Union, and therefore Soviet internationalism being accepted does not prove that it was life-changing, but it was undeniably successful to some degree and also reveals bigger ideas about the relationships at stake as a whole.

There were some negative reactions to the festival, however, that originated in the Global South. China was one nation that refused to send an official delegation to the festival, and refused to allow any of its citizens to participate independently, because of larger scale political matters at work relating to tensions between the Soviet Union and

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2, 1984; "Team Leaders Leaves for Moscow Youth Festival," *Ulaanbaatar Montsame (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 24, 1985.

<sup>118</sup> "Arrival in Moscow," *Pyongyang KCNA (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 26, 1985; "DPRK Book, Photo Exhibition Opens in Moscow;" "Kim Il-Song Receives Youth, Student Delegation," *Pyongyang KCNA (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 21, 1985; "Korean National Club Inaugurated in Moscow;" "LSWYK Welcomes Group," *Pyongyang KCNA (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, February 15, 1985; "Nodong Sinmun Welcomes Festival," *Pyongyang Domestic Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 26, 1985; "Pyongyang Students Welcome IUS Delegation," *Pyongyang KCNA (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, October 30, 1984; "Soviet Youth Delegation Meets with Reporters," *Pyongyang KCNA (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, February 17, 1985; "Yi Yong-Su-Led Group Leaves for Soviet Union," *Pyongyang KCNA (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, March 27, 1985.

<sup>119</sup> G Gerasimova, "Vozrast ispolnitelei," *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, July 20, 1985; "IUS Newsletter – January 1985.

China over Afghanistan.<sup>120</sup> One of the most prominent issues that affected participants from the Middle East and Northern Africa was Zionism. The Soviet Union was officially anti-Zionist, believing Zionists to not be loyal to the Soviet Union, and believing the West to be engaged in an imperialistic war against Palestine. These ideas played into the festival and festival preparations, in both the domestic and the international spheres. No Israelis attended the festival; however, there were Jewish delegates that came as part of Italy's official delegation, and there was a Zionist Communist group invited as well. The presence of these Jewish individuals caused Libya to decide against attending the festival despite having already made arrangements to go.<sup>121</sup> However, even this international setback was different than that which came from the West. The situation with China was similar in the way that large-scale politics affected festival arrangements, but in the case of Libya and Zionism, the decision not to attend was not so much a result of the Soviet Union and its general policies, but instead was because of one specific reason that was not even against that which the Soviet Union itself believed.

### **Before the Festival – The Eastern Bloc**

The Soviet Union also had ways in which it worked to appeal to its own satellite states before the start of the festival. Soviet appeals towards its satellite states are not as prominent in available sources from the festival era, likely because their relations were already more firmly established and their cooperation was expected. The satellite states

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<sup>120</sup> "PRC Absence Regretted," *Moscow International Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 27, 1985.

<sup>121</sup> Celestine Bohlen, "Soviets, With Care, Hail World Youth," *The Washington Post*, July 28, 1985; Bonet, "El Acta Final;" "Libyan Delegates Pull Out of World Youth Festival," *Tripoli JANA (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 7, 1985.

followed the Soviet lead with boycotting the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, supporting purer ideas of peace and friendship, and since this was the theme of the youth festival as well, the situation further aligned the Soviet Union and its satellite states together in the events of the 1985 Moscow festival.<sup>122</sup> Many newspaper sources stressed that countries like Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic were in close cooperation with the Soviet Union regarding the festival movement, helping to raise funds for the festival and participating in the International Youth Year in their own ways by holding festivities to prepare their youth for the summer events in Moscow.<sup>123</sup> Bulgarian and Polish youth had a gathering prior to the festival, and while departing, expressed excitement over being able to meet again in Moscow.<sup>124</sup> The Soviet Union had established press sources through which they published news about the festival, the IUS festival journal was distributed in these countries, and the Soviet Union already had “friendship” programs in place in its satellite states, Czechoslovakia most notably,<sup>125</sup> but Poland and others as well.<sup>126</sup> The Soviet

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<sup>122</sup> “Hungary Withdrawal Noted;” “Olympic Movement, NOC’s Decision Defended;” “Polish Olympic Committee Voices Concerns;” “U.S. Propaganda Denounced;” “USSR Coach Wants Olympics Transfers from Seoul.”

<sup>123</sup> “Czech Paper Interviews Mishin,” *Prague Rude Pravo (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 24, 1985; “Delegation to Moscow Youth Festival Departs,” *Prague Rude Pravo (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 25, 1985; “FDJ’s Aurich Meets with FRG Student Leaders,” *East Berlin ADN International Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, December 11, 1984; “GDR’s Honecker Receives Komsomol’s Mishin,” *Komsomol’skaia pravda (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, May 21, 1985; “GDR’s Honecker Speaks on Peace at Festival;” Gogoberidze, “Programma na vse vkucy;” “Husak Addresses Youth Union Delegation,” *Prague Domestic Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, June 24, 1985; “IUS Newsletter – March 1985;” “Nash parol – družba,” *Pravda*, July 25, 1985; “Strougal Addresses International Student Union,” *Prague Domestic Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, November 16, 1984; “1985 Youth Festival Committee,” *East Berlin ADN International Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, March 21, 1984.

<sup>124</sup> “Polish Youth Minister Concludes Visit,” *Sofia BTA (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, March 1, 1985.

<sup>125</sup> Applebaum, *Empire of Friends*; Applebaum, “The Friendship Project.”

<sup>126</sup> “Komsomol Head Mishin Talks on Komsomol’s Role,” *Warsaw Sztandar Mlodych (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 13, 1984.

Union's internationalist approach to its satellite states in regard to the festival was fairly straightforward, with the Soviet Union seeming to emphasize the relationship that was already in place and the commonalities they shared. Therefore, it took an approach closer to that which it directed towards the Global South, focusing on a shared present and a shared future, rather than a hope to unite.

Satellite state reactions to Soviet internationalism in the months leading up to the Moscow festival were generally positive. The press of the satellite states widely publicized the festival preparations and their own countries' contributions to the International Youth Year, Moscow festival, and movement towards anti-imperialist peace as a whole. There were no obvious political problems that influenced their view of the festival and ideological problems also did not play a role. The satellite states were among the biggest participants of all of the World Festivals of Youths and Students, standing as part of the socialist force that dominated the events, and therefore the Soviet Union did not need to try to appeal to these countries in the same way as it did to others.

### **During and After the Festival – The West**

The Soviet Union performed actions to appeal specifically to the West during the Moscow youth festivities. The 1985 Moscow festival had a wide variety of panel discussions, and some of them involved meetings between Soviet and Western participants, allowing them the opportunity to talk through the issues impacting relations between their countries. One event noted for its importance by a variety of festival-goers was the discussion held between Soviet and American delegates. Friendliness was maintained throughout the conversation, but the participants did not shy away from difficult topics and

ideological debates. The Soviet Union was aware that the way to appeal to its Western counterparts was not to ignore or sugarcoat issues, but rather to address and work through them.<sup>127</sup> Additionally, in the World War II performance on the second day of the festival, the emphasis that was placed on the fact that it was the combined forces of the Soviet Union, allied European countries, and the United States that led to the Allied victory of World War II was a deliberate internationalist move.<sup>128</sup> Throughout the festival, the Soviet Union's Western internationalism continued to revolve around the success of the past and the hope for a more successful future in the same manner that it had established with its pre-festival advertisements and activities.

The Soviet Union also utilized positive rhetoric when including the West in the festival events. In general, the Western delegates of the festival were specifically recognized and thanked for their open-mindedness and devotion to the festival movement. They were praised for adhering to festival ideals and joining the fight for peace and anti-imperialist freedom for all in spite of the ideas that were pushed forward by their own governments. The United States delegates in particular were told that they were amongst the "most important" people to attend the festival, for their presence proved the power of peaceful internationalism and the hope for a future of cooperation.<sup>129</sup> There were also many references to the fact that all participants in the festival could understand each other despite language barriers, and that the participants could connect with each other and agree on

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<sup>127</sup> *Peace and Friendship: Our Happiness*, directed by Ivan Garin.

<sup>128</sup> Popov, "Poslednee sovetskoe megasobytie," 1021.

<sup>129</sup> Davidow, *Youth Fights for Its Future*, 13.

important matters despite their different politics.<sup>130</sup> The Soviet Union did not solely use the festival as an opportunity to criticize the United States and Western European NATO countries, instead recognizing their presence as something important and influential. However, once again, these festival participants were the Westerners least likely to resent the Soviet Union and therefore such attempts at persuasion and inclusion did not necessarily change much, but simply further revealed the nature of Soviet internationalism.

Despite attempts to appear friendly to the West during the festival, the Soviet Union also aimed a substantial number of comments and ideas against its Cold War enemies. First, in all of its praise for the American delegates that did attend the festival, there were frequent, negative references to the United States government. There were anti-Reagan sentiments throughout the festival, and not just from the Soviet Union, with a South African performer group including “stop Reagan” in the chorus of the song they wrote specifically for the festival,<sup>131</sup> and many discussions of Reagan and his “star wars” between delegates from all around the world.<sup>132</sup> Additionally, as previously stated, the anti-imperialist theme of the festival often welcomed criticism of the United States. Discussions of modern imperialism, including—most notably—the anti-imperialist tribunal, tended to revert back to a discussion about the United States, and how the country was not only unjustly exerting its presence and influence around the world, but also how it was doing things like training Latin American militaries to violently stop popular uprisings.<sup>133</sup> So, rhetoric towards

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<sup>130</sup> *Around the Soviet Union No. 211*; “Do svidaniia, festival!” *Pravda*, August 4, 1985; “Obrashchenie k molodezhi i studentam mira;” “Podruzhila Moskva,” *Pravda*, July 31, 1985; *The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko.

<sup>131</sup> Popov, “Poslednee sovetskoe megasobytie,” 1020.

<sup>132</sup> *The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko.

<sup>133</sup> Davidow, *Youth Fights for Its Future*, 45-54.



American citizens was positive and spoke of cooperation and mutual appreciation, but comments about the United States government were consistent with typical Cold War rhetoric, which was the same as that which took place prior to the festival, and once again shows some of the limitations of Soviet internationalism and the ways in which it reflected the politics of the day.

There were certainly some positive Western reactions to the festivities and the Soviet Union as a whole. The majority of positive reactions to the festival came from festival participants who chose to attend the festivities in defiance of the ideas put forward by their respective governments. As was the case with the 1957 Moscow World Festival of Youth and Students, Western delegates returned to their home countries and told stories about their pleasant surprise at the hospitality of the Soviet citizens and state of the Soviet Union in general. Participants in 1985 were quick to realize how different the Soviet Union and Soviet people were from what they had been told by the media sources in their own countries.<sup>134</sup> An American participant, Mike Davidow, wrote an entire booklet on his festival experience, which was then published in English by a Soviet press agency, likely in an attempt to spread positive ideas about the Soviet Union.<sup>135</sup> There were positive comments from others as well, such as a Denmark participant who expressed appreciation for Moscow and its metro station,<sup>136</sup> and a Belgian delegate who admired Moscow and its parks.<sup>137</sup> Western participants interviewed throughout the festival had positive things to

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<sup>134</sup> A. Efremov, "Plamia festivalia," *Pravda*, September 3, 1985; *Peace and Friendship: Our Happiness*, directed by Ivan Garin; *The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko.

<sup>135</sup> Davidow, *Youth Fights for Its Future*.

<sup>136</sup> N. Larionova, "Prazdnik na vsiu zhizn'," *Pravda*, August 3, 1985.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

say about the festival itself, as well as the Soviet Union as a whole. In this way, Soviet internationalism and the ways in which it portrayed itself to foreigners was a successful endeavor, although undeniably limited in the way that it reached only those within earshot, and was unlikely to convert anyone in the process.

Despite a variety of positive reactions to Soviet internationalism at the Moscow festival, there were also negative reactions from the West. Western press during and after the festival did not change much from that which had preceded it—festival talk was nearly non-existent, and that which was actually said primarily involved critiques of Soviet internal conditions. Western news sources were also indignant at the lack of freedom of speech made clear when the Soviet Union prevented an open discussion of Soviet involvement in Afghanistan on more than one occasion, purposefully mistranslating sections of speeches made by Swedes, Norwegians, Italians, and others in which they spoke about Afghanistan, and intervening during the anti-imperialism tribunal when the notion of the Soviet Union as an imperialist force in Afghanistan was proposed. The Belgian delegation was one of several that walked out of the anti-imperialist tribunal after the Soviet chairperson interjected with the official party line on the matter.<sup>138</sup> There was also harsh criticism of the police forces in the Soviet Union,<sup>139</sup> and the fact that Westerners did not know the extent to which they were being surveilled, but knew that it was taking place.<sup>140</sup> Additionally, there was substantial drama with the delegation from West Berlin.

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<sup>138</sup> Bonet, "El Acta Final;" "Controversy Over Afghanistan at Moscow Festival;" "Delegation Protests USSR Translation of Speech."

<sup>139</sup> Bonet, "El Acta Final."

<sup>140</sup> Hornsby, "The Enemy Within," 54-55; Serge Schmemmann, "Life in Moscow: Ease and Mistrust," *New York Times*, August 23, 1985.

In contrast to promises that the Soviets had supposedly made, in the opening ceremony of the festival, West Berlin was listed as its own nationality. The Soviets claimed this to be a small technical error, for although the screen in the stadium incorrectly said “delegation of West Berlin,” the sign that the West Germans carried in and the announcer of the delegation procession correctly said “delegation from West Berlin.” This situation led to the West Berlin delegation threatening to leave, and then West German news sources criticizing the delegates when they decided to stay.<sup>141</sup> There were also instances of Westerners engaging in what the Soviet Union labeled as sabotage. First, there was a situation in which two United States citizens—identified as Arthur Moore of Washington D.C. and Geoffrey Wayclam of Indiana—tried to cross the Soviet border under the guise of attending the festival, but were denied entry when their car with a West German license plate was searched, and the Soviet authorities found materials “harmful to the Soviet Union” hidden under the floor, in the ceiling of the van, and in various containers in the vehicle as well. When examined, the materials turned out to be pamphlets—numbering more than one thousand—with what Soviet officials labeled the “pretentious” title of “Light in the East,” the purpose being to try and “enlighten” socialist citizens. It could not be determined whether the two American citizens were working with any official organization, but they

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<sup>141</sup> “Apology for ‘Technical Error,’” *TASS International Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 29, 1985; “Delegation to Resume Activities,” *Hamburg DPA (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 29, 1985; “FRG Group to Stay,” *Paris AFP (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 29, 1985; “Genscher July 31 Speech,” *Hamburg DPA (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 31, 1985; “Moscow Treatment of West Berlin Group Condemned,” *Hamburg DPA (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 29, 1985; “Press Views Event at Moscow Youth Festival,” *Cologne Deutschlandfunk Network (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 30, 1985; R. Reuters, “West German Youths Quit Moscow Festival,” *New York Times*, July 29, 1985.

were immediately expelled from the Soviet Union, and their van was confiscated because it had acted as a “smuggling aid.”<sup>142</sup> Additionally, there was a ship parked in the Soviet harbor in which many foreigners were arriving that was filled with people from Western countries protesting the festival and the Soviet Union as a whole. The Soviet state believed this to have been set up and funded by the United States’ CIA. Soviet newspapers also stated that the CIA was trying to hand out “subversive literature” to the festival goers.<sup>143</sup> All of this shows that the 1985 Moscow youth festival transcended Cold War expectations in some ways, but certainly not in others. There were some positive Western reactions to the events, but overall, the same tensions remained. Politics were at play during the youth festivities, and both the Soviet Union’s attempts at internationalism and the Western reactions to such attempts help prove that that was the case.

### **During and After the Festival – The Global South**

The Soviet Union also took action to appeal specifically to the Global South during the 1985 Festival of Youth and Students. The aforementioned anti-imperialism tribunal was central to the festival and featured speakers from many countries of the Global South who gave firsthand accounts of living under imperialist control. The countries of the Global South were also given attention for their experiences under imperialism during the fifty-seven “rallies of solidarity” that the Soviet Union held throughout the festival. There were rallies of solidarity with the “peoples, youth, and students” of different continents, each

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<sup>142</sup> R. Reuters, “Soviets Refuse Entry to 2 U.S. Students,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 11, 1985; V. Vukovich, “Danait’s drugogo berega,” *Izvestiia*, July 10, 1985.

<sup>143</sup> “Baltic Protest Cruise Conflicts with ‘Helsinki Spirit’;” “CIA Delivering Subversive Literature,” *TASS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 22, 1985; “TASS on CIA, USIA Campaign Against Youth Festival.”

with its own reasons. For example, there was a rally of solidarity with the people of Africa fighting apartheid and racism. There were also rallies of solidarity with the people of different regions and groups of countries, such as a rally of solidarity with the people of the Middle East fighting Zionism, and rallies of solidarity with the people of individual countries, such as a rally with the people of Nicaragua who were fighting imperialist forces within their borders.<sup>144</sup> A significant number of festival events were specifically targeted towards the people of the Global South, and not only did the events discuss the issues they were facing, but they also provided these people of the Global South opportunities to use their voices on the international stage. In a comparable manner to its pre-festival internationalist attempts aimed at the Global South, the Soviet Union focused on the problems of the present, the cooperation against common enemies, and the fight for a peaceful future throughout the festival. The Soviet Union was building itself up as an ally and a leader in solving the struggles of the modern world and inspiring others to cooperate as well.

The Soviet Union also used particular themes and rhetoric when dealing with and discussing the Global South throughout the festival. The Soviet Union's approach to the Global South during the festival events was a continuation of that which began in the months preceding the festival. The Soviet Union placed its emphasis on anti-imperialist solidarity. Its expressed notion of anti-imperialism was far from limited, for it included apartheid, racism, fascism, and other related concepts that appealed to different countries

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<sup>144</sup> *Around the Soviet Union No. 211*; Efremov, "Plamia festivalia;" "IUS Newsletter – April 1985;" *Peace and Friendship: Our Happiness*, directed by Ivan Garin.

of the Global South in different ways. These were ideas that were consistent throughout the festival and were part of the anti-imperialist tribunal, rallies of solidarity, and other festival events and conversations as well.

Delegates from the Global South generally had positive reactions to the Soviet Union and the events of the Moscow festival. In interviews given throughout the festival and interviews given in their own countries following the Moscow festivities, the vast majority of responses from Global South delegates about the festival were positive. Youth were impressed by the Soviet Union as a whole, as well as the solidarity expressed throughout the festival. For example, an Afghan delegate remarked that there was “nothing to be afraid of” in Moscow and that the youths were able to be “anything they wanted to be” while there.<sup>145</sup> However, in contrast to the West, it was not simply the participants of the festival that felt the way this way. Delegates of numerous countries, like Cuba and Laos, returned home and were greeted by the leaders of their countries, mass celebrations, and requests for interviews.<sup>146</sup> In these countries, festival attendance held a place of honor, instead of being seen as something taken on by those on the outskirts of society. The events were not only reported on extensively in newspapers, but also broadcasted on radio and television.<sup>147</sup> For the countries of the Global South, the festival did not necessarily transcend any political boundaries in place, but it was a successful display of soft power

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<sup>145</sup> Larionova, “Prazdnik na vsiu zhizn'.”

<sup>146</sup> “Castro Message Greet Returns Youth Delegates,” *Havana Television Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, August 23, 1985; “Mass Rally Hails Success of Moscow Youth Festival,” *Vientiane KPL (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, August 10, 1985.

<sup>147</sup> “Machado Ventura Opens Meeting,” *Havana Television Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, February 7, 1984; “USSR-DPRK Accord on Broadcast Cooperation Signed,” *Moscow International Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, January 12, 1985.

and a reaffirming of the Soviet Union's position on the world stage and in relations to these regions of the globe. In other words, the delegates were impressed but not completely transformed by what they encountered in Moscow, because they came from countries that were already engaged in friendly relations with the Soviet Union.

There were some negative reactions to the festival events that originated from the Global South, however. Almost exclusively, negative reactions revolved around instances of obvious Soviet repression, most notably their refusal to adequately discuss Afghanistan. A Spanish newspaper article detailed the various reactions to the Soviet intervention in the anti-imperialist tribunal, and it mentioned that several Central American countries expressed outrage alongside of the Western nations mentioned previously.<sup>148</sup> Such matters were not the concern of the West alone, for the Global South also questioned the Soviet Union's contradictory nature as it preached anti-imperialism, peace, and openness, but was engaged in actions of an imperialist nature itself and was not even willing to talk the problem out at this international forum that was intended to provide the opportunity to do just that. This was not a matter of believing in a failed Soviet ideology, as was the case with the West, so much as it was a matter of seeing contradictions within that ideology. Many in the Global South believed in the Soviet mission and all of their official internationalist ideas, but were not averse to questioning and criticizing the implementation of such concepts.

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<sup>148</sup> Bonet, "El Acta Final."

### **During and After the Festival – The Eastern Bloc**

The Soviet Union also had ways in which it worked to appeal to its satellite states throughout the festival events. Once again, Soviets did not seem to employ overly obvious measures to connect the themes of the festival to the satellite youth specifically. It appears as though the Soviet Union thought of these socialist bloc states as essentially being one and the same as them in terms of the festival movement. Something that is certainly worth noting though is the fact that although the Soviet Union kept certain topics under strict control, like Afghanistan, festival discussions about the political repression of the Polish Solidarity trade union movement and the Czechoslovakian dissidents' Charter 77 took place. Foreign governments, such as that of Spain, commended these conversations, labeling them an uncharacteristic display of openness from the Soviet state.<sup>149</sup> The Soviet Union did not wholly restrict the speech of its own citizens or the official festival program, and this example from the Soviet Union's own sphere of control says a great deal about what the Soviet Union was willing to give up in the name of international cooperation and the move towards common goals at this time, and well as what the Soviet Union's relationship and tensions with its satellite states looked like. The Soviet willingness to speak on such topics seemed to act as an antecedent to the *Glasnost*' openness that helped define the rest of Gorbachev's years in power.

Satellite state reactions to Soviet displays of internationalism at the Moscow festival were generally positive, although not exclusively so. In terms of the negative, in the same way as the West and Global South, the Soviet satellite states also protested the

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<sup>149</sup> Bonet, "El Acta Final."



Soviet control when it came to the topic of Afghanistan. Bulgaria's festival delegation actually walked out after the Soviet chairperson of the anti-imperialist tribunal intervened when Afghanistan was brought up.<sup>150</sup> However, beyond these issues, there was widespread support for the Soviet Union and widespread support in Eastern Europe for the festival movement as a whole. There was extensive media coverage and many positive comments from participants about the festival events and the Soviets themselves, such as a Bulgarian who praised the Soviet Union for not discriminating for matters relating to language or skin color.<sup>151</sup> Satellite state citizens and governments overall, and outwardly, supported the messages that the Soviet Union pushed in order to propel the festival forward, but the festival did not completely hide the political tensions in place.

Soviet internationalism during the 1985 festival varied in its portrayals as well as in the foreign reactions that it received from the West, the Global South, and its own satellite states, all of this reflecting the larger political relations in motion at the time. Soviet encouragement of the West was tied to the memory of past cooperation most of all, while attempts to appeal to the Global South and Eastern Europe were discussed in relation to the present and continuing into the future. While Soviet sentiments hit home and were attractive to most delegates, in the West the ideas did not reach the governments, and although this was not the case in the Global South or in regard to the satellite states, there were still problems that, when taken into consideration, give a better sense of the complicated nature and nuanced successes of Soviet internationalism and cultural

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<sup>150</sup> Bonet, "El Acta Final."

<sup>151</sup> Larionova, "Prazdnik na vsiu zhizn'."

diplomacy. All of this ties to the question of towards whom the festival was really directed. To this day, the World Festivals of Youth and Students are often discussed and researched as they related to the Cold War West. However, it is undeniable that the 1985 Moscow festival was not simply a matter of East versus West. The Global South played a tremendously important part in festival preparation and implementation, and the supporting role held by the Eastern Bloc was substantial as well. The youth festival was partially a way for the West and the Soviet Union to address political problems and try to demonstrate cultural superiority, but that was not the end of it. The youth festivals were advertised as being for the whole world, and although they were socialist-dominated, host countries still tried to uphold to the festival tradition of appealing to all forces.

### **Conclusion**

Internationalism and cultural diplomacy were important to the Soviet Union, and these ideas were on full display at international events within the Soviet Union's borders like the 1985 Twelfth World Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow. By 1985, far gone were the isolationist years of Stalin's time as leader of the Soviet Union—the world was becoming increasingly globalized and the Soviet Union was not immune to the process. To its entire audience, the Soviet Union used the festival as an opportunity to prove itself as a leader in the fight for world peace, but the Soviet Union developed its internationalism to impact the West and the Global South in different ways, which was only logical given the context of the surrounding Cold War. The Soviet Union played to its audiences when addressing them and appealing to them on such an international platform, portraying matters as they would make sense to the different groups. The Soviet Union's attempts

were successful in some ways but not in others, for the reactions of the Global South were generally positive, reactions from the West varied depending on whether they came from delegations or governments, and although the satellite states were seen as being an inherent part of the Soviet's mission and goals, they also showed their independence at the festival, and some of the tensions between these powers and the Soviet state were evident. All of this shows how difficult it is to actually pinpoint the level of effectiveness that Soviet internationalism had. However, there are related matters that are worth noting and that are contrary to popular belief, such as the fact that the Soviet Union did not rely on the legacy of its past without good reason, the Soviet Union was strategic and catered its internationalist approach differently to different people, and that the Soviet Union did not simply see the festival as an opportunity to go head-to-head with the West, although there were certainly elements of Cold War tensions present. These big ideas relating to Soviet internationalism, the Cold War, and the Soviet approach to politics in the mid-1980s were all not only prominent in the ways in which the Soviet Union interacted with its foreign counterparts, but they also played into the domestic situation in the Soviet Union at the very same time.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE FESTIVAL AT HOME**

The domestic problems and successes of the Soviet Union were never simply a domestic concern. Throughout its history, the internal dynamics of the Soviet Union were politicized from multiple ends, for the Soviet Union wanted to prove its stability to its own citizens and its foreign counterparts at the same time that the West wanted to discredit the Soviet Union and prove the very opposite. This process was amplified when it came to mega-events, during which the typically closed-off Soviet Union was on display for citizens of every region of the world to see. These events were staged, but they also involved the Soviet state relaxing its control over its public sphere and established narratives to certain degrees. The Twelfth World Festival of Youth and Students in particular spoke to the surrounding circumstances of Soviet life in an important way. Once again, 1985 is a year that sits between the era of “late socialism,” generally identified as lasting from the late 1960s to the mid-1980s, and the Gorbachev era, which took place from the mid-1980s to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. However, many of the problems facing Soviet society remained consistent from the 1970s onwards, and therefore, although 1985 is an important transitional year in Soviet and Cold War politics in its own right, it is possible to use the year and its events to discuss the problems of the last decades of the Soviet Union more broadly. Not all was negative in the Soviet Union, for the government took initiatives to improve standards of living and society as a whole is seen as having reached maturity during the years leading up to 1985, and 1985 also marked the beginning of an era of reform and new levels of openness. However, political, social, and economic crises existed as well, threatening the Soviet system. The general state of the Soviet Union

was apparent to its citizens and most certainly also to countries in the West, and therefore the 1985 festival—like the 1980 Olympics before it—was an opportunity to rebuild the Soviet image, in the process reassuring Soviet citizens, proving the West wrong, and retaining appeal to the countries of the Global South. In this way, the domestic conditions of the late Soviet Union became an important component of the international youth festival, in regard to Soviet portrayals, as well as foreign opinions and reactions.

The Soviet state had a different interpretation of the defining features and problems of late socialism than its foreign onlookers. In the mega-event setting, the Soviet Union predictably wanted to portray the current positive aspects of Soviet society, in addition to its path towards a prosperous future, not only to its foreign guests, but to its own people. When it came to youth festival preparation, in many ways the Soviet Union did not completely ignore its glaring problems, but the spin that official media sources put on such troubles differed greatly from the information put forth by the Soviet Union's Western counterparts. While Soviet press about the festival preparations focused on improvements as well as further promotions of things that Soviet citizens were already proud of, American and other Western media harped on the fact that the Soviet Union had been facing the same, unchanging problems for years. These portrayals can be compared to the known realities of the period and to each other to determine the larger political implications of the differences, for in the same way as the Soviet approach to internationalism and attempts to prove itself as the world leader in the fight for peace, Cold War tensions were clearly at play as the Soviet Union used the 1985 youth festival to attempt to prove its domestic stability as well.

## Transportation

Transportation was both a known success and a known problem of late Soviet infrastructure, and it had a stake in festival preparations. In general, public transportation thrived and served as an affordable and efficient option for both citizens and tourists. The railways—both under and above ground—were utilized extensively by Soviets and foreigners, and the government invested in new train and metro stations through the 1980s.<sup>152</sup> Bus transportation was popular as well. In the mid-1980s the state even attempted to change to a more environmentally-safe fuel source; however, this initiative was not particularly successful.<sup>153</sup> The Soviet Union’s aviation industry was competitive on the international stage, but its most popular airline, Aeroflot, was not without problems. Domestic flights taken by both Soviets and foreigners were said to involve long waits, poor service, inadequate food and bathrooms, and uncomfortable cabins. Aeroflot and other Soviet airlines also had problems with safety, losing hundreds of aircrafts to accidents throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Not all resulted in fatalities, but correct numbers are not even known for all of the ones that did due to inaccurate Soviet reporting.<sup>154</sup> The transportation sector in which the Soviet Union struggled most was the car industry. The Soviet state had a complicated relationship with cars. It portrayed the Soviet Union’s public transportation, especially the metro, as being a better alternative to the West’s private

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<sup>152</sup> David Wilson, *The Demand for Energy in the Soviet Union* (London: Routledge, 1983), 205-206.

<sup>153</sup> *A Study of the Soviet Economy* (Washington D.C.: International Monetary Fund, 1991), 87-88.

<sup>154</sup> “Aeroflot Flies Blind,” December 1976, *Flight International Digital Archive*, <https://www.flightglobal.com/pdfarchive/view/1976/1976%20-%202904.html>; “Soviet Union: Aeroflot Operations,” May 1989, *Library of Congress Country Studies*, <https://www.loc.gov/item/97007563/>; “Worst Airline Safety Audit,” January 1985, *Flight International Digital Archive*, <https://www.flightglobal.com/pdfarchive/view/1985/1985%20-%200243.html>.

transportation because of its affordability and elegance; however, the Soviet Union had been producing cars since the 1930s, and they were often imitations of Western models.<sup>155</sup> Automobile production increased in the later decades of the Soviet Union, but few citizens could afford cars, and the road network was so underdeveloped that cars were rarely an efficient form of travel.<sup>156</sup> Mature socialism in the Soviet Union brought a shift away from the communal and towards the individual, and this brought tensions when the Soviet state failed to invest in private transportation in a way that could keep up with the growing demands of the people and the era.

The Soviet Union's official media sources often discussed transportation methods as they related to festival preparations, stressing the successful public sector. Soviet newspapers reported on the fact that participants from over one hundred and fifty countries would be using a wide variety of transportation methods to arrive in Moscow, which included Soviet ships and airlines.<sup>157</sup> The press stressed that the Soviet tourism industry worked extensively during the months prior to the festival, preparing to provide transportation services to foreign guests at every stage of the festival process.<sup>158</sup> A newspaper article written a year before the festival mentioned that Soviet railways were being repaired specifically in preparation for the events.<sup>159</sup> A month prior to the festival, an article mentioned the anticipated constant passenger movement in trains, and indicated

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<sup>155</sup> Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Cars for Comrades: The Life of the Soviet Automobile* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011); Lewis H. Siegelbaum, "On the Side: Car Culture in the USSR, 1960s-1980s," *Technology and Culture* 50, no. 1 (2008): 1-22.

<sup>156</sup> John Steward Ambler, Denis J. B. Shaw, and Leslie J. Symons, *Soviet and East European Transport Problems* (London: Routledge, 1985), 165-169.

<sup>157</sup> V. Smirnov, "Zvuchat fanfary nad Luzhnikami," *Pravda*, July 28, 1985.

<sup>158</sup> "K vstreche gotovy!" *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, June 25, 1985.

<sup>159</sup> G. Batsanova, "Doroga v gorod nadezhdy," *Pravda*, August 10, 1984.

that the Soviet Union was prepared for this to take place.<sup>160</sup> Several Soviet articles commented that many delegates would arrive by motor ships, and the Soviet Union had been preparing for water arrivals as well.<sup>161</sup> When it came time for the festival, Soviet delegates greeted foreign guests upon their arrival in the Soviet Union and provided transportation back to hotels, and newspapers commented on the efficiency of this as well.<sup>162</sup> The Soviets did not completely neglect the matter of private transportation though, for in what was likely an attempted display of successful Soviet industry and modern technology, the Soviets planned car and motorcycle performances for the festival too.<sup>163</sup> In the midst of the many problems that did exist in the late Soviet era, public transportation was something that could be emphasized to show that the state was still successfully providing for its citizens and its foreign visitors. The Soviet Union's festival guests directly benefitted from the work that the Soviets put in to ensure that everything ran smoothly, but it should be recognized that the Soviet press directed countless comments about its transportation endeavors directly to its internal audience, as if to reaffirm its citizens in their long-held pride for Soviet public transportation. In this way, it seems clear that the Soviet state was utilizing transportation to portray its domestic stability to both its own people and to those watching from all around the world.

Foreign media sources and foreign festival participants often mentioned Soviet transportation during discussions of the festival as well. The report that the U.S.

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<sup>160</sup> G. Batsanova, "Troie iz dvukh tysiach," *Pravda*, June 26, 1985.

<sup>161</sup> V. Mertsalov, "Ot Arktiki do tropikov," *Pravda*, July 16, 1985; V. Mertsalov, "Ot tropikov do Arktiki," *Pravda*, January 25, 1985.

<sup>162</sup> "SRV Youth Delegation Arrives," *Moscow International Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 24, 1985.

<sup>163</sup> Gogoberidze, "Programma na vse vkucy."



Department of State published in June 1985 about the measures that the Soviet Union was taking to prepare for the upcoming festival included a section on the Soviet airline company, Aeroflot. The Department of State emphasized that the Soviet Union was working in vain to advertise and build up the image of Aeroflot before the festival because of the substantial problems that it had supposedly been experiencing and that were known to Soviets and foreigners alike.<sup>164</sup> However, in contrast to this official account, general festival-goers had generally positive remarks about Soviet transportation as a whole. A delegate from Glasgow, Scotland discussed the well-run, intricate metro system in Moscow in his diary from the festival.<sup>165</sup> A participant from Denmark had a similar positive view of the “colossal” Moscow metro station.<sup>166</sup> A Cuban delegate, in an interview about the festival, commented on how excellent and well-organized the festival was in its entirety, and specifically mentioned transportation in his observation.<sup>167</sup> Other Caribbean delegates went by plane and expressed gratitude towards the Soviet Union because they had all travel accommodations paid for by the Komsomol and International Festival Fund.<sup>168</sup> Foreign reactions to transportation in the late Soviet Union were varied, with those actually attending the events seeming to have few qualms, while Western government reports and media said otherwise. Such reactions are comparable to that which is shown in the previous chapter regarding internationalism and the ways in which festival delegates reacted

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<sup>164</sup> *Soviet Active Measures*, 5.

<sup>165</sup> Paul Hill, “The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival of Youth and Students, Moscow 1985,” *Glasgow Punter* (blog), May 11, 2016. <http://glasgowpunter.blogspot.com/2016/05/the-12th-world-festival-of-youth-and.html>.

<sup>166</sup> Larionova, “Prazdnik na vsiu zhizn'.”

<sup>167</sup> *The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko.

<sup>168</sup> “70 Youth Festival Delegates to Leave for Moscow,” *Bridgetown CANA (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, July 13, 1985.

differently from their governments. Soviet transportation problems existed, but so too did the industry have successes. As a result, transportation as it related to the 1985 youth festival was politicized from both ends of the Cold War in different ways.

### **Standard of Living**

The last decades of the Soviet Union saw the Soviet Union struggling with supply availability while simultaneously working to improve standards of living for average citizens. The situation in the Soviet Union was not equivalent across all groups and social divides, but under Brezhnev, wages increased overall. However, most of the improvement took place in the first years of his time in power and essentially stalled during the following “era of stagnation.” The economy slowed, but the state still tried improving standards of living and housing quality, and succeeded to varying degrees.<sup>169</sup> Consumer goods were cheap at this time, and although they were lacking in comparison to Western countries, the increased availability of things like refrigerators did help raise the standard of living. However, by the end of the Brezhnev era, there were other problems that affected average Soviet citizens, such as the healthcare system being in peril and the agricultural sector of the Soviet economy failing, evident by the fact that bread had become rationed in several regions.<sup>170</sup> After Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov worked to address some related problems of the late Soviet Union, like corruption,<sup>171</sup> and Konstantin Chernenko after him worked to

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<sup>169</sup> Richard Sakwa, *Soviet Politics in Perspective* (London: Routledge, 1998), 28.

<sup>170</sup> Robert Service, *A History of Modern Russia: From Tsarism to the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 409-418.

<sup>171</sup> “The Soviet Anticorruption Campaign: Causes, Consequences, and Prospects, August 1985,” *CIA Electronic Reading Room*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp08s01350r000200600002-8>.

increase investment in things like consumer goods and agriculture.<sup>172</sup> However, widespread economic restructuring only took place under Gorbachev, starting after 1985, and therefore these problems of the late Soviet Union were factors in the 1985 festival.

The Soviet Union, predictably, painted a positive picture of Soviet life and resources in its own coverage of festival events. Although Soviet coverage of the youth festival did not particularly focus on the individual's standard of living, there was discussion of the cleanliness and improvement of the public space. Many of the venues that had been used for the 1980 Moscow Olympics were renovated, and Komsomol members had the same task of cleaning the streets of Moscow that they had had prior to the 1957 youth festival. This process included ridding the streets of stray dogs and cats, and even clearing the city of pigeons, in addition to general trash pickup and cleaning.<sup>173</sup> The Soviet Union seemed to counter Western attacks on personal standards of living more concretely during elements of the festival itself. First, many festival delegates stayed in hotels—the Kosmos hotel built for the 1980 Olympics in particular—and the Soviet press featured remarks made by those staying in the hotels on the pleasant Soviet hospitality and efficient accommodations.<sup>174</sup> There were others that stayed with host families in Moscow and were able to see Soviet homes and lifestyles up close, and American delegate Mike Davidow observed that the Soviet way of living was the “opposite” of what had been portrayed by

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<sup>172</sup> “Chernenko: A Preliminary Assessment of the Man and His Policy Agenda, March 1984,” *CIA Electronic Reading Room*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp85t00287r001400410001-3>.

<sup>173</sup> Bohlen, “Soviets, With Care, Hail World Youth;” Peacock, “The Perils of Building Cold War Consensus,” 519-20; Schmemmann, “Life in Moscow;” Tyner, “Soviet Emigration of Jews Increases.”

<sup>174</sup> *The Coming Festival*, directed by Aleksei Uchitel; Efremov, “Plamia festivalia;” *Hello 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko; *Peace and Friendship: Our Happiness*, directed by Ivan Garin; *The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko.

the American press, and that he and other delegates “wanted more.”<sup>175</sup> Additionally, the last day of the festival was dedicated to teaching guests about the Soviet Union, and part of this involved tours of Moscow apartments.<sup>176</sup> The Soviet Union put the best homes on display, hoping to dispel some of the rumors about Soviet life. The domestic living conditions of Soviet citizens was an international concern in the midst of Cold War tensions, and the Soviet Union worked to convince its foreign guests of the capabilities of the Soviet state and people and the positive aspects of the Soviet lifestyle as a whole.

In their coverage of the festival, Western media outlets tended to stress low Soviet living standards. For years, Westerners—most prominently Americans—who planned to travel to the Soviet Union were warned by their respective governments of the poor living conditions of the country, and the months leading up to and following the 1985 World Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow were no exception. The United States press published a variety of articles stressing how poorly Soviets lived compared to what Americans knew at home.<sup>177</sup> Additionally, Western press emphasized that although the Soviet Union was struggling to have enough food and resources for its own citizens, it put on a show for its foreign guests and left its own people to continue to struggle. Western media connected the situation to the 1980 Olympics, saying that the Soviet Union did the same thing to its own citizens then.<sup>178</sup> In reports on the festival, the United States and rest of the West continued to undermine the Soviet Union and its attempts to build up its international image of domestic stability by focusing not only on where the Soviet Union

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<sup>175</sup> Davidow, *Youth Fights for Its Future*, 34, 38.

<sup>176</sup> *The 12<sup>th</sup> World Festival: Days of the Festival*, directed by A. Opryshko.

<sup>177</sup> Schmemmann, “Life in Moscow.”

<sup>178</sup> Hornsby, “The Enemy Within?” 237–78.

was falling short in general, but also the ways in which it was “putting on a show” specifically for its international audience at the festival.

### **Zionism**

The Soviet Union’s “Jewish question” played a role in domestic and international politics of the late Soviet Union. Anti-Semitism was prevalent all throughout the Soviet period, despite official rhetoric that indicated that the Soviet Union was above such forms of discrimination.<sup>179</sup> “Anti-Zionism” tended to be cover that the Soviet state used for anti-Semitic actions because anti-Zionism was considered to be different and in line with the official Soviet stance, Zionism being labeled as a form of “bourgeois nationalism” and racism. Soviet newspapers rarely referenced Jewish citizens as a group, instead referring to “Zionism” and “Israel” alone in this attempt to disguise anti-Semitic ideas.<sup>180</sup> In the late Soviet era, many Soviet Jews were prevented from emigrating from the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union tried to prevent emigration of any citizens for obvious reasons, and for the Jewish population there was the added components of attempting to prevent the spread of Zionism, as well as trying to slow the “brain drain” that was affecting the country. Many educated professionals were leaving the Soviet Union during this time to seek better opportunities elsewhere, and a significant portion of Jews were educated professionals with jobs in the medical, science, and music fields. The Soviet state enacted different policies to limit Jewish emigration in the 1970s and early 1980s, including a “diploma tax” in 1972,

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<sup>179</sup> Leon Trotsky, “Thermidor and Anti-Semitism, February 1937,” *Marxists Internet Archive*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1937/02/therm.htm>.

<sup>180</sup> Konstantin Azadovskii and Boris Egorov, “From Anti-Westernism to Anti-Semitism: Stalin and the Impact of the ‘Anti-Cosmopolitan’ Campaigns on Soviet Culture,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4, no. 1 (2002): 66–80.

which made it so that educated professionals had to pay an unrealistic fee if they hoped to emigrate after having received higher education. Many Jews were also kept from leaving simply because the state claimed that they had had access to state secrets. Those who were not permitted to emigrate were called “*refuseniks*.”<sup>181</sup> The Soviet treatment of its Jewish citizens and anti-Zionist policies drew worldwide attention, with Western countries labeling the situation an example of a Soviet human rights violation.<sup>182</sup> It was not until 1989, after the first few years of Gorbachev’s time in power, that a record number of Soviet Jews were permitted to emigrate.<sup>183</sup> Internationally, the stance of the Soviet Union on Zionism was met with different reactions, for the West condemned the evident Soviet discrimination, but anti-Zionism further united the Soviet Union with its Arab allies. Therefore, once again, the domestic conditions within the Soviet Union were inseparable from the international, and both aspects played a part in the 1985 Moscow festival.

Issues relating to the Soviet Union’s treatment of its Jewish population were present in festival preparation and events, but in this case, the Soviet state deemed a lack of advertising on the matter to be more helpful in constructing a positive domestic image. 1985 festival preparations were comparable to those of the two previous Soviet mega-events—the 1957 World Festival of Youth and Students and the 1980 Moscow Olympics—in the way that the state ensured that the streets were “cleaned up” prior to the arrival of foreign guest. Besides the superficial alterations relating to the cleanliness of the public

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<sup>181</sup> Piet Buwalda, *They Did Not Dwell Alone: Jewish Emigration from the Soviet Union 1967-1990* (Washington D.C.: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1997).

<sup>182</sup> Stefan T. Possony "Anti-Semitism in the Russian Orbit" in *Case Studies on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms: A World Survey* (1976).

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

space already mentioned, the process included relocating homeless Soviets and Soviet dissidents out of Moscow. Since the Soviet Union saw Zionists as a threat to the Soviet state and ideology, many Soviet Jews were included with the “dissidents.” However, the specifics of this practice were not advertised by the Soviet press at the time.<sup>184</sup> Additionally, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the festival was largely focused on the fortieth anniversary of World War II, or “the defeat of Nazi fascism and Japanese militarism,” and at this time, Zionism was often labeled as a form of fascism by countries who opposed Israel. Israel did not attend the festival, but there were Jewish delegates from other countries that did. The Soviet Union never spoke out against them directly, even though their presence caused Libya to decide not to attend.<sup>185</sup> While the Soviet state was indeed anti-Zionist, in regard to the festival it took a more neutral stance in the attempt to promote the hope for peace and solidarity, thereby trying to fulfill its internationalist intentions at the same time that it was hoping to repair its domestic image.

Western media used the 1985 Moscow youth festival as an opportunity to comment on injustices suffered by Soviet Jews. An article about the festival published in Madrid weighed in on the restriction of Soviet Jewish emigration, tying it to other examples of Soviet repression, such as the Soviet Union’s actions in Afghanistan and the prevention of discussion of such actions during the festival. In a United States newspaper article about obtaining visas prior to the festival, there was mention of the festival circumstances being positive for Soviet Jews who the Soviet state had thus far not permitted to emigrate. The

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<sup>184</sup> Bohlen, “Soviets, With Care, Hail World Youth;” Peacock, “The Perils of Building Cold War Consensus,” 519-20; Schmemmann, “Life in Moscow;” Tyner, “Soviet Emigration of Jews Increases.”

<sup>185</sup> Bohlen, “Soviets, With Care, Hail World Youth;” Bonet, “El Acta Final;” “Libyan Delegates Pull Out of World Youth Festival.”

Soviet state gave exit visas high priority in the months prior to the festivities in the hopes of accommodating all of the incoming visa requests, and therefore the United States anticipated that Soviet Jews would have their chance to leave, especially because the Soviet Union wanted to remove those who they considered to be political dissidents from Moscow at this time as well.<sup>186</sup> Another American article also discussed how the Soviet Union was eager to have “refuseniks and other political undesirables” leave before foreign guests started coming in, because Soviet officials wanted to prevent unsatisfied opinions about the Soviet Union from being expressed.<sup>187</sup> The West used their press coverage about this festival dedicated to international peace and solidarity as an opportunity to discuss Soviet discriminatory policies and prevention of human freedoms.

## **Youth**

Soviet youth culture evolved during the post-Stalin period and years of late socialism, and scholars often describe it as having been contradictory. Youth were metaphorically important to the Soviet state, for they had the potential to represent either a hopeful future or an impending loss of control. During the last decades of the Soviet Union, the Soviet state continued to work to educate youth using specific ideology and information in school, and also continued to control Soviet leisure activities, with youth organizations having to be officially registered with the government, and most being connected to the Komsomol.<sup>188</sup> After the Khrushchev Thaw, Soviet youth began having more exposure to Western culture though, which in turn affected their own culture. However, while

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<sup>186</sup> Bohlen, “Soviet Shift on Visas Raises Hopes, Concerns of 'Refusedniks!'.”

<sup>187</sup> Tyner, “Soviet Emigration of Jews Increases.”

<sup>188</sup> Pilkington, *Russia's Youth and Its Culture*, 77-82, 102-113; Tsipursky, *Socialist Fun*, 76-77.



hooliganism and Western-oriented dissident groups, like the *stiliagi*, did appear, often the Western aspects of Soviet life melded together with Soviet state expectations and structures. For example, there were high-level Komsomol officials in the 1960s through the early 1980s who had pictures of American cars in their offices and helped organize Western rock band concerts. They performed their duties to the state while challenging the state at the same time.<sup>189</sup> Although the Brezhnev era was less open than the time of the Khrushchev Thaw, most historians argue that Russian youth connection to the West grew, and adherence to strict state policies lessened progressively over the later socialist years. In 1984, there were educational and recreational youth reforms in the Soviet Union, which increased Communist Party control in the Komsomol, tightened restrictions on approved youth leisure time, and gave both the Komsomol and Soviet schools the task of increasing class and ideological education for Soviet youth, which was meant to include international education as well.<sup>190</sup> Reforms additionally included labor, social, and physical improvements for youth, teachers were evaluated for their adherence to party lines, and rural education was to receive “special attention” because those schools were supposedly falling behind Soviet expectations at higher rates than urban institutions.<sup>191</sup> The reforms

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<sup>189</sup> Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, 207-237.

<sup>190</sup> “Estafeta ideinoi ubezhdenosti,” *Pravda*, June 5, 1984; “Grishin Address;” “Mishin Addresses Meeting,” *Komsomol'skaia pravda (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, November 6, 1984; “Nadezhnyi rezerv partii,” *Izvestiia*, March 18, 1984; “Nastupatel'nost' nashei ideologii;” “Obsudili komsomol'tsy,” *Izvestiia*, May 19, 1984; Silin, “Ploshchadi nashi palitry;” “Tesnee iunosti riady;” “TV 'Text' of Speech,” *Moscow Television Service (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, November 5, 1984; “Vernyi pomoshchnik partii.”

<sup>191</sup> “Supreme Soviet Approves Draft on School Reform,” *Pravda (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, April 14, 1984.

were noted by both the West and the Soviet press in media covering the upcoming festival, albeit in different ways.

Soviet sources covering the youth festival—and youth population in general—at times admitted to problems, but overall expressed a sense of optimism. The 1984 news sources reporting on Chernenko’s education and Komsomol reforms did openly discuss the idea that the Komsomol was using outdated approaches to appeal to youth, and that youth were in danger of turning against the ideals of the Soviet Union and towards immorality as a result.<sup>192</sup> A newspaper article even commented that Soviet youth were a positive force for the future, but were not always engaged with “positive moral experiences.”<sup>193</sup> However, all of this should not negate the fact that, while there were dissident and “Westernized” youth that were present in Soviet society, a great number of Soviet youths generally abided by the system, and were “successfully socialized.”<sup>194</sup> There were many youth programs that flourished during this time, like youth summer construction programs, the successes of which were advertised by the Soviet Union to both its own citizens and to Westerners.<sup>195</sup> Related to this, the idea of the “Stakhanovite” worker was still alive, and many youths were still motivated to work towards maximum productivity.<sup>196</sup> In general, to both their international and domestic audiences, the Soviet Union confidently emphasized the “peace and creativity” of Soviet youth and made it clear that Soviet youth were the capable,

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<sup>192</sup> “Nastupatel'nost' nashei ideologii;” “V Politbiuro TsK KPSS,” *Pravda*, June 29, 1984.

<sup>193</sup> “Estafeta ideinoi ubezhdenosti.”

<sup>194</sup> Pilkington, *Russia's Youth and Its Culture*, 85, 89-117; Yurchak, “The Cynical Reason of Late Socialism,” 161–88; Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*.

<sup>195</sup> Aksenov, Ogorodnev, and Wood, *Looking Forward to the 12th World Youth Festival*, 34; V. Belikov, “24 iunia: Den' sovetskoi molodezhi,” *Izvestiia*, June 23, 1984.

<sup>196</sup> Pilkington, *Russia's Youth and Its Culture*, 95.

friendly leaders of the future.<sup>197</sup> Additionally, in Soviet reflections on the success of the Moscow youth festival published in newspapers after the summer of 1985, they also reflected on their attempts to “step up ideological, moral, and international education of young men and women,” and they deemed their measures to be working.<sup>198</sup> Soviet youth were a problem of late socialism to a certain degree, evident in the reforms that the Soviet state enacted, but the 1985 Moscow festival served as an opportunity for the Soviet Union to promote its youth and their accomplishments, and therefore the continued stability and achievements of the Soviet state.

Western sources discussing the festival often mentioned a “youth crisis” in the Soviet Union that was so labeled to stress the Soviet youth turn away from state ideals. In the report published by the U.S. Department of State prior to the start of the festival, there was a discussion of this 1980s “youth crisis.” The document asserted that the Soviet Union was worried about Western influence on Soviet youth—especially after surges of dissident activity in Poland—and the fact that youths were becoming more unruly and more preoccupied with ideas of individualism and consumerism as a result of such influences. The report emphasized that the Soviet government was taking measures to bring the youth back under control, and the World Festival of Youth and Students was tied into this idea of trying to regain control over the youth and propagate the correct image of the future of the Soviet Union. The document cited a speech given by Soviet leader Chernenko on May

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<sup>197</sup> M. Baratiants, “Leninskim kursom mira i sozidaniia,” *Izvestiia*, November 7, 1984; “Estafeta ideinoi ubezhdenosti;” “Mishin Outlines Komsomol Tasks in Interview,” *Prague Rude Pravo (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, October 28, 1985; Silin, “Ploshchadi nashi palitry.”

<sup>198</sup> “Komsomol Plenum Information Report,” *Komsomol'skaia pravda (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, November 3, 1985.

28, 1984 in which he criticized the Komsomol for attempting to solve new problems with “obsolete and unoriginal methods,” instead of creative initiatives, as well as the June 28 Politburo decree in which it was revealed that the Communist Party would be having a closer relationship with the Komsomol in the attempt to combat such things as “labor and civic passivity, individualism, lack of discipline, wastefulness, drunkenness, laziness, apoliticism, immorality, and blind imitation of Western fashion.” However, it should be noted that upon inspection of the original articles, it appears that the State Department fabricated, or at least incorrectly cited, this specific list of vices.<sup>199</sup> In January 1985, a *Pravda* newspaper article echoed some of the same ideas about youth reform in general and then tied them to the festival, stating that the Komsomol must “do much for the purposeful class education of young men and women in preparations for the Moscow festival,” and the State Department cited this article as well.<sup>200</sup> In a similar way, there were also Western newspaper articles written about the festival referencing the fact that these “aimless” youth were causing problems when preparing for the events.<sup>201</sup> As a whole, the Western press negatively advertised the situation of Soviet youth prior to the festival, once again in a Cold War-style attempt to discredit the Soviet Union’s domestic control.

The 1985 World Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow brought to light numerous issues of the late socialist period of the Soviet Union. The festival showed Soviet domestic conditions in and of themselves, and also revealed the international politics associated with these conditions, indicating that the domestic situation was not limited to

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<sup>199</sup> *Soviet Active Measures*, 1-2; “V Politbiuro TsK KPSS.”

<sup>200</sup> “Nastupatel'nost' nashei ideologii;” *Soviet Active Measures*, 1-2.

<sup>201</sup> Seth Mydans, “Party Officials Try to Cope with Aimless Soviet Youth,” *New York Times*, September 9, 1984.

a simply domestic impact. The realms of Soviet transportation, standard of living, Jewish emigration, and youth include just some examples of problems that faced the Soviet Union in the late socialist era and were highlighted in the wake of festival preparations and events, contributing to further displays of Cold War tensions. The Soviet Union used the festival as an opportunity to improve the ways in which both its own citizens and its foreign counterparts viewed the internal realities of the Soviet experience, and the Western press used the opportunity to do the opposite, critiquing the Soviet Union for its shortcomings and its attempts to cover up these shortcomings. However, it is important to remember that the festival took place during Gorbachev's first year as leader, and it was over the next few years that the Soviet administration would attempt to address some of these issues at their roots.

It is not a simple task to try and determine precisely where 1985 belongs in the periodization of Soviet history, for leadership changed a few months in and subsequently policies changed. In the process, elements of the pre-Gorbachev and Gorbachev eras melded together. The larger-scale Gorbachev reforms had not yet been implemented, but Gorbachev did not sit and idly observe for his first year either. The youth mega-event of 1985 put pressure on the Soviets of that time to establish what Gorbachev's time in power would mean domestically and internationally and to portray that to the foreigners both attending, and simply paying attention to, the events. The 1985 World Festival of Youth and Students is an invaluable event to study when trying to periodize the year within the context of late Soviet history, for it reflected aspects of both the previous period and the

upcoming years, and the international transparency of the situation made it so that the year's transition as a whole was visible within the festival itself.

### **1985 as a Reflection of the Previous Period**

The festival took place when not much had changed yet under Gorbachev, and much of the planning occurred under the previous Soviet leader, Konstantin Chernenko. To indicate that the festival in its entirety was reflective of the period of openness under Gorbachev would be inaccurate, considering that the Soviet Union volunteered to host the event in 1983,<sup>202</sup> and preparations began in earnest in 1984.<sup>203</sup> Chernenko was the leader of the Soviet Union during this period, and he was a known supporter of the festival and of Soviet youth and Komsomol activities in general. He, on multiple occasions, asserted that his push for Komsomol reforms was the result of a strong belief in the capabilities and potential of Soviet youth.<sup>204</sup> Chernenko often spoke out about the good work that the Komsomol was doing, both in general and in reference to festival preparation.<sup>205</sup> Upon Chernenko's death in March 1985, the leader of the Komsomol, Viktor Mishin, gave a speech in remembrance of the Soviet leader, his accomplishments, and his belief in Soviet youth. The speech mentioned Chernenko's support and excitement for the upcoming

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<sup>202</sup> V. Arsen'ev, "V edinom stroiu bortsov za mir," *Izvestiia*, November 30, 1983; Chausov, "Golos molodezhi."

<sup>203</sup> "Ustranit' iadernuiu ugrozu," *Izvestiia*, January 14, 1984; M. Zenovich, "Pervaia vstrecha," *Pravda*, January 6, 1984.

<sup>204</sup> "Chernenko Addresses Socialist Youth Group Leaders," *TASS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports)*, November 5, 1984; Chernenko, "Uchastnikam mezhdunarodnoi vstrechi trudiashcheisia molodezhi;" "Grishin Address;" "Supreme Soviet Approves Draft on School Reform;" "Vernyi pomoshchnik partii."

<sup>205</sup> Chernenko, "Uchastnikam mezhdunarodnoi vstrechi trudiashcheisia molodezhi;" *The Coming Festival*, directed by Aleksei Uchitel; "Vernyi pomoshchnik partii;" "Vstrecha K. U. Chernenko s rukovoditeliami molodezhnykh organizatsii sotsialisticheskikh stran."

international festival.<sup>206</sup> Gorbachev was then elected to power, and although he also had a hand in festival work and showed his support for the festival and the Komsomol as a whole in the months to come and for the rest of his time as leader, foreign guests were not invited to the Soviet Union as a direct result of Gorbachev initiatives of openness.<sup>207</sup> The festival was a display of Soviet internationalism in a way that, in many ways, was not new in 1985.

The festival still saw many of the same restrictions of speech that characterized the period before Gorbachev, but changed significantly under his direction. Gorbachev's time in power is known—perhaps most significantly—for the policy of *Glasnost*, or “openness.” The Soviet state was more open about its shortcomings and there was less censorship in the media and in the lives of Soviet citizens.<sup>208</sup> However, *Glasnost* as a policy did not really come into existence until 1986, so there were still noticeable restrictions in speech during 1985. As described in the previous chapter, Soviet involvement in Afghanistan was a sensitive subject. Delegates from Afghanistan were in attendance and the Soviets discussed their presence in the country, but portrayed it as being part of brotherly relationship, emphasizing the previously established party line that the Afghans were thankful for the Soviets.<sup>209</sup> However, when the Afghanistan conflict was brought up in contexts that were not under Soviet control and not consistent with the established Soviet rhetoric, the Soviet festival representatives shut down the discussions.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> V. Mishin, “Rech' V.M. Mishina,” *Pravda*, March 14, 1985.

<sup>207</sup> “Mishin Outlines Komsomol Tasks in Interview.”

<sup>208</sup> Joseph Gibbs, *Gorbachev's Glasnost: The Soviet Media in the First Phase of Perestroika* (College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 1999).

<sup>209</sup> Bonet, “El Acta Final;” “Controversy Over Afghanistan at Moscow Festival;” “Jamaica Youth Conference 'Show' Denounced.”

<sup>210</sup> Bonet, “El Acta Final;” “Controversy Over Afghanistan at Moscow Festival;” “Delegation Protests USSR Translation of Speech.”

The West also complained about not being able to discuss issues relating to Jews, the persecution of religion, and the situation of sexual minorities that specifically affected the Soviet Union.<sup>211</sup> As a whole, Komsomol leaders taught Soviet festival delegates how to act and how to portray the best image of the Soviet Union prior to the festival, which was the same process that had taken place before the 1957 festival. The Soviet delegates received lessons on how to be courteous hosts, and also on how to respond to inquiries and debates on a variety of topics with the official Soviet stances. The Soviet delegates were all chosen carefully, so as to ensure that the correct Soviet image was broadcasted.<sup>212</sup> While there were some degrees of openness in the festival, these instances of structure and control show that the festival was not completely part of the Gorbachev era of openness and instead still reflected the previous period in various ways.

The reactions of the West to the festival were generally more reminiscent of the late socialist period than those that came in the later years of Gorbachev. Through a combination of Gorbachev's attempts to cool down the Cold War and his general shift in attitude relating to Soviet transparency, Gorbachev was more popular with the West than any Soviet leader before him. Tensions were still present and Reagan in particular was not forthcoming with his intentions to compromise to any degree with the Soviet Union, but the Gorbachev era saw the beginnings of warmer relations with the West. However, as indicated by the aforementioned Western media representations of, and attitudes towards, the festival, the West was not yet at a point of noticeably friendlier relations during the

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<sup>211</sup> Popov, "Poslednee sovetskoe megasobytie," 1023.

<sup>212</sup> Efremov, "Plamia festivalia."



festival preparations and events, and was instead still largely utilizing established Cold War attitudes. Additionally, Western media sources about the festival stressed supposed Soviet attempts to “brainwash” their foreign guests. In Cold War-style tactics, the United States and other Western countries tried to discourage their citizens from attending the festival, and they did so by accusing the Soviet state of trying to brainwash foreigners in the attempt to convince them of the superiority of the Soviet ways. An article published about festival delegates from Chicago emphasized that although the Chicago mayor was convinced that the United States participants would not come back brainwashed and therefore thought that there was no problems with them attending, much of the general population thought otherwise.<sup>213</sup> Other newspaper articles discussed groups of American citizens who planned to attend the festival—such as a theater group hoping to perform an antiwar play—but, in an attempt to diminish the significance of the festival, the media stressed the fact that these were independent citizens and not part of any official United States delegation.<sup>214</sup> Therefore, even from a Western perspective, 1985 as it was being lived seemed to be more consistent with the years before Gorbachev. The Soviet state had yet to implement any of its major attempted reforms that attracted the West and the West still seemed to be convinced that the Soviet Union was experiencing the ingrained problems of late socialism with little hope for change.

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<sup>213</sup> Michael Sneed, Cheryl Lavin, and Kathy O'Malley, “Redfest '85,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 6, 1985.

<sup>214</sup> D'Vera Cohn, “Seven Area Youth Going to Moscow To Participate in 'Peace Child',” *The Washington Post*, July 18, 1985.

### 1985 as a Reflection of the Upcoming Period

Speech was restricted during festival events, but there was undeniably more openness than there had been previously. Certain topics were heavily controlled during the festival; however, other topics, like the uprisings in Poland and dissidents in Czechoslovakia, were discussed.<sup>215</sup> Considering that Poland and Czechoslovakia were part of the Eastern Bloc and had close ties to the Soviet Union, this was a significant display of transparency and freedom of information on behalf of the Soviet Union. Additionally, the festival, on several occasions, was labeled the “most political” World Festival of Youth and Students to date.<sup>216</sup> The cultural and sports competitions were popular and a subject of interest for the festival participants and media coverage, but it was the political panels, conversations, and tribunals that dominated both Soviet and foreign press.<sup>217</sup> Granted, much of the political talk was aimed against things like U.S.-led imperialism and the United States’ nuclear arms developments, but the range of political and controversial topics was broader than those that were found at any previous festival, and undoubtedly contrasted the 1957 Moscow festival during which culture was the focus and political discussions were intentionally limited.<sup>218</sup> The move towards more political openness and freedom of speech and information fell more in line with the Gorbachev era of reform than it did with the period preceding 1985, and therefore was indicative of the change taking place within the Soviet Union.

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<sup>215</sup> Bonet, “El Acta Final.”

<sup>216</sup> “IUS Newsletter – February 1985;” Smirnov, “Zvuchat fanfary nad Luzhnikami.”

<sup>217</sup> Davidow, *Youth Fights for Its Future*, 45; Popov, “Poslednee sovetskoe megasobytie,” 1019.

<sup>218</sup> Koivunen, “The 1957 Moscow Youth Festival,” 53.

The festival revealed some of the peace initiatives and attempts to cool down the Cold War that defined the upcoming Gorbachev years. One of the things that both Soviets and foreigners considered to be a highlight of the festival week was the speech that Gorbachev gave—not even in direct connection to the festival—about the Soviet Union’s decision to enact a moratorium on nuclear testing, beginning in August and lasting until the end of 1985. The decision fit into the theme of international peace that dominated the festival, and Gorbachev hoped that the initiative would inspire the United States to reciprocate with its own ban on nuclear testing.<sup>219</sup> Gorbachev’s moratorium was connected to the foreign policy of his era, rather than that which preceded him. In the 1970s, under Brezhnev, there had been a period of Cold War détente; however, matters escalated again with the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan, and Andropov and Chernenko after Brezhnev did little to improve Cold War conditions.<sup>220</sup> Things worsened with Reagan as leader of the United States, and the early 1980s saw heightened tensions such as those relating to the Olympic boycotts of 1980 and 1984.<sup>221</sup> During his time in power, Gorbachev put forward a doctrine of “new thinking,” which impacted the Soviet Union’s role in the Cold War by promoting peaceful international politics, universal interests, and an increasingly interdependent world.<sup>222</sup> In this way, the festival events of 1985 were more of a taste of what to come than of what was. The international youth festival and its themes of peace

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<sup>219</sup> Popov, “Poslednee sovetskoe megasobytie,” 1021.

<sup>220</sup> Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente And Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1994).

<sup>221</sup> James Riordan, “The USSR and Olympic Boycotts,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 5, no. 3 (1988): 349–59.

<sup>222</sup> “Gorbachev and New Thinking in Soviet Foreign Policy, 1987-88,” *U.S. Department of State Archive*, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/rd/108225.htm>.

and cooperation corresponded with the views that Gorbachev himself seemed to hold when it came to international politics. Gorbachev's moratorium initiative was similar to a series of other initiatives in which he took part in the following years, centering around work to stop the arms race between the Soviet Union and the United States. Although the youth festival and 1985 as a whole were a bit early to see most of Gorbachev's major reforms, this was a glimpse of what would later form and help define both Soviet and Cold War history.

Although much of the Western coverage of festival-related activities were anti-Soviet in a traditional manner, there were some nuances that shifted with Gorbachev and hinted at a new era. In 1985, although Western coverage of the Twelfth World Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow was still laden with Cold War rhetoric, during the period of festival activities there were positive comments being made about Gorbachev as the new leader of the Soviet Union. Western sources had faith that the Gorbachev era would bring about improvements in the Soviet Union, and saw his ideas as a promise of more peaceful relations. Newspapers even reported that Western diplomats saw Gorbachev as having an "advantage" over Reagan because of his willingness to halt nuclear testing.<sup>223</sup> So, while the coverage of the festival events was most often negative in the way that was expected in the Cold War era, the belief in, and hope for, Gorbachev as a leader was certainly a move in a different direction. The altered attitude is, of course, more representative of the Gorbachev era of reform than the previous period of the Soviet Union and Cold War.

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<sup>223</sup> William Eaton, "Gorbachev Asserts Peace Goals at Youth Festival," *Los Angeles Times*, July 28, 1985; Michael McGuire, "Gorbachev Adds His Personality to Soviet Arsenal," *Chicago Tribune*, August 4, 1985.

The study of 1985 Moscow festival activity reveals that 1985 was indeed a transitional year, reflective of both the previous and the upcoming periods in Soviet history. 1985 being placed within the categories of both late socialism and the Gorbachev era makes sense, not only for the fact that Gorbachev became the Soviet leader a few months into the year, but also because it accurately shows that the year had elements that corresponded with both periods. The Moscow youth festival was something that clearly displayed the transition taking place, for the festival highlighted the internal dynamics of the Soviet Union, as well as its international relations, on both a domestic and an international scale. The problems of late socialism were prominent in the festival events, and the domestic and international attitudes and attributes of the Soviet Union were largely the same, but it is also evident that changes within the Soviet Union and Cold War relations were starting to emerge.

### **Conclusion**

The Twelfth World Festival of Youth and Students may have been a single event, but it related to a myriad of issues and questions important to late Soviet domestic life and politics. Foreign sources and the Soviet press handled their analyses of the problems of late socialism in different ways, the Soviet Union remaining optimistic about improvements while the West criticized the lack thereof. The Soviet Union did take concrete measures to alter domestic life specifically in preparation for the festival, and they did so in a way that they hoped would convince both their own citizens and their foreign critics of Soviet stability. However, the politicization of the domestic conditions of the Soviet Union during this international event occurred from both sides of the Cold War, each engaged in their

expected rhetoric. The youth festival shows how 1985 was a culmination of many of the problems from the late socialist era; however, 1985 was also the beginning of Gorbachev's time in power and an era of reform. Gorbachev, and the Soviet Union as a whole, had to quickly decide how to present itself as a strong, capable presence on the world stage, just months after the appointment of a new, uncharacteristically young, and comparatively radical leader. Few of Gorbachev's reforms had started by the time the festival took place, and therefore much was still reflective of the years prior; however, the festival did carry with it attitudes and elements of openness and peace that showcased what was to come. The festival and surrounding activities showed the larger transition taking place, and like the festival itself, this transition had both domestic and international implications, marking the Soviet Union as well as the entirety of the Cold War.

## CONCLUSION

After the closing of the 1985 Moscow youth festival, Soviet newspapers lamented the fact that all of the performances and events could only be experienced once. From the Soviet perspective, the event was an undeniable success, an “unprecedented celebration” with the noble purpose of contributing to the “political, aesthetic and ethical education of the masses.”<sup>224</sup> Not all interpreted the Twelfth World Festival of Youth and Students in this way, but it is undeniable that it was an event with implications far greater than that which immediately meets the eye. The festival was meant to combine important issues of the day with friendly competition and fun. Music and dance performances were abundant, art was everywhere, and artists and athletes alike competed against the youth of other nations for prizes and pride. Politics were not present in every aspect of the festival; however, this festival was known for being more political than any other that had preceded it. The festival’s location within the capital of the Soviet Union provided an opportunity upon which the Cold War powers seemed to capitalize, with the West criticizing the Soviet state, and the Soviet Union employing elements of internationalism to win support from youth all around the world in noticeably different ways, extending far beyond the East-West dichotomy.

The festival was laden with themes, symbols, and performances that were the Soviet Union’s attempts to appeal to, and appear united with, the other countries of the world. Anti-imperialism, the memory of World War II, and the anniversary of the Helsinki Accords were among the prominent themes of the festival, and performances like the

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<sup>224</sup> Silin, “Ploshchadi nashi palitry.”

opening ceremony and World War II artistic reenactment helped to symbolically bring these themes to life. Although the Soviet Union did rely on the legacy of the past when emphasizing things like World War II to such a degree, it was not without reason, for the Soviet Union was drawing on the memories of wartime to try and paint an image of cooperation in the West in the hopes of bringing about world peace. The Soviet Union did not exclusively remind the world of its past victories either, for it emphasized current progress and future goals, both for itself and in conjunction with the countries of the Eastern Bloc and the Global South. The Soviet Union's internationalist approach was varied and catered to its different audiences, with themes and symbols that portrayed the Soviet Union as a leader in the world's fight for international peace and could be understood by people of widely different backgrounds.

Beyond this idea of symbols and performance, concrete Soviet festival internationalism varied in its application to the West, Global South, East, and Soviet satellite states, as did the reactions to it, further revealing the politics that were at play during the cultural phenomenon that was the World Festival of Youth and Students. Reviews of the festival from official delegates were overwhelmingly positive, no matter the country or region from where these delegates originated. The festival was not without its issues, such as those relating to restriction of speech, but still these were minor in comparison to all that was deemed a success by those who attended. Foreign government reactions to the festival were much more varied, but negative comments did not say so much about the supposed success, or lack thereof, of the festival itself, instead speaking much more to the political tensions at stake. Whether the issue was related to Zionism or



general Cold War animosity, it was these factors that tended to hold the most sway in media coverage and government commentary about the events in Moscow, further showing how this cultural event became a breeding ground for political displays.

Despite the international youth festival's purpose to address problems facing the entire world, the domestic conditions of the Soviet Union at the time ended up playing a significant role in conversations about the event. The Twelfth World Festival of Youth and Students saw Moscow opening up its doors to a new mega-event only five years after the previous one, and for the second time in a decade, the internal conditions of the Soviet Union were on display for the entire world to see. The problems that the Soviet Union faced in the years of late socialism were well-known—to Soviet Union's international audience as well as its domestic—and the Soviet Union worked hard to stress its stability and the improvements that were taking place in different realms of the country to its own citizens, such as those relating to youth culture and standard of living. However, the United States-led West was there to undermine Soviet claims of progress in the limited media coverage of the festival in which the West did engage. There was both truth and Cold War tactics involved on both sides, resulting in the politicization of the domestic status of the Soviet Union within the scope of an event that was international in nature.

1985 was a pivotal year in the Soviet Union and the study of the Moscow youth festival actually helps elucidate 1985's place in the periodization of the history. 1985 being classified as both the end of the last socialist period and the beginning of the Gorbachev era makes sense, but leads to a myriad of questions. The youth festival took place in the summer and only a few months after Gorbachev took power, and therefore much still

remained the same. However, despite the limited time for change, changes were indeed evident. Study of the Moscow youth festival does not necessarily result in a concrete answer of whether 1985 belonged more in the period preceding 1985 or the era that followed. However, what it does do is show where some of the consistencies and some of the changes resided, in not only the Soviet Union's domestic sphere, but the international as well, thereby showing the very transition that characterized the year as a whole.

Overall, the festival shows both how the cultural and political went hand in hand, as well as the domestic and the international. All of the major points touched upon in the chapters of this work reveal strong connections between different aspects of the world in the mid-1980s. Politics were never far from culture, and most certainly not when it came to the world stage. The events of the festival and Soviet attempts to do things like create "friendship" programs with countries of the Global South and amongst its own satellite states were not wholly innocent and benevolent in nature. Additionally, the international was never far from the domestic, for even though the Moscow youth festival was supposed to be about something much larger than the Soviet Union itself, in practice this was not the case. The festival was built on ideas of anti-imperialism and world peace, and when the Soviet Union's opponents could not critique this festival message, they turned to criticizing the Soviet state itself. The Moscow youth festival had a lot to say, not only in terms of its official symbols and messages, but also in the way that its preparations and reactions all revealed things far beyond the scope of the festival itself.

This study of the 1985 World Festival of Youth and Students relates to the historiography of the Soviet Union in several ways and offers its own contribution. The

1985 Moscow festival falls in line with ideas of Soviet youth culture, the problems of late socialism in the Soviet Union, Soviet internationalism, Soviet mega-events, and more. Although little research has been published on the 1985 festival thus far, information and arguments provided here have a place in the surrounding historiography. This work tries to add to existing debates, and one of the ways in which it does this is by emphasizing the Global South's part in the festival movement. Virtually all scholarship on the 1957 Moscow festival revolves around the Western experience at the festival and the ways in which the Soviet Union was altered because of it. To return to what Tobias Rupprecht points out in his book about Soviet internationalism after Stalin, this begs the question of for whom the festivals were intended.<sup>225</sup> The Cold War influence in both Moscow youth festivals was undeniable, and therefore one of the goals here is to show that, but an additional goal is to recognize that the Soviet Union had domestic hopes relating to the youth festivals, and also had plans directed towards the Global South. To deny the importance of the Global South in the festival movement, and particularly the 1985 festival, would be a misjustice, not only in theory, but for the practical, tangible reason that so much of the festival was aimed towards these countries of the world. The anti-imperialist theme of the festival and rallies of solidarity were all highlights, and indicative of the importance that the Soviet Union saw in establishing relations with the Global South. Another important idea throughout this work is the recognition that not only was 1985 an important transitional year in the history of the Soviet Union and the Cold War, but that this transition

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<sup>225</sup> Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin*, 51.

was evident in the festival itself, for this speaks to the importance that the festival had in both its domestic and its international contexts.

This work is by no means all encompassing, and will perhaps help lead to additional questions and future scholarship. The available resources upon which this paper resides are primarily newspapers, and although there are a variety of perspectives represented, there are things missing. For example, Komsomol meeting minutes and sources directly from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union would add a great deal to the information provided here. Additionally, there are worthwhile larger ideas that have yet to be explored. There are brief mentions of connections between the 1985 festival and the 1957 festival, the 1985 festival and the 1980 Moscow Olympics, and even the 1985 festival and the festival movement as a whole, and these relationships could all be explored in other research projects. Any individual section could also be expanded upon to include additional sources and thought. This paper uses the festival as a way to describe surrounding conditions, on both a domestic and an international scale, but there remains much more that can be said on both levels, and on the era as a whole.

There is a lot that can be learned from the study of a 1985 international youth festival that has been nearly forgotten by the West. All of the World Youth Festivals that took place during the Cold War era were largely dismissed by the West, and therefore continue to have little impact in this region today. The average person is likely to have never heard of them at all, and while a handful of Soviet historians have studied them, the literature on the 1985 festival specifically simply does not exist yet. The youth festivals held much more sway in the Soviet Union and the countries of the Global South, and

continue to be recognized in Russia, who not only hosted the most recent World Festival of Youth and Students in Sochi in 2017, but also has continued to comment on the anniversary of the 1985 festival throughout the years and to make other references to it in the media as well.<sup>226</sup> The 1985 Moscow festival dealt with large issues of international interest, all of the regions of the globe, and ideas pertaining to the past, present, and future of global relations. It focused on the so-called “Third World,” and was also tied closely to Cold War tensions. It was unlike any other mega-event because of the pivotal year in which it took place and all that that said about the Soviet Union and the Cold War. The festival had impacts far greater than mere mention of it reveals, a concept that is made all the more intriguing in light of the fact that so few remember such a recent mega-event in history, which had been influential enough in its own time to have been deemed an occasion of “planetary significance.”<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> “Nash kalendar’,” *Pravda*, July 19, 2005; “Vsiudu prozvuchit: ‘Lenin! Partii! Komsomol!’,” *Pravda*, June 20, 2008.

<sup>227</sup> Popov, “Poslednee sovetskoe megasobytie,” 1017.

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**ABSTRACT****POLITICS AT PLAY: THE 1985 WORLD FESTIVAL OF YOUTH AND STUDENTS AND ITS ROLE IN SOVIET AND COLD WAR HISTORY**

by

**MICHAELA LEWALSKI****May 2020****Advisor:** Dr. Aaron Retish**Major:** History**Degree:** Master of Arts

The Twelfth World Festival of Youth and Students that took place in Moscow in 1985 has largely been forgotten, but historical analysis of the event reveals that it had significant implications for the Soviet Union and Cold War. This thesis argues that the festival was a public ceremony that the Soviet Union used to prove its domestic stability and its role as a leader in the fight for world peace to its own people, counterparts in the West, and allies and potential allies in the South and East. The symbols and concrete measures that the Soviet Union used—and the reactions it received to both its internal conditions and attempts at internationalism—were dependent on the audience in question. The differences reflected the different relations and politics at stake during this important year in Soviet and Cold War history that was characterized by a transition displayed in the festival itself.

## **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT**

Michaela Lewalski began as an undergraduate at Wayne State University in 2016. She majored in Honors Global Studies, co-majored in University Honors, and minored in Spanish and Russian. She began her master's degree in History during her last year of undergraduate study as part of Wayne State's Accelerated Graduate Enrollment Program. That same year she was named the ACTR Russian Scholar Laureate and won a Faculty Undergraduate History Award and a Russian Excellence Award through the university. She graduated with her bachelor's degree, a 4.0 GPA, and an invitation into the Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society and the Dobro Slovo National Slavic Honor Society in May 2019, and will be graduating with her master's degree in May 2020. Her areas of focus as a History MA student have been Soviet and Russian history, youth culture, and post-World War II internationalism. Upon graduation, she will be starting a career in the federal government.