

The Soviet Union Encounters *Anglia*: Britain's Russian Magazine as a Medium for Cross-Border Communication

Sarah Davies, Durham University

As Cold War historians begin to gravitate away from “phenomena of the great” to “phenomena of the small,” attention has turned to the ostensibly minor actors, processes, and initiatives that were significant despite or even because of their size.¹ This chapter explores one such small undertaking: *Anglia*, the Russian-language quarterly magazine about life in Britain, produced by the Foreign Office (FO) and distributed in the Soviet Union between 1962 and 1992.

Influencing and engaging with publics from the opposite camp was a high priority for both the East and the West throughout the Cold War. What was labelled variously as “psychological warfare,” “international propaganda,” “publicity,” “cultural diplomacy,” “cultural exchange,” or “public diplomacy” assumed multiple forms. While international broadcasting has attracted most attention, slower, smaller-scale media, such as magazines, also had an important, if less prominent, role to play in this process.² Mass circulation periodicals were enormously popular by the mid twentieth century, with illustrated magazines of the *Reader's Digest*, *Life*, and *Paris-Match* variety enjoying a particular boom.³ As East-West communication began to accelerate from the mid 1950s, both camps came to regard national magazines such as *Amerika*, *Anglia*, and *Soviet Weekly* as an effective means of “perforating” the Iron Curtain and advertising the merits of their respective systems to the other side.

Unlike *Amerika*, which is relatively well-known and has been discussed by several scholars, *Anglia* appears to have been overlooked.⁴ In part this neglect reflects the familiar tendency of Cold War historiography to privilege the role of the superpowers at the expense of that of smaller actors. The burgeoning literature on the cultural Cold War includes multiple studies of American efforts to influence opinion behind the Iron Curtain,⁵ but it is only relatively recently that attention has turned to the parallel initiatives undertaken by Western European states, including those of Britain.⁶ Notwithstanding ambiguous feelings in Britain about the concept of “overseas propaganda,” with its connotations of “totalitarian” media manipulation, the British government, in contrast to that of the United States, had the advantage of extensive and diverse pre-Cold War experience in these matters which it was in a strong position to build upon. Despite, or perhaps because of, its waning global power, Britain was determined to offer an alternative, British contribution to a sphere that would otherwise have been dominated by the United States.⁷

Drawing on Foreign Office archival material as well as the magazine itself, we consider how and why *Anglia* was established and investigate its fundamental ethos. Deliberately differentiated from *Amerika*, *Anglia* aimed to tell a subtle and credible story about Britain as a modern and progressive nation with a distinct set of values and way of life. We then shift our perspective to some apparently very minor actors: ordinary Soviet readers of *Anglia* who wrote letters to the magazine. Since it was considered important that *Anglia* serve as a catalyst for dialogue between Britain and the USSR, the exchange of letters between the editor and the readers was strongly encouraged. Although necessarily limited, this correspondence represents a small but intriguing example of how borders could be crossed, symbolically and physically, during the Cold War.

Magazine Diplomacy in the Cold War

Following the post-war deep-freeze, the thaw in Soviet relations with the West that occurred after Stalin's death – “the spirit of Geneva” – opened up new opportunities for various forms of cultural diplomacy and exchange. The USSR took the lead in these initiatives: the Bolsheviks had always viewed culture as a powerful political weapon and had been actively practising various forms of cultural diplomacy in the interwar period under the auspices of VOKS, the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.⁸ From the early 1950s, Moscow embarked upon what was described in military terms by some Western observers as a new “cultural offensive” or “cultural campaign abroad,” using cultural diplomacy as a form of bridge building, as a means of acquiring useful information from the West, and as a somewhat more palatable way of exporting Soviet values.⁹

Although initially suspicious of Soviet overtures, governments in the West soon joined in this new Cold War game. Even before 1956, the Americans had begun to question their strategy aimed at the “liberation” of the “captive peoples” behind the Iron Curtain through the use of covert operations and psychological warfare.¹⁰ Nikita Khrushchev's “Secret Speech” and the crushing of the Hungarian Uprising simply confirmed these doubts, and the United States came to share the view prevailing in the Foreign Office that any change in the Soviet bloc would only come about as a result of a process of internal evolution. Assuming that exposure to Western values and ways of life would, in the long run, contribute to this evolution,¹¹ the United States, Britain and other states began to invest in cultural diplomacy and exchange with the Soviet Union and its satellites. By the late 1950s, for example, official exchange agreements had been concluded between the USSR and France (1957), the United States (1958), and Great Britain (1959).¹²

It was in this relatively benign climate that Britain's initial ideas for a new "Russian Magazine" emerged. The Soviet authorities had always gone to great lengths to obstruct the circulation of what it dubbed "capitalist propaganda," including non-communist publications and radio broadcasts. In the 1950s, for example, the only British newspaper in general circulation in the Soviet Union was the communist *Daily Worker*, while the BBC's Russian Service was routinely, if ineffectively, jammed. Gradually, small and not entirely symbolic steps were taken to ease the barriers to communication. Something of a breakthrough occurred at the high-level meeting in Britain between Khrushchev, Nikolai Bulganin, and the Prime Minister, Sir Anthony Eden, in April 1956. Demonstrating that the Soviet Union was serious about "peaceful coexistence" and that Britain could play a key role in East-West relations, the talks resulted in a number of constructive agreements, including a joint declaration on the desirability of furthering cultural exchange and of taking "practical steps directed towards ensuring a freer exchange of information by the spoken and written word."¹³

A magazine seemed an obvious medium through which Britain could disseminate information by the written word. FO-sponsored "general projection" magazines such as *Commonwealth Today* and the Arabic-language *Al Aalam* had played a prominent role in British cultural diplomacy from the early 1950s.¹⁴ The magazine format was deemed particularly suitable for the USSR with its highly developed culture of reading.¹⁵ Periodicals were especially favoured by Soviet readers, and their circulation increased hugely in this period, reaching 2.6 billion by 1970, 14 times the 1950 level.¹⁶ The serious "thick journal," such as *Novyi mir*, a blend of literature and broader socio-political articles, enjoyed phenomenal success amongst the burgeoning intelligentsia, particularly during the Khrushchev-era "Thaw."¹⁷ The Foreign Office was evidently well aware of this tendency, with one official commenting that "the Russians wanted a good read."¹⁸

A previous British government periodical, the illustrated weekly *British Ally* (*Britanskii soiuznik*), set up on the basis of a reciprocal agreement during the period of British-Soviet wartime cooperation, had been well received in the USSR, although it suffered when relations soured in the late 1940s, and was terminated in 1950 (its counterpart in Britain, *Soviet Weekly*, was permitted to survive).¹⁹ Support for a new version of *British Ally* gathered momentum from 1955, particularly after the relaunch of the U.S. illustrated magazine *Amerika*.²⁰ *Amerika*, published from 1945 until 1952, was resurrected in 1956 following a US-Soviet agreement concerning the reciprocal distribution of national magazines; its Soviet equivalent in the United States was *USSR*, later renamed *Soviet Life*.

The British were evidently concerned not to be left out of this accelerating periodical diplomacy. However, the Soviet invasion of Hungary in November 1956 created dilemmas. On one hand, it caused temporary setbacks in cultural relations, as public revulsion created considerable pressure to ostracize the USSR, while on the other, it persuaded some officials of the urgency of extending cultural contacts in the interests of fomenting change, particularly amongst the Soviet intelligentsia and youth, who were perceived to be potentially rebellious and receptive to Western values. Cecil Parrott, Minister at the British Embassy in Moscow, pressed for a policy of what he called “injecting . . . western ideas” to encourage these groups. This view prevailed, and by 1957 the British government had accepted the case for a magazine.²¹ However, because of the vicissitudes of East-West relations and the intractable nature of Anglo-Soviet negotiations, as well as domestic financial pressures, it was only in January 1961 that an agreement to set up the magazine was finally concluded with the Soviet authorities.

The wording of this agreement largely followed the model of the 1955 US-Soviet agreement on *Amerika*. It specified that the magazine should be “non-political in character” and “devoted to an objective presentation of various aspects of British life, particularly in the

sphere of culture, science and technology.” This was the price to be paid for a further clause maintaining that it would not be subject to censorship by the Soviet authorities. The Soviet agency, Soiuzpechat’, was to distribute fifty thousand copies of the quarterly magazine, with 10 percent of these on subscription, while further two thousand complimentary copies were to be distributed by the British Embassy to Soviet institutions and individuals. If any copies remained unsold for three months, Soiuzpechat’ had the right to return them to the Embassy for a refund – an opportunity for the authorities to restrict the distribution of ideologically suspect editions. In return for all this – and reciprocity was always important – the British government agreed to facilitate the distribution of *Soviet Weekly* in the event of any difficulties.²²

Following the agreement, various practical arrangements were put in place. Responsibility for the production of the magazine was assigned to the Central Office of Information (COI), a service department established in 1946 to produce publicity material for government departments.²³ The magazine’s editor was officially attached to the COI. However, it was the FO’s Information Research Department (IRD) that took charge of the magazine’s editorial policy. Formed in 1948 with the explicit remit of countering communist propaganda, this clandestine department had originally concentrated on anticommunist propaganda in Britain and areas of British influence, but from the mid 1950s it turned its attention to the Soviet bloc. It was thought that the IRD’s expertise in both communist states and propaganda made it especially qualified to take on the project.²⁴

The title of the new magazine was the subject of some discussion at this stage. Since Britain was (and is) generally known as Англия (*Anglia* – England) in Russia and the Soviet Union, *Anglia* seemed a natural choice by analogy with the two other national projection magazines then circulating in the USSR, *Amerika* and *Jugoslaviia*.²⁵ It was acknowledged that this might provoke a vociferous reaction from the “Scottish lobby” in particular,²⁶ yet it

proved difficult to find a suitably inclusive alternative. One suggestion, *British Life*, was vetoed in the USSR on the grounds that the word “life” had acquired a hint of “foreign propaganda penetration.” *Velikobritaniia* (Great Britain) was also rejected by FO officials who argued that it sounded too pompous and carried colonialist overtones in the USSR. A compromise suggestion, *Britannia*, was deemed to be poor Russian. Finally, it was agreed that the title *Anglia* should be accompanied by a sub-title: “*a magazine about life in Great Britain today.*”²⁷

Projecting “Life in Great Britain Today”: the Subtle Philosophy of *Anglia*

This protracted discussion about the name of the magazine exemplifies the problem inherent in any attempt to establish a suitable narrative about contemporary Britain – it was one thing to propose a magazine about “life in Great Britain today”, but quite another to agree on precisely how to project such an amorphous and contested subject. The approach adopted by the IRD, which bore ultimate responsibility for the magazine’s editorial line, was informed by the department’s interpretation of *Anglia*’s objectives:

The magazine aims at presenting an attractive, truthful and convincing picture of all aspects of Britain to serious Soviet readers. Although “Anglia” cannot deal directly with political subjects, this presentation of an honest and accurate picture of Britain can both counteract the misleading account given in the Soviet press, and reveal how unfavourably many aspects of life in the Soviet Union compare with Britain.²⁸

To ensure that Britain was portrayed in a way that was both “attractive” as well as “truthful and convincing” required some subtlety. As Embassy officials had emphasized in 1957, they would have to be “careful not to risk accusations of propaganda (and to avoid this we shall have to be very subtle indeed!)”²⁹ The British approach was distinguished from that of the United States in this respect, with the COI’s Director of Publications proposing a “rather subtler approach” than the “blatantly lavish efforts of the Americans.” It had always been envisaged that Britain’s magazine would be more modest than *Amerika*, partly for financial reasons and so as not to duplicate American efforts, but also because of differing notions about the whole matter of “publicity.” While Britain and the United States cooperated closely in this field, there was an assumption within the Foreign Office that American practices were inferior; for example, one FO official observed very little difference between British and American policies toward Eastern Europe, apart from in the area of “publicity” where “the Americans are more adventurous than we are.” This strategy had “not always proven more effective than our quieter methods.”³⁰

“Quiet” *Amerika* certainly was not. A large-format, sixty-page monthly magazine with a print run of fifty thousand copies, it was full of glossy color photographs and designed for a mass readership. It promoted the American way of life in a quite unashamed fashion: the first issue included a five-page spread on American cars, accompanied by a glaringly obvious price chart.³¹ By contrast, it was proposed in 1957 that Britain’s magazine should appear quarterly, initially in a run of about ten thousand copies (although this figure was later increased), and that it would have an unusual pocket-sized format (similar to that of the *Readers’ Digest*), which was considered to be more subtle than that of *Amerika*. It was thought that the small size would allow the reader to hide it in their pocket, and mean that it was likely to be longer-lasting, passed around and kept on bookshelves. While it was intended that the magazine should be illustrated, the main emphasis was to be upon text

oriented toward a particular readership, “the intelligent, non-technical, layman, particularly of the emergent middle class and the administrative class.”³² This was in line with the elite-oriented tradition of British overseas propaganda, which aimed to target the “influential few and through them at the many.”³³ All these proposals were ultimately adopted, thus ensuring that *Anglia*’s identity remained quite distinct from that of *Amerika*.

Once the magazine was up and running, various strategies were employed to minimize any risk that it might be rejected as blatant propaganda by its readers. *Anglia* never criticized the USSR directly; on the contrary, it aimed to project an attitude of friendship and mutual respect between the two countries. For example, articles about science often mentioned the connections between British and Soviet scientists, and the magazine regularly reported on visits between the two countries, the activities of the GB-USSR Association and so on.³⁴ More controversially, an article on “Lenin in London” was even published in 1967 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution, despite the initial reservations of some FO officials who agreed that it should go ahead only if it was used as an opportunity to include photographs showing how the parts of London Lenin had visited had changed for the better: “anything which brings home the point that Lenin’s ideas are totally unrelated to the world of today, without of course ever saying that!”³⁵

Rather than engaging in explicitly negative propaganda, the *Anglia* team concentrated on telling a positive story about Britain designed both to interest the serious Soviet reader and to draw an implicit contrast with life in the USSR. In 1957, the COI had suggested that the magazine focus on “the common experiences of people in relatively similar circumstances, so that the reader may readily identify himself with the subject of the article.”³⁶ *Anglia* certainly followed this recommendation, for many of its articles addressed subjects of common interest and experience, particularly science and technology, industry and agriculture, the arts, sport, and leisure. However, the view from the Embassy in Moscow was that British political

objectives would be better served by dwelling on areas in which Britain *differed* substantially from the Soviet Union, such as government, the legal system, education, trade unions, and so on.³⁷ While this was precluded to some degree by the “nonpolitical” terms of the *Anglia* agreement, later issues did begin to incorporate more explicitly sociopolitical content designed to underline differences, rather than similarities, between the two societies. In addition, the magazine regularly featured extracts from contemporary British literature, crosswords, material on the regions of Britain, examples of humor, and items in English. In order to avoid a “rag-bag” appearance and to engage the serious reader with complex subjects, *Anglia* was frequently centered on one major theme, such as chemistry or travel, although most issues also contained additional material unrelated to the theme. A representative example from the mid 1960s, *Anglia* no. 11, included articles connected to the main theme of British design, as well as material on parliamentary elections, cricket, books published in 1963, East Anglia, fashion, the nervous system, stamps, and English sporting terminology, plus some caricatures, a short story, and a crossword.³⁸

Whether the subject was sport or department stores, education or gardening, the underlying message was always that Britain represented modernity and progress. Great emphasis was placed upon the country’s recent economic achievements and scientific advances (the latter were accorded a particularly high priority given the prestige of Soviet science.) Britain was presented as a land of contented workers and consumers reaping the benefits of a buoyant economy and a thriving welfare state, and as the home to a diverse, innovative, and widely accessible modern culture (in both its high and popular variants). The British political system was portrayed as genuinely democratic and as open to modern developments such as opinion polling. This “branding” of Britain as modern and progressive was considered essential given that Soviet propaganda constantly painted a picture of the country as backward looking and in steady decline. In 1961, as detailed plans for the first

editions of the magazine were being drawn up, the IRD's Mark Russell argued they "must try to get across the impression of a progressive society which is moving forward all the time as against the picture of capitalist stagnation with which the Soviet public have been fed."³⁹ At a time when the USSR seemed to many in the world to represent the future, *Anglia* needed to show that a modern Britain offered a viable alternative to the Soviet socialist model of modernity (and, implicitly if not explicitly, to the American version of capitalist modernity, too).

This image of an unequivocally modern and progressive Britain was necessarily based on a somewhat selective approach to the "truth." As Lord Christopher Mayhew – one of the prime movers behind the creation of the IRD and an *Anglia* supporter – subsequently observed, the key to effective propaganda was the selection of facts: "The policy of IRD was not to lie or distort facts, but to select the facts that proved our case."⁴⁰ Written in a dispassionate rather than an opinionated style, *Anglia's* articles incorporated a dazzling array of facts and figures; for example, detailed statistics were inserted into many of the articles, and the editor went to considerable lengths to ensure that these were up-to-date, accurate, and in line with those used by the BBC Russian Service.⁴¹ To enhance credibility, the personal testimonies of concrete individuals were often incorporated, and, where possible, their direct speech was used since this was thought to be more convincing than indirect reporting. Visual images were also employed as evidence to substantiate the claims of the magazine, as well as to make it more interesting – while *Anglia* was never intended to be as lavishly illustrated as *Amerika*, it was still important that Soviet citizens could see aspects of British life for themselves. Appealing photographs accompanied many articles, particularly those devoted to fashion, furniture, and so on.

This attractive vision would have seemed unbalanced and unconvincing without at least some acknowledgement of the problems Britain faced. Right at the outset, the

magazine's first editor, Wright Miller, insisted that they should be "frank sometimes about our deficiencies."⁴² However, the nature and extent of this frankness were never entirely clear. In 1961, the IRD's Mavis King asked "are we allowed to include criticism, i.e. x houses have no indoor sanitation, 40 children in the class?" Her opinion was that "some negative facts must be included, otherwise the Russians are going to classify everything we say as propaganda." Mark Russell agreed that problems should not be hidden, but suggested that the magazine should always indicate what was being done to tackle issues such as slums. Another FO official, Bryan Cartledge, also argued for a cautious approach since "the Soviet press pounces joyfully on admissions of defects in Western society and one gets no credit for 'good sportsmanship' in showing both sides of the picture"; *Pravda* would delight in beginning an article by stating that "According to the official British magazine *Anglia* 15% of British homes have no inside sanitation..." Cartledge recommended focusing on "past shortcomings which have been or are being remedied." Presenting as full a picture of Britain as possible, with the emphasis not on "hiding shortcomings" but on showing how problems were being tackled, was thus the approach that was said to inform editorial policy.⁴³

Exchanging Letters: Readers' Correspondence with *Anglia*

How successful was this effort to explain the British way of life to Soviet readers? Although it was always difficult to measure its effectiveness, the magazine, with its "subtle" approach, appeared to be well received by both the Soviet authorities and the educated public. It was clearly in high demand, its circulation was not generally obstructed, and the available evidence suggested it was being read by the desired target groups: professionals and younger people. Informal conversations indicated that most readers did not dismiss it as

“propaganda,” perceiving it rather as interesting and informative. Some claimed explicitly that they preferred it to *Amerika*.⁴⁴ Importantly, *Anglia* managed to stimulate a process of two-way communication: readers were strongly encouraged to correspond with the editor, not only because their feedback was valuable, but also because the whole process of dialogue with individual Soviet citizens was considered intrinsically worthwhile in itself.

The USSR had always had a tradition of encouraging letter writing to the press, and journals such as *Novyi Mir* clearly received large quantities of readers’ mail in this period.⁴⁵ However, writing to a foreign periodical was another matter altogether. Censorship of mail continued to be routine in the post-Stalin USSR, and corresponding with foreigners was still regarded as a risky activity. The IRD’s Mavis King thus observed that the thirty letters *Anglia* received in 1962 might not seem many, but were “more than I dared to hope for.” By way of comparison, it is worth noting that the much more widely accessible BBC Russian Service only received forty-one letters in 1956, and somewhat over a hundred in 1963.⁴⁶ Between 1962 and 1969, a total of 240 letters reached the offices of *Anglia*.⁴⁷ Of course we cannot know how many never made it at all. The letters were never published in the magazine, but a small selection from the periods 1963–65 and 1974–75 have been retained in the Foreign Office archives, along with an even smaller sample of the editors’ responses. Although the numbers are quite limited, some conclusions can be drawn from them.⁴⁸

What is quite striking is the geographical spread of the correspondence. *Anglia* was supposed to be available in eighty cities, and readers certainly wrote in from as far afield as Magadan, Perm, Vladivostok, and Yalta. Indeed it may be surmised that communication with foreigners was valued particularly highly by those living far from Moscow, Leningrad, and other cities with greater exposure to foreign influences. It is also clear that most letters emanated from professionals and young people (many of those who wrote in 1974–75 described themselves as students or children). While the majority wrote in Russian, some

correspondents enjoyed practising their English. They generally supplied their names and addresses, evidently anticipating that their letters would elicit a response.⁴⁹

Not surprisingly, the content of their letters was, from a political point of view, ostensibly quite innocuous. Some wrote simply to express their appreciation of the magazine. Others offered constructive criticisms, or suggested themes *Anglia* could address, ranging from pop music and the lives of young people to contemporary visual arts, cinema, cartoons, and even fireworks. Correspondents also requested further information relating to specific articles they had read, or asked to be put in touch with British specialists on topics covered by the magazine. A few readers even made polite requests for material objects such as records, books, or postcards.⁵⁰

Regardless of their content, these letters from ordinary Soviet citizens were highly valued by the FO, and the *Anglia* editor was expected to handle them in an appropriately responsive manner. The first editor, Wright Miller, seemed particularly well suited to this task. He was equipped with a good knowledge of the USSR, having visited the country several times, including a spell during the war when he worked for *British Ally* in Moscow and Kuibyshev. After the war, he had served as a London-based editor of *Ally*. In 1960 he published his *Russians as People*, a book that expressed much understanding of and sympathy for the Russian people (as opposed to the Soviet political system). One of the book's themes was the centrality of personal relationships in Russian culture: Miller argued that Russians set great store by personal ties and friendships and observed the importance of "respect for and expression of genuine personal feeling."⁵¹

In his correspondence with Soviet readers, Miller always took trouble to cultivate a sense of warm friendship and trust between editor and reader, to avoid an official, bureaucratic approach, and to demonstrate that he cared about each correspondent on a personal level. He made sure to answer letters fully and in a sympathetic and personal tone,

paying attention to even the smallest details of the correspondence. For example, he concluded his reply to one 19-year-old Vitalii Reshetov, who had mentioned in passing that he was taking exams: “Wishing you all success with your entrance examination for the institute, and thereafter...” Wright Miller’s successors also followed this practice: when a 12-year-old Dima Droshnev professed to be a long-time reader of the magazine and to be studying English with the help of his sister, a later editor, Jean Penfold, sent cordial greetings to Droshnev and his sister and wished him well with his studies. This warm, friendly tone was often echoed by the correspondents themselves, for example, one concluded his missive with the words “To end this letter, I wish you a lot of success, to you personally and to ‘Anglia.’”⁵²

The editor and correspondents often exchanged seasonal greetings, a practice that served to reinforce the impression of personal friendship. A regular correspondent, Volkov from Magadan, sent Wright Miller his greetings for Christmas and New Year, expressing his hope that “the New Year and further numbers of *Anglia* will enable us to continue our correspondence in the same friendly manner as before.” Else Brucene, a teacher from Lithuania, wrote to compliment the editors on the magazine, which she claimed to use in her teaching: “I await the appearance of each new issue as a feast.” Brucene accompanied her letter with a New Year’s card. The editor in turn thanked her for the “delightful” card and encouraged her to continue the correspondence and pass on her suggestions for future issues. A Margarita Pasekova from Moscow wished the editorial team her best wishes for the New Year adding: “I would like our friendship to continue in the New Year.” Pasekova included a New Year’s poem beginning with the lines: “The good Russian Father Frost / Wishes you to take leave of the old year without tears / And to greet the New Year and to love it.”⁵³

Another means of cultivating friendship between the editor and the readers of the magazine involved the giving and receiving of gifts. *Anglia* endeavoured where possible to

satisfy readers' requests for various small items: the aforementioned Volkov from Magadan, who had read a report on razor blades in *Anglia* (reprinted from the British consumer magazine *Which?*), was given a Wilkinson blade, which he clearly appreciated – although he complained that he had only received one blade rather than the two he was promised! The magazine sometimes sent out books, for example, a reader from Gorky, L. Krai, was given a book about British proverbs, a subject on which he had expressed an interest. Cards and pictures were common gifts, especially postcards of London or pictures of British pop groups. In some cases, the principle of reciprocity seems to have been observed. A regular correspondent from Uzhgorod, Pavel Sankov (an engineer), who had requested information about various matters, including British architecture and landscape gardening, gave Wright Miller a guide to his region, the Transcarpathian oblast, “for our better acquaintance.” In his reply, Miller expressed his delight at having received the volume. L. Krai, the recipient of the book about British proverbs, reciprocated with some postcards about Russian proverbs, while one couple, the Baizantovs from Cheliabinsk, sent Miller a set of postcards of Tbilisi in exchange for the postcards of London he had sent them. Their letter provides an interesting indication of the depth of emotion the relationship with the editor could evoke, for they claimed to be “unspeakably glad” to receive his “wonderful letter”, continuing:

We are extremely grateful for your sensitiveness, for your warm words, for your invaluable help in realising our old dream – correspondence with your country...and at last for your brilliant gift – wonderful postcards with the sights of London. We earnestly ask you in token of our deep gratitude to take our modest present – series of post-cards with the sights of our beautiful city – Tbilisi...⁵⁴

The Baizantovs' mention of "correspondence with your country" was a reference to Miller's success in putting them in touch with a pen-friend. The business of cultivating British-Soviet friendship required not only the exchange of warm words and small gifts, but also the provision of various types of practical assistance to the magazine's readers. Particularly in the mid 1970s, when détente was flourishing, many Soviet citizens asked *Anglia* to help them find pen-friends. Their requests were usually satisfied, frequently with the help of the GB-USSR Association. In this way the initial correspondence with *Anglia* often acted as the catalyst for a further process of East-West communication. One notable example was *Anglia's* facilitation of correspondence between a bed-bound reader, Dzhaminat Kerimova from Makhachkala, and Lady Susan Masham, a campaigner for the rights of people with disabilities who had been the subject of a feature in the magazine. When Kerimova wrote to *Anglia* to ask if they could pass on her letter to Lady Masham, they did so, as well as offering to pass on and translate further correspondence. Masham herself duly responded with a full letter, in which she discussed her own disability and expressed an interest in Kerimova's life, and that of disabled people in the USSR more generally. She volunteered to continue the correspondence and send Kerimova magazines about the disabled in Britain.⁵⁵

The editors and FO officials went to considerable lengths to satisfy correspondents' requests for information on all manner of subjects. The strict rationing of information within the USSR created a tremendous "thirst for knowledge" and many readers appeared to value *Anglia* as a source of useful and credible information.⁵⁶ Following the publication in the magazine of a profile of Diana Barnes, a postgraduate medical researcher, a professor at a Moscow children's hospital wrote to enquire whether Barnes could supply some specific information about breast cancer treatment. *Anglia* arranged for Dr Barnes to contact her directly. Similarly, a professor of Biological Sciences from Ul'ianovsk, who had read articles about British agriculture in the magazine, went on to ask for further material on wheat

selection in Britain and this was arranged through the GB-USSR Association. Stanislav Gurin wrote to Wright Miller from Kharkov to communicate his feelings about the death of a British specialist on the poet Alexander Blok – “I was extremely sorry to hear from you of the death of Sir Cecil Kisch; the death even of someone with whom one is not acquainted can produce a sad impression” – and to ask if there were any other Blok specialists in Britain. Miller spent some time tracking down and putting him in touch with the relevant experts.⁵⁷

As well as assisting *Anglia* readers with their requests for pen-friends and information, the editors helped out in other ways, from correcting the English of correspondents who were learning the language, to attempting to resolve the problems of those having difficulty subscribing to the magazine.⁵⁸ This practical help, in conjunction with the personal approach, seems to have been greatly appreciated. The editor was regarded by some not so much as a British government official but rather as a trusted friend. Certainly this is the impression conveyed by one of Wright Miller’s regular correspondents, Savitskii from Stavropol, who wrote to the magazine to express his grief at the death of Miller, whose obituary was published in *Anglia* in 1974.⁵⁹ Savitskii had conducted an extensive correspondence with Miller that he clearly treasured. He recalled how the editor “did not leave a single of our letters unanswered and always patiently replied to all our queries. We awaited his replies eagerly and read them with the greatest interest. His letters, as his articles, were full of his gentle sense of humour, showing that he was a good and out of the common person.” Savitskii enclosed a card for Wright Miller’s wife and daughters, which read: “My wife, my son and I deeply mourn and share your grief on losing your husband and father, Mr. Wright Miller.”⁶⁰

By promoting the exchange of letters between the editor and the readers in this way, *Anglia* facilitated grassroots communication between Britain and the USSR during the Cold War. Ordinary individuals from all over the USSR felt inspired to enter into friendly

correspondence, not only with the editors themselves, but also with others whom they encountered thanks to *Anglia*'s interventions. Although these Soviet citizens may not have been able to travel to Britain in a physical sense, their letters certainly did, and this must have gone some way to eroding their sense of isolation from the West (and, quite possibly, their British correspondents' sense of isolation from the East).⁶¹

Conclusion

The enduring fascination with the actions of the two main protagonists in the Cold War drama has tended to obscure the roles played by other supporting actors. This case study of *Anglia* builds on recent research that has cast light on Britain's very significant involvement in the cultural Cold War.⁶² Motivated by the desire to maintain global influence and prestige at a time of decline and aware that it had considerable pre-Cold War experience on which it could draw, the British government was determined to make its own distinctive contribution to the process of East-West communication. Although Britain and the United States always cooperated closely, it was accepted that the two allies could only gain from "shooting at the same target from different angles."⁶³

When compared with the lavishly funded initiatives of the United States or the USSR, or even with Britain's own activities in the sphere of radio broadcasting to the Soviet Union, *Anglia* might justifiably be regarded as one of the "small phenomena" of the Cold War.⁶⁴ Produced by one of the lesser "great powers," it cost relatively little and was designed to have a modest reach. In terms of physical appearance it was, quite literally, small. Nevertheless, it would be fair to claim that the magazine was remarkably successful, in part because of its small scale and subtle approach. *Anglia* told an appealing and reasonably credible story about

Britain to Soviet citizens who were hungry for any information about *zagrantsa* (abroad).⁶⁵ By showing that Britain possessed a distinct ethos and way of life, *Anglia* complicated simplistic binary notions about “East” and “West.” In its own small way, it helped to break down barriers and ease communication between Britain and the USSR, not only at the level of the state, but perhaps equally importantly, at the level of the ordinary individual. By 1992, when the last issues of the magazine appeared, the Cold War was over, and *Anglia*’s work appeared to have been done.

NOTES

¹ S. Autio-Sarasmo and B. Humphreys, ed., *Winter Kept Us Warm: Cold War Interactions Reconsidered* (Helsinki: Aleksanteri Institute, 2010), 14.

² On the radio see, for example, G. Rawnsley, *Radio Diplomacy and Propaganda: The BBC and Voice of America in International Politics, 1956–1964* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996); M. Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens: The Battles of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War* (London: Brassey's, 1997); A. Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000); A. Ross Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: The CIA Years and Beyond* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); A. Ross Johnson and R. Eugene Parta, ed., *Cold War Broadcasting: Impact on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* (Budapest: Central European Press, 2012).

³ K. Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2006), 15; G. Barnhisel and C. Turner, ed., *Pressing the Fight: Print, Propaganda, and the Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 12.

⁴ W. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945–1961* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 118–19; Y. Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2003), 148–51; A. Yarrow, "Selling a New Vision of America to the World: Changing Messages in Early U.S. Cold War Print Propaganda," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 11, no. 4 (2009).

⁵ E.g. Osgood, *Total Cold War*; Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*; N. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945–1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); S. Lucas, *Freedom's War: The American Crusade Against the Soviet Union* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); F. S. Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta Books, 1999); Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War*; J. Gienow-Hecht, *Transmission Impossible: American Journalism as Cultural Diplomacy in Postwar Germany, 1945–1955* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999); L. Belmonte, *Selling the American Way: US Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

⁶ On some Western European initiatives, see G. Scott-Smith, "Interdoc and Western European Psychological Warfare: The American Connection, 1958," *Intelligence and National Security* 26, no. 2–3 (2011); G. Scott-Smith, *Western Anti-Communism and the Interdoc Network: Cold War Internationale* (Basingstoke: Palgrave,

2012); A. Macher, "Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy, 1957–1963: Echoes of Western Cultural Activity in a Communist Country," in *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy*, ed. J. Gienow-Hecht and M. Donfried (New York: Berghahn, 2010). There is now a growing body of literature on British activities: Rawnsley, *Radio Diplomacy and Propaganda*; Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens*; FCO Historians, *IRD: Origins and Establishment of the Foreign Office Information Research Department 1946–48* (London: FCO/LRD, 1995); P. Lashmar and J. Oliver, *Britain's Secret Propaganda War* (Stroud: Sutton, 1998); R. Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (London: John Murray, 2001); A. Defty, *Britain, America, and Anti-Communist Propaganda 1945–1953: The Information Research Department* (London: Routledge, 2004); L. Schwartz, *Political Warfare Against the Kremlin: US and British Propaganda Policy at the Beginning of the Cold War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009); M. B. Smith, "Peaceful coexistence at all costs: Cold War exchanges between Britain and the Soviet Union in 1956," *Cold War History* 12, no.3 (2012).

⁷ P. Taylor, *The Projection of Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); P. Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), especially 227–29; Defty, *Britain*; Schwartz, *Political Warfare*, 3; L. Risso, "A Difficult Compromise: British and American Plans for a Common Anti-Communist Propaganda Response in Western Europe, 1948–1958," *Intelligence and National Security* 26, no. 2–3 (2011).

⁸ J.-F. Fayet, "VOKS: The Third Dimension of Soviet Foreign Policy," in Gienow-Hecht and Donfried, *Searching*, 31–49; M. David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁹ F. Barghoorn, *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960); "The Soviet Cultural Campaign Abroad," The National Archives (henceforth TNA) FO 975/77; N. Gould-Davies, "The Logic of Soviet Cultural Diplomacy," *Diplomatic History* 27, no. 2 (2003).

¹⁰ Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*, 101.

¹¹ Defty, *Britain*, 239–41; Schwartz, *Political Warfare*, 181.

¹² Barghoorn, *The Soviet Cultural Offensive*.

¹³ Cmd. 9753, appendix; Smith, "Peaceful coexistence at all costs".

¹⁴ On *Al Aalam*, see J. Vaughan, "A Certain Idea of Britain': British Cultural Diplomacy in the Middle East, 1945–57," *Contemporary British History* 19, no. 2 (2005).

-
- ¹⁵ S. Lovell, *The Russian Reading Revolution: Print Culture in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000).
- ¹⁶ K. Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time: How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire that Lost the Cultural Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 12.
- ¹⁷ E. Frankel, *Novy Mir: A Case Study in the Politics of Literature, 1952–1958* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
- ¹⁸ TNA INF 12/1094 minutes, 27 January 1965.
- ¹⁹ V. Pechatnov, “The Rise and Fall of *Britansky Soyuznik*: A Case Study in Soviet Response to British Propaganda of the Mid-1940s,” *The Historical Journal* 41, no. 1 (1998).
- ²⁰ TNA FO 371/111774.
- ²¹ TNA FO 371/129124 Parrott to Brimelow, 11 January 1957.
- ²² Cmnd. 1287.
- ²³ M. Grant, “Towards a Central Office of Information: Continuity and Change in British Government Information Policy 1939–51,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, no. 1 (1999).
- ²⁴ Defty, *Britain*, 239; TNA FCO 95/1232 Murray to Hopson, 8 February 1961; Hopson to Murray, 10 February 1961.
- ²⁵ I transliterate Англия as *Anglia* throughout this chapter, as this was the form used by the FO.
- ²⁶ TNA INF 12/1095 Draft FO Brief, August 1958; FO 953/1990 FO to Moscow, 25 January 1960; Hansard HC Debates, 10 April 1957, Series 5, vol. 568, cc. 1133–34.
- ²⁷ TNA FO 953/1990 Mason minute, 22 March 1960, Morgan minute, 23 March 1960; FO 953/1991 Moscow to FO, 12 May 1960; FO to Moscow, 13 May 1960.
- ²⁸ TNA FCO 95/348 Bayne to Clive, 9 April 1968, memorandum on *Anglia*.
- ²⁹ TNA INF 12/1347 Simpson to Slater, 15 January 1957; INF 12/1095 Embassy to Simpson, 16 October 1957.
- ³⁰ Schwartz, *Political Warfare*, 150, 169. For another example, see Defty, *Britain*, 104.
- ³¹ Richmond, *Cultural Exchange*, 149; Schwartz, *Political Warfare*, 198.
- ³² TNA INF 12/1095 McMillan to Lovell, 27 August 1957; Draft FO brief, August 1958.
- ³³ Taylor, *Projection*, 3; Cmd. 9138, 6.
- ³⁴ Funded by the British government, the GB-USSR Association was set up in 1959 as an attempt to promote dialogue and contacts between Britain and the USSR in a way that would circumvent the “front” organizations such as the British-Soviet Friendship Society.

-
- ³⁵ TNA FCO 95/343 Morgan to King, 18 January 1967; Fretwell minute, 31 January 1967.
- ³⁶ TNA INF 12/1095 McMillan to Lovell, 27 August 1957.
- ³⁷ TNA INF 12/1095 Embassy to Simpson, 16 October 1957.
- ³⁸ *Anglia* 11 (1964).
- ³⁹ TNA FO 1110/1459 King minute 5 May 1961; Russell minute 15 May 1961.
- ⁴⁰ Lashmar and Oliver, *Britain's Secret Propaganda War*, 36; C. Mayhew, *A War of Words* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998).
- ⁴¹ TNA FCO 95/343 King to Miller, 23 June 1967.
- ⁴² TNA INF 12/1347 Miller to Bewg, 16 May 1960.
- ⁴³ TNA FO 1110/1459 King minute, 5 May 1961; Russell minute, 15 May 1961; Cartledge minute, 15 May 1961; FO 1110/1586 Hopson to Marett, 1 March 1962.
- ⁴⁴ S. Davies, "The Soft Power of *Anglia*: British Cold War Cultural Diplomacy in the USSR," *Contemporary British History* (forthcoming).
- ⁴⁵ M. Lenoe, *Closer to the Masses: Stalinist Culture, Social Revolution, and Soviet Newspapers* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004); M. Dobson, "Contesting the Paradigms of De-Stalinisation: Readers' Responses to 'One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich,'" *Slavic Review* 64, no. 3 (2005); D. Kozlov, "'I Have Not Read, But I Will Say': Changing Ideas of Social Membership, 1958–66," *Kritika* 7, no. 3 (2006).
- ⁴⁶ TNA FO 1110/1586 King minute, 16 January 1963; Schwartz, *Political Warfare*, 90–92. See also G. Mytton, "Audience Research at the BBC External Services during the Cold War," *Cold War History* 11, no. 1(2011): 55.
- ⁴⁷ TNA FO 95/677 Hall, "FCO-Sponsored COI/HMSO Services – A Survey," 12 June 1969.
- ⁴⁸ TNA FO 1110/1845 readers' letters 1963–64; FO 1110/1977 readers' letters 1965; FCO 95/1844 readers' letters 1974–75.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹ W. Miller, *Russians as People* (New York: Dutton, 1961), 58–59.
- ⁵² TNA FO 1110/1977 *Anglia* to Reshetov, 4 November 1965; TNA FCO 95/1844 Droshnev to *Anglia*, 11 May 1975; Penfold to Droshnev (no date); FCO 95/1844 Krai to *Anglia*, 8 September 1974.
- ⁵³ TNA FO 1110/1845 Volkov to *Anglia*, 16 December 1963; FCO 95/1844 Brucene to *Anglia*, 18 December 1974; *Anglia* to Brucene (no date); FCO 95/1844 Pasekova to *Anglia*, December 1974.

⁵⁴ TNA FO 1110/1845 Volkov to *Anglia*, 16 December 1963; FCO 95/1844 Krai to *Anglia*, 8 September 1974; *Anglia* to Krai (no date); FO 1110/1977 Sankov to *Anglia*, 22 September 1965; *Anglia* to Sankov, November 1965; 1110/1977 Baizontovs to *Anglia*, 19 September 1965.

⁵⁵ TNA FCO 95/1844 Kerimova to *Anglia*, 24 December 1974; *Anglia* to Kerimova (no date); Masham to Kerimova, 18 March 1975.

⁵⁶ S. Mikkonen, "Stealing the Monopoly of Knowledge? Soviet Reactions to U.S. Cold War Broadcasting," *Kritika* 11, no. 4 (2010): 790.

⁵⁷ TNA FO 1110/1845 Vishnevetskaya to *Anglia*, 6 February 1964; FO 1110/1845 Berliand to *Anglia*, 31 January 1964; FO 1110/1977 Gurin to *Anglia*, 1 September 1965; *Anglia* to Gurin, November 1965.

⁵⁸ TNA FO 1110/1977 Komarova to *Anglia*, 12 August 1965.

⁵⁹ The publication of the obituary was a significant event in itself.

⁶⁰ TNA FCO 95/1844 Savitskii to *Anglia*, 18 August 1974.

⁶¹ For a discussion on the importance of direct interpersonal communication in relation to U.S. exhibitions in the Soviet Union, see T. Tolvaisas, "Cold War 'Bridge-Building': U.S. Exchange Exhibits and Their Reception in the Soviet Union, 1959–1967," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 12, no. 4 (2010).

⁶² See footnote 6 for some examples.

⁶³ Defty, *Britain*, 104.

⁶⁴ Autio-Sarasmo and Humphreys, *Winter Kept Us Warm*, 14.

⁶⁵ For a discussion on the concept of *zagraniitsa*, see A. Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).