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Oriental rhetoric and image of the USSR in J.N. Darling's travelogue *Ding goes to Russia*

Abstract: The article is devoted to the little-known text of the American cartoonist Jay Norwood Darling *Ding Goes to Russia*, created in 1932. In the travelogue, the narrator observes and reflects on the processes and results of Soviet reforms, particularly the Five-Year Plan, through the everyday realities of a Soviet human. The political controversy of the travelogue inspires satirical and parodic modes aimed at criticizing the new government, especially the project of creating a 'new' human. It is a Soviet human, who becomes the plot centre of Darling's journey. The author expands the visual space of the travelogue, including caricatures, a rare graphic genre for this type of literature. The objective of the article is to reveal the strategies for re-evaluating the established viewpoints in American journalism regarding the progress of the USSR during the Stalinist period. To more clearly outline the direction of Darling's criticism, the analysis includes the texts of the travellers who glorified Soviet achievements in widely circulated ideological formulas (L. Fischer, F. Griffin, W.H. Chamberlin, G.S. Counts). The 'new/old' structural contrast, which serves as the foundation for imaginatively distinguishing the West and the East, became the fundamental structure of the rhetoric of backwardness and uncivilization. Oriental constructions appear in both verbal and visual forms and are used to deconstruct the clichés of Soviet victories and achievements. The Soviet life is

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represented in a simplistic satirical light, and its future is imaginatively projected through Oriental tropes of nudity, backwardness, intellectual inferiority, silence.

Keywords: travelogue, Soviet Union, caricature, oriental tropes.

Introduction

Jay Norwood Darling (1876–1962) is known primarily as a cartoonist and environmentalist. He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1924 and 1943 for his contribution to the development of caricature[1]. The artist's experiences had a significant impact not only on the travelogue format but also on the representation of the Soviet experiment. As elucidated by David L. Lendt, a two-month expedition was conducted at Stalin's personal invitation in 1932[2].

There are no detailed and thorough studies of Darlings intermedia travelogue, *Ding Goes to Russia*, even though there exists an extensive historiography of American and European travel to the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s[3]. However, several important features determine the originality of this work.

Firstly, the author's impression and evaluations categorically do not coincide with the optimistic interpretation of the processes, inherent to political pilgrims, in the new country.With widely publicized progressive changes and utopian visions of the Soviet society as the 'future' of humanity, Darling purposefully undermines the notion of a new world.

Secondly, political controversy inspires satirical and parodic modes aimed at criticizing the new government, especially the project of creating a 'new'

1 For more information on his biography and environmental protection see: J.P. Dudley, *Jay Norwood 'Ding' Darling: A Retrospective*, "Conservation Biology" 1993, V. 7 №. 1, pp. 200–203., P. Medrano-Bigas, *The Forgotten Years of Bibendum. Michelin's American Period in Milltown: Design, Illustration and Advertising by Pioneer Tire Companies (1900–1930)*, PhD Thesis. University of Barcelona, 2015.

2 D.L. Lendt, *Ding: the life of Jay Norwood Darling,* Iowa 1983.

3 In particular, see the following works: M. David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to Soviet Union, 1921–1941,* Oxford 2012; L.S. Feuer, *American Travelers to the Soviet Union 1917–1932: The Formation of a Component of New Deal Ideology,* "American Quarterly" 1962, Vol. 14 №. 2, Part 1, pp.119–149; P. Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba. 1928–1978*, New York and Oxford 1981; D. Kravets, *Soviet Ukraine in the Eyes of Western Travellers (1920–1930),*"Storinky istorii" 2019 № 49, pp. 151–162.; S.R. Margulies, *The Pilgrimage to Russia: The Soviet Union and the Treatment of Foreigners, 1924–1937*, Medison 1968; B. Schweizer, *Radicals on the Road: The Politics of English Travel Writing in the 1930s.*, Charlottesville and London 2001.

human. It is a Soviet human, who becomes the plot centre of Darling's journey. The ability to capture significant details of everyday life and turn them into visual metaphors identifies the third specific feature of the travelogue, which distinguishes it from many similar texts. The author expands the visual space of the travelogue, including caricatures, a rare graphic genre for this type of literature. Criticism of Western travelogues in the verbal part of Darling's text grows into a satire on the Soviet achievements in the visual part. Both components involve the Oriental tropes, the essence of which Edward W. Said expressed in his work *Orientalism*. As is known, Said did not expand his methodology for studying of the Russian discourse. However, modern research convincingly demonstrates that Oriental constructs regarding the Russian Empire were quite stable in the Western consciousness, but their role regarding the pre-war Soviet Union is debatable. The goal of this article is to reveal the reasons, features, and means of actualization and transformation of the Oriental constructs in Darling's vision of the Soviet Union in the 1930s.

The travelogue *Ding Goes to Russia* is a complicated case that requires a complex strategy to interpret. A comparative analysis enables us to observe that the verbal part of Darling's text highlights the Soviet ideology and Bolsheviks' power through an intertextual dialogue with the 'optimistic' travelogues of American and European pilgrims to the Soviet Union in the 1920s and early 1930s. The cartoonist uses them as propaganda that exports Soviet lie to the West, and distorts the true face of this society. To more clearly outline the direction of Darling's criticism, the analysis includes the texts of the travelers who glorified Soviet achievements in widely circulated ideological formulas and clichés (Lewis Fischer, Frederick Griffin, William Chamberlin, George Sylvester Counts).

Russia and Orientalism in American Discourse

Oriental rhetoric is involved in the representation of the Russian space in Darlings iconotext, but it is not clearly defined and anchored in the American tradition. It also differs a lot from the Western European imaginative paradigm. The ethnic narrative and the Eastern location are pushed to the margins of the narrative, with only a few mentions of the variety of Russia's 'racial' traits, which, as the narrator explicitly states, he's not interested in exploring. Darling emphasizes the resemblance of national existence, anxieties, and struggles, which revels in the similarity of the Soviet people's qualities. He examines the Soviet Union from

the conscious position as a representative of a civilized country and constantly contrasts the two states according to the criterion of freedom, in particular, political freedom. Another factor is the desire to diminish the intensity of emotions, or as Darling aptly describes it, hysteria triggered by admiration or apprehension of the potential threats posed by the new regime to the Western world.

Darling appeals to the ideas of unprecedented social experimentation and powerful modernization, common in travel accounts, visualized in Soviet posters, and to images of *Bolshevism* in American cartoons (Lewis Crumley Gregg *The Cloud* (1919), Edmund Gale *The Nice Red Apple* (1923), Jay N. Darling *The Result of the Debauch* (1919). His caricatures of the Russian Revolution in the early 1920s testify to his rejection and condemnation of the events. It is obvious that in the early 1930s, when the state had already established itself, he sought to make sense of the results, to confirm or refute his previous assessments.This is, in my opinion, a complex of factors in the intertextual plane that enhanced the significance of Orientalist constructs.

As Dimitrios Kassis notes that the associations of the Russian Empire with the East, and its image formation within the conceptual paradigm of E. Said, were determined by a major share of the Asian population, and the traditions of the Greek Orthodox Church that reflected a strong Byzantine influence[4]. These are undoubtedly the substantive features, but the dynamics of the Orientalization of the Russian space are much more heterogeneous in the Western perception. The idea of Russia as an Orient, which most researchers believe dates back to the 18th century, was preceded by earlier evidence that reflected the concept of separating ancient civilization from barbarians, the Scythians[5]. The antique code as the genetic basis of the European civilization established the expressiveness and persistence of the model of self-identification and differentiation between the West and the Other, the East. Therefore, when the concept of civilization confronted with barbarism developed in the 18th century, the signs of backwardness as the main feature of the Oriental world began to intensify in the Western reflection of the Russian Empire. In the nineteenth century, the value vector changed in Russia, and instead of being perceived as backwardness, Asian stagnation turned to be

4 D. Kassis, *Deconstructions of the Russian Empire in Western Travel Literature*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne 2021, p. 3.

5 L. Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe the Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment,* Stanford, Calif 1994, p. 10.

seen as stability based on orthodoxy, aristocracy, and national traditions[6]. In the West, Nicholas's Russia is defined as an Oriental-despotic country. Furthermore, there were deep cultural foundations of Orientalization, based on concepts of backwardness in social development and the despotism of the political feudal organization of the empire, most clearly embodied in the phenomenon of serfdom. Michael Devid-Fox looks at how the idea of being backwards started and how it changed over time. The researcher says that the idea of having different nationalities and a unique way of life was associated with Asian primitives and resulted in Westerners seeing Russia as being lagged behind in the 19th century. The Soviet cultural revival, however, was interpreted as a manifestation of the same national spirit, the transfer of religious orthodoxy to the secular realm accompanied by a fusion of ideological ideals[7].

In this context, it is crucial to consider the specific ideological differences between Oriental/Occidental concepts and the interrelationship between Russian and American cultures. Margarita D. Marinova emphasizes that America and Russia were positioned as opposed to the European order. Numerous historical, political, and cultural factors, including massive nation-building processes, Russia's support for America during the Civil War, and the almost simultaneous emancipation of slaves/serfs, have a remarkable impact on the peculiarities and significance of the relationship. According to the study, the travel writing of Russians and Americans during the studied period did not envision the two countries as complete antiworlds, as the Orientalist dichotomy would have it, but rather as alternative worlds[8]. Nonetheless, there occurred certain shifts in relations between the two countries in the second half of the nineteenth century. The clash of imperial interests pushed American cultural and political figures to adopt European rhetoric about the Russian Empire, echoing Victorian racial concepts of backwardness, slavery, and oppression, but not primitiveness[9].

6 A. Lukin, *Russia between East and West: Perceptions and Reality*."Joint Session of the European Consortium for Political Research" 2003. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/lukin20030328.pdf.

7 M. David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to Soviet Union, 1921–1941,* Oxford 2012, p. 13.

8 M.D. Marinova, *Transnational Russian-American Travel writing*, London 2011, p. 19.

9 Ch. Chatterjee, *Transnational Romance, Terror, and Heroism: Russia in American Popular Fiction, 1860–1917,* "Comparative Studies in Society and History" 2008, Vol. 50 № 3, p. 754.

The events of the Russian Revolution and their evaluation in the United States resulted in in an extraordinary polarization between the two nations. The new regime in Russia was detected as a threat during the First Red Scare, which lasted from 1918 to 1920. Whereas in the 1930s, Americans no longer considered post-revolutionary Russia an alternative project, but an experimental one and seriously analyzed economic transformations. The rhetoric became dominated by ideas that went beyond the Oriental polarization of West/East, progressive/backward. Among the most important are modernization and liberation, which seem to break with the Soviet Union's imitation of imperial policy and formulate a new agenda that the Western travel discourse was replicating. The catalysts for this process were the crisis of liberalism, The Great Depression, when "even staunch defenders of capitalism were willing to admit that there might be something to learn from the Soviet 'experiment', in particular, the experience of the Soviet five-year plans"[10]. The insightful observation of M. David-Fox reveals that political tourists witnessed an extraordinary reversal of the Oriental tropes of mysticism, femininity, exoticism, and thus backwardness. In the 1930s, bourgeois intellectuals declared "a new breed of intellectual man in action"[11].

The fervent interest of Americans in economic and social innovations is an essential impetus for studying the Soviet reality for Darling. Nevertheless, the issues of economic reforms and resolving unemployment, which were of great concern to the American populace during the crisis, are derived from his understanding of political and ideological aspects as more crucial and threatened. Due to the propagandistic tactics applied by the Soviet Union or the superficially biased testimony of Western travelers, the Soviet Union's policy in the West was positioned in a favorable position.

Transforming the Idea of Backwardness in the Reconstruction of the Soviet Concept

Darling's criticism focuses precisely on the mentioned concept of *Sovietophiles*. Searching for appropriate writing strategies leads to combining contradictory discursive models. For example, Ulrike Brisson states: "The politics of travel under colonial conditions were very different from the ideologically motivated

10 M. David-Fox, *Showcasing...*, p. 36.

11 Ibid., p.25.

journeys of 1930s radicals"[12]. Analysis of Darling's travelogue proves both models can intersect in opposition to the dominant representation constructions of the Soviet space and activate the parody mechanisms. Darling examines the advertised social achievements and neutralizes metaphorical constructs. The Soviet tourist infrastructure clearly outlined for foreigners the locations that created the illusion of well-being, fullness, and dynamics of Soviet life. To take an in-depth look into another culture, one needs a non-touristy kind of travel to avoid deliberate manipulations by the Soviet authorities and their specific way of hospitality. Darling clearly comprehends the importance of independent travel and acquaintance, emphasizing that the way of travelling with one's own car and cook, in a manner that provides pleasure and comfort, and staying in good hotels, will only form a favorable attitude towards the Soviet 'experiment'[13]. He therefore abandons this practice and suggests that his compatriots would adopt the same approach. Nevertheless, he follows a typical route, the same loci as the USSR sympathizers, removing the symbolic halo from them. Moscow is a city where the privileges of the newly chosen are on display all the time; Yalta is not a 'fairy tale' but a poor resort with dirty canteens; Dniprobud is not a place of industry victories but a newborn city of a hard and unfair labor; Nizhny Novgorod is a city with a ruined centuries-old and profitable trade tradition that contradicts the spirit of communism.

The American traveler takes the model of the Journey to Civilization, which optimists synthesize with utopian images, and creates a journey to an uncivilized world using Oriental techniques. The significant basis of this journey is not a journey through space, but through time. The journey to the Middle Ages contrasts with the temporal model of political travelogues that celebrated the birth of the future of humanity. Upon examining the travelogues of the Pilgrims in the 1930s, Jacques Derrida posits that the amalgamation of politics and travel writing yields a distinct genre with a distinct chronotope: the notion of 'out there' is non-existent, and historically evokes the philosopher's memories of a pilgrimage[14]. Darling echoes this structure and also adheres to ideological cartography, albeit inverted.

12 U. Brisson, *'Naked' Politics in Travel Writing*", [in:] Not So Innocent Abroad: The Politics of Travel and Travel Writing, [ed.] U.Brisson, B. Schweizer. Newcastle upon Tyne 2009, p. 5.

13 J.N. Darling, *Ding Goes to Russia*. New York and London 1932, p. 166.

14 J. Derrida, *Back from Moscow, in the USSR*, [in:] Politics, Theory, and Contemporary Culture, [ed.] M. Poster, New York 1993, pp. 197–235.

Just like the pilgrims, he touches on the themes of Soviet everyday life in the light of the birth of the future world, and according to Darling's system, the past.

The texts of the pilgrims are replete with official statistics, which they trust absolutely and which should confirm the validity of their conclusions. For example, a well-known American educational theorist who wrote several studies, including travelogues, about the USSR notes:

> Personally I believe that the Soviet statistics are as accurate as the Russian statisticians can make them and that they are becoming more accurate every year. They provide the foundation on which the whole program of construction rests[15].

Darling categorically rejects official figures and indicators, leaving statistics, as he says, "at the bottom of the suitcase." He introduces the anthropological dimension as a priority over any industrial or political achievement. When the narrator observes the social conditions, he feels sympathy for the Soviet people and describes the changes in their lives as a tragedy.

> If you saw160 , 000 , 000 people going barefooted , whenever possible , to save the one pair of shoes they were lucky to possess; living in one room, barely furnished; and eating only black bread without butter, porridge without milk or cream [...] Those 160 , 000 , 000 Russians are the same kind of human beings that inhabit the rest of the world. The thought that they should be willing to make all these sacrifices, to go without common conveniences, to work diligently in order that their automobiles, shoes, textiles and caviar might be exported into countries already better equipped than themselves, while they continue to go without, is an absurd invention of an hysterical imagination[16].

The criticism extends to key Soviet ideologemes repeated by Western travelers. For example, in F. Griffin's travelogue, one of the sections of his travel impressions is called *When worker is boss* and conveys the ideological formula of liberating workers from exploitation[17]. "Labor is the aristocracy, the privileged class of

15 G.S. Counts, *The Soviet Challenge to America*, New York 1931, p. XV.

16 J.N. Darling, Ding Goes..., p. 139.

17 F. Griffin, *Soviet Scene: a Newspaperman's Close-up a New Russia*, Toronto 1933.

the Soviet Union"[18], writes the American journalist W. Chamberlin. The assertion that a worker represents the new upper class suggests that the notion of privilege has not vanished, as Darling observes, demonstrating that the distinctions between the upper and lower classes have not been eradicated, but rather merely the social composition has undergone a change. The chosen, i.e., representatives of the authorities, have access to automobiles, attire, foreign merchandise, and the freedom to cross borders without restriction. The ideology of free labor is illustrated by him in a satirical way: «The Russian workers don't watch the clock, they watch the GPU»[19]. Observing the gap between the authorities and the Other at the level accessible to a traveler, the level of daily practices, the construction of the Other begins to stratify. On one side, the Other is a Soviet person, who is supposed to be subjugated by the authorities. This is evidenced by the bodily marker of the nakedness of the colonized native proletarian, which contrasts with the uniforms of the colonizers (Fig.1). Darling comes very close to understanding the process that is defined in modern language as 'internal colonialism', the orientation of one's own culture, the historical forms of which will take on a grotesque manifestation in the early Soviet period[20]. The image of the new man, viewed in the light of the Oriental paradigm, lacks any distinctly negative connotations, being rather ironic, compared to the image of the Soviet Union, its projects, and accomplishments as distinct from civilisation, in particular the American comprehension of the ways in which society's evolution proceeds.

The use of the Oriental concept of nudity is determined by its dual nature. Nudity, as a marker of the uncivilized Soviet person, is interwoven into the narrative of the Soviet as impoverished, meaning unified, monotonous, and inexpressive, affecting all spheres of existence. The narrator is struck by the 'architectural nudeness' of the new proletarian neighborhoods, which he considers as drab and devoid of decorations as life itself in Russia today[21]. He is surprised that a waiter at a hotel serves him in his underwear and emphasizes the anecdotal aspect with a caricature of a half-naked man. (Fig. 2) The narrator is baffled by

18 W. Chamberlin, *Henry Soviet Russia; a living record and a history*, Boston 1930, p. 163.

19 J.N. Darling, Ding Goes..., p. 133.

20 A. Etkind *Bremya bitogo cheloveka, ili vnutrennyaya kolonizatsiya Rossii*, "Imperio" 2002, № 1, p. 296–297.

21 J.N. Darling, Ding Goes..., p. 118.

the widespread nude bathing, wondering if this occurrence is a sign of moral shifts in communal behavior.

The Other is the system, the primitive nature of its actions and their outcomes. The critical rethinking of key ideologies is dependent on this concept. It is only when the narrator steps into the Soviet space that he enters into a polemic about the declarations of a 'new' world: "There is very little that is new here except on the surface"[22]. Compare this to the ebullient croons of his contemporaries: "It's new. It is vivid. It is stupendous"[23], "There is always something new under the Red Sun"[24] For G. Counts, in his travelogue *A Ford crosses Soviet Russia*, the renewal is obvious, although he sees it from a distance, from afar: "Obviously, in its outward form, the new social order is revealing itself not only in a vast program of economic construction but also in the creation of those material facilities necessary for the general protection and enrichment of life counts"[25].

Darling responds to all these assertions with a starkly different assessment and rejects the universalization of a perspective that forms reality with the conventional and utopian constructs of *being-in-construction26*. This is not a case of enrichment, but rather of colonial devastation, which manifests itself not only through the lack of goods, commodities, and living conditions but rather through creationg a model of *being-in-destruction*. With the exiles, culture declines, the best peasants, known as *kulaks*, disappear; groups of peoples, such as the Gypsies, are eradicated; traditions are destroyed; and everything that is produced instead of being provided to local people to overcome poverty is sold overseas. Russia has become a huge vacuum space[27].

Such features as backwardness, medievalism, impoverishment of everyday practices, and political and economic leadership in the USSR as well as the ineffectiveness of reforms bring the image of the Soviet Union closer to the representations of the East in Western European discourse. The tropes of illness and the physical and intellectual inferiority of a Soviet person are the consequences

22 Ibid., p. 22.

23 F. Griffin, *Soviet Scene...*, p.13.

24 L. Fischer, *Soviet Journey*, New York 1935, p. 94.

25 G.S. Counts, *A Ford Crosses Soviet Russia*, Boston 1930, p. 169–170.

26 J. Derrida, *Back from Moscow...*

27 J.N. Darling, Ding Goes..., p. 142.

of cruelty, violence, and propaganda. These are also the consequences of children's simplicity, obedience, and friendliness – a typical Oriental construct of the Russian space that has also transformed:

> They have suffered so bitterly that almost anything that promises even a stepmother's affection seems to them a hopeful and soothing condition. That is why they accept, so tolerantly, the severe and ironlike rule of the new regime. They have reacted to the slightest sign of friendliness as children rebound to a smile of reconciliation after punishment[28].

This motif is intertwined with the concept of the *Oriental silence*, which in the context of E. Said's theory of Orientalism acquires a serious political sound: "Orientals were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analyzed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined or-as the colonial powers openly coveted their territory-taken over"[29]. In this travelogue, the Oriental silence, which is a sign of alienation, powerlessness, and passivity, is transferred to a Soviet individual and transformed into a 'prudent' silence: "Never was labor less emancipated between the Party men and the G.P.U. he steers a straight and narrow course, and if he cannot think of anything pleasant to say about the government, he keeps discreetly still"[30].

Reflecting on the reasons for human submissiveness, despite all trials and challenges, Darling reinforces fundamental concepts in the Oriental representation of the Russian space. It is about slavery as a feature that is rooted in social psychology. He sees serfdom from the present perspective and pushes its class boundaries from the peasantry to all underprivileged strata. Loyalty and hard work in exchange for meager food and the absence of punishment are the core of the "primitive civilization of the Middle Ages"[31]. As a consequence of the processes of self-colonization in the Soviet Union, portrayed in Darling's travelogue, the Soviet individual appeared as a mute subaltern[32], for whom the authority speaks through

28 Ibid., p. 26.

29 E. Said, *Orientalism,* New York 1979, p. 207.

30 J.N. Darling, Ding Goes..., p. 127.

31 Ibid., p. 99.

32 G.Ch. Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* [in:] Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture, [ed.] C. Nelson, Chicago 1988, pp. 271–313.

propaganda that permeated all levels of life. Posters turned out to be the most effective and evocative means of articulating the identity of new human beings.

As mentioned before, Darling's criticism has many aspects. Undoubtedly, he pays more attention to the texts of *Sovietophiles*. The criticism of those who spread alarming and intimidating signals is no less significant in forming the narrative of backwardness. During the period of the first Red Scare, *Bolshevism* was caricatured as a snake, evoking associations with treachery and deceit, or a dirty, patchy, bearded man with a haunted expression, clearly appealing to the barbarism and savagery of the Soviet revolutionaries. This historical context explains the caricature on the frontispiece of Darling's travelogue, which to some extent presents a collective image of revolutionary radicalism in Western reception (Fig. 3). This is the only image in the work with expressive features of caricature grotesque. The caption to the caricature creates a satirical effect directed against excessive emotions surrounding communist ideology: "Russia isn't nearly as red as it has been painted". In the text, this thesis will acquire a political commentary with an emphasis on the fact that communism, which is associated with the red hue, dissolves in an entirely different, actually *Bolshevik* regime, the essence of which he explains using another Oriental concept – chaos: "strange bedlam of fantastic theories and medieval inefficiency"[33]. It is natural that one of the important questions that the American traveler constantly thinks about is the assessment of the threat that Russia can pose to his country and the civilized world. This can be defined as a continuation of the Oriental tradition of interpreting the Russian space.

Approaching the borders of the Soviet Union, the narrator ironizes Poland's 'militaristic hysteria' against the neighbor's strange social experiment and, running ahead, hurries to reassure and, introduces the theme of the inability and backwardness of the new country:

> Maybe Russia intends to conquer the world for Communism at some future date, but neither the Red Army nor the scarce resources of the populace at this time would give one the slightest impression of any capacity in that direction. She has a long way to go before she can conquer her own soul without bothering about the salvation of anyone or anything else[34].

33 J.N. Darling, Ding Goes..., p. 137.

34 Ibid., p. 9.

The regime pretends to be communist, but it is not. It postulates equality, but there is none, just as there is no renewal of family institutions or economic reforms, including the *Five-Year Plan*. The emotional aversion to the 'new' in the economic and social life of the Soviet state is heightened by the revelation of political imitators and counterfeiters of various models and forms, including those from the former imperial, Western bourgeois, including American, and dictatorial, like the Mussolini regime. By denying the Soviet integrity and completeness, which is only worth the grotesque metaphor of *Bolshevism* as a rabid dog with its tail and the path to decline[35], a narrator devises a strategy for destroying of a significant ideology – the Soviet Union as a project for the future of humanity. The solution to this issue depends on Oriental tropes, whose application is ambiguous and contradictory.

In the synchronic view, the Soviet life is constructed as strange, wild[36] and enclosed ('political prison', in the diachronic view – as a "benevolent" dictatorship capable of being more effective in solving crisis issues than democracy, but short-lived. The narrator expresses a paradoxical belief that the same subaltern proletariat, whose total dependence he felt and vividly depicted, will not endure a long-term burden, and will not accept the lack of water supply, a sufficient number of ties or cars[37]. On the one hand, aggressiveness, hostility, and poisonous hatred towards the West are being nurtured in the new Soviet man. He warns that the spores of a sick regime can become detrimental to civilization: "No amount of counter – inoculation can overtake the deadly virus"[38]. On the other hand, the Soviet life is represented in a simplistic satirical light, and its future is imaginatively projected through Oriental tropes: break out of dirt, from medieval poverty, to catch up with the 20th century with such ineffective reforms, only cruelty and pressure, it takes a lot of time, hence the conclusion: "It is this fact which makes the much advertised likelihood of a Russian military offensive seem doubtful"[39].

According to all the canons of finalization of an Oriental journey, summing up his depressing experience on the border with Estonia, the narrator is relieved

35 Ibid., p. 51.

36 Ibid., p. 118.

37 Ibid., p. 139.

38 Ibid., p. 86.

39 Ibid., p. 25.

to see the signs of a civilized country: people are fully clothed, houses are well-kept, gardens are full of well-groomed flowers and flourishing vegetables. It is the end of the route with the denial of uniqueness and the path of the new state, together with the ability to modernize create a picture of Stalin's Russia as a landscape of primitiveness.

Conclusion

Western travel discourse of the Soviet Union is characterized by polarization: on the one hand, approval, on the other, categorical rejection of the communist regime and its ideology. Darling established his viewpoint, which the author artistically expressed in his early cartoon. Later on, he wanted to be certain if the cruelty, injustice and, most importantly, the regime's lies were fact or myth.

It is noteworthy that Oriental tropes in this travelogue put forward another level of understanding of the colonial policy of the Soviet government about its population. However, the Oriental discourse, through which he perceived the observed reality, revealed its blind spots. The 'new/old' structural contrast, which serves as the foundation for imaginatively distinguishing the West and the East, became the fundamental structure of the rhetoric of backwardness and uncivilization and reduced Darling's appreciation of the Soviet system. The narrator nevertheless recognizes the pace and intensity of changes and the enslavement of people. Still, he rejects the analysis of their future, underestimating the threats of the regime, its stability and its aggressiveness.

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List of Figures

Fig. 1.

Fig. 2.


RUSSIA IS'NT NEARLY AS RED AS IT HAS BEEN PAINTED.
(Frontispiece)

Fig. 3.