

In our view, what makes Mrs. Karolina Pawlik Lovejoy's PhD entitled *Images of Russia and the USA in selected newspapers and weekly magazines* so particularly remarkable is that not only does it "aspire to be a pioneer work" (p. 9) to the matter at hand, but it achieves this goal in more ways than one. There are many extensive studies on American and Russian media, and the main corpus of this PhD in that respect will not seem particularly original—*Time* and *Newsweek* are well-known "mainstream" magazines in the USA as well as internationally, and so are *Арзументы и Факты* (*Argumenty i Fakty*) and *Kommersant Vlast'* (*Коммерсантъ Власть*) for Russia; the two "alternative" publications taken into account, namely *The Nation* and *Новая Газета* (*Novaya Gazeta*) have gained a recognition that goes well beyond their actual circulation, and this is even more relevant for *Novaya Gazeta* since its editor-in-chief, Dmitry Muratov, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2021. In other words, this PhD might easily have fallen into the pitfall of belabouring the obvious.

This has been avoided by the originality of its intercultural and essentially *comparatist* approach, something which would never have been possible—at least to the same extent—had its author not been able to have direct access to sources not only in English or Polish, her mother tongue, but also in Russian and French, as the impressive bibliography so clearly exemplifies. Drawing upon such a variety of multilingual sources is the best way to produce research that allows you to "think out of the box" as the British Academy's position paper *Language Matters* so pointedly remarked back in 2009. A case in point is Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands*, published the following year—had the author not had a thorough knowledge of Russian, but also Polish and Ukrainian, the book would simply have been impossible to publish or at least considerably impaired in its scope and insight. Mrs. Karolina Pawlik Lovejoy's PhD dissertation partakes of the same comparatist approach, and the fact that she was an expat in "Russia, Ukraine, Germany and finally in the United States" allowed her to confront several "mindsets" (p. 5) is another obvious asset of this research.

This PhD unexpectedly acquired a topicality that very few people, included its author, would have foreseen. The period covered by the dissertation was meant to run from the beginning of Putin's second mandate in 2004—which coincided with the Orange Revolution in Ukraine—to Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, when "mutual communication" between the USA and Russia was "radicalized" (p. 12), but the connection with Russia's invasion of Ukraine is unescapable and gives the study added relevance of considerable proportions, bringing us back to the worst times of the Cold War, from the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 to Russia's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 (see for instance Fareed Zakaria's

point of view p. 114). Seen in retrospect, the period 2004-2014 seems to have heralded today's Russian so-called "special military operation" in Ukraine which now has global implications.

As Walter Cronkite used to say, "information is power", and in our "post-truth" age of the Internet, social networks, this is even more to the point. Yet, although we can now have direct access to information in a vast number of languages, and that it "is mainly on the basis of mass media that we form perceptions of different nations" (p. 13), most people will "form" those perceptions mainly through their national media and more often than not in their own language, at least if the issue is taken into account in terms of *mass* media. In other words, the American media analysed in this PhD, *Time*, *Newsweek* and *The Nation* are seldom read if at all by a Russian-speaking audience and the converse also stands—people who actually read their Russian counterparts *Argumenty i Fakty*, *Kommersant Vlast'* or *Novaya Gazeta* in the USA are few and far between, even when *Novaya Gazeta Europe* is now available in Russian and English. No wonder therefore if after thoroughly sifting through an impressive amount of quantitative data collected from the six media under consideration the American and Russian sides seldom adopt convergent views.

Mrs. Karolina Lovejoy's PhD has once more avoided belabouring the obvious, which would have consisted in stating that the divergence stems from the fact that the USA and Russia are two different societies which can only see one another through the prism of "stereotypes" as famously shown by Walter Lippman in his *Public Opinion* (p. 22) and that a knowledge of the "Other" was always bound to be biased by such mutual representations. Another pitfall would have been to consider that the American viewpoint was necessarily less unbiased than its Russian mirror image on the grounds that from 2004 onwards, unlike the USA, Russia has increasingly estranged itself from democracy to become a "Post-Soviet" authoritarian regime based on nationalist propaganda of the worst kind. One of the most interesting parts of this PhD is that it demonstrates that stereotypes are not only to be applied to the Other but also to oneself, so that "both *The Nation* and *Novaya Gazeta* noticed that the produced images were patches for [...] post-cold war identity problems of both the USA and Russia, using the narrative of exceptionalism to alleviate their own insecurities" (p. 313). This, however, leads the author to make a convincing distinction between the two countries, "Russia's collective persona being closer to covert narcissism and the USA to overt narcissism" (*ibid.*). Contrary to the USA and its "Manifest Destiny" (p. 98), Russia's tends to see itself throughout history as a "constant victim", which for instance helps explain today's diametrically opposed visions of the war in Ukraine as seen from the USA and Russia.

Last but not least, the whole dissertation not only is firmly grounded on a vast quantitative research as previously mentioned but also on an impressive amount of different theoretical sources, which have been used to good effect. This is the case, for instance, for the concept of “communicational narcissism”, and the concepts of Dominique Wolton’s “communication” vs “incommunication”, which run counter to the common wisdom that takes the notion of communication as self-evident (see p. 64 ff. the “communication model” used). But the communication model used in this PhD goes beyond one theoretical approach, as elsewhere, and blends it with a number of other viewpoints, such as those of what has been defined as the American School of Anthropology, including Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead, and of other schools as well, since Mrs. Karolina Lovejoy has been able to delve into sources available in English and Russian as well as in Polish and French. This is the prism through which the title *Images of Russia and the USA in selected newspapers and weekly magazines* has to be understood, namely not only from two, but four different cultural world views, adding a deepened sense of perspective.

This is all the more relevant to a world living in the throes and convulsions of Marshall McLuhan’s global village and the ensuing globalization of communication which has brought to the fore the need for intercultural communication with unprecedented salience, but also *intracultural* communication—in order to understand the Other, this PhD stresses the fact that it cannot be dissociated from the understanding of the stereotyped views of our own world’s “persona”, which we take too often for granted, Americans and Russians alike, but this is true of all possible viewpoints or stances throughout the world. This PhD focuses on Russian and American media, but the same could be done for other so-called Western countries (which include Taiwan, Japan or South Korea) and those of the BRICS (which include Russia), all of which have made the ongoing war in Ukraine a central issue.

That is why such a complexity calls for an in-depth *critical* intercultural approach, such as the one that can be found in Mrs. Pawlik Lovejoy’s illuminating, ground-breaking dissertation.

That is also why it shall come as no surprise, on the basis of what precedes, that we express our favourable opinion and full agreement as regards the application for the defense of this PhD.

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