

**A SATIRIST'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE SOVIET UKRAINE
DURING THE STALIN ERA IN AMERICAN TRAVELOGUE**

The problem of the research provokes different questions in a plane of theoretical and historical vision of a political travelogue, though the scholars of American travel to the Soviet Union have not considered it. The primary objective is to reconstruct the strategies for establishing the image of the USSR in American culture and reassess the Soviet memory within the context of Ukrainian national identity. The main focus is on the travelogue titled “Ding Goes to Russia” (1932) by the Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Jay Norwood Darling.

Why is Darling's work significant in today's context? Darling's impression and evaluation of the Soviet Union are completely inconsistent with the optimistic interpretation of the processes in the new country, which is inherent to political pilgrims. Political controversy inspires satirical and parodic ways to criticize the new government, especially its claim to have created a “new” human and principles of social organization. Darling devotes considerable attention to the southeastern region of Ukraine, capturing the significant moments in its history. His visions of a new Soviet man are specified in such features as cognitive degradation, serfdom and obedience. Nonetheless, in the sketches of Ukrainian villages forcibly transformed into kolhoz Darling softens the grotesque and parody, focusing his attention on the life and work hardships of the Ukrainian people, particularly women. This is one of the few travel testimonials in which the image of a Ukrainian is visible.

Darling ridicules a regime that he perceives as dictatorial while simultaneously expressing empathy for the life of a Soviet man, whose tragedy he reveals to an American reader (Юферева, 2023). The author expands the visual space of the travelogue, including caricatures, a rare graphic genre for this

kind of literature. The caricature has become a way of counter-propaganda for the Soviet authorities.

I believe that an in-depth study of this text will contribute to a greater understanding of the political travelogue's nature and intermedia specificity. Furthermore, it actualizes reflections on the discourse framework of recognition and the fictional techniques of visualizing violence, oppression and conflicts, hidden by Other world.

The main areas of the research are as follows:

Caricaturing the USSR: humor techniques in verbal and visual travel narratives.

Travelogue is a non-fiction genre, but as is known, it is open to fictional techniques. In Darling's text and other satirical travelogues, fictional visualization is used to deconstruct the imaginary world of the Soviet Union. This part aims to explore the intermedia nature of travelogues in the context of satirical and caricatured travelogues (W. Rogers "There is not a Bathing Suit in Russia and Other Bare Facts" (1927), K. Martin "Low's Russian Sketchbook" (1932).

2. Representation of the Soviet Empire: utopian versus oriental

The purpose of this part is to contextualize Darling's work and vision. He comprehended that the advancement of industrialization and collectivization was an anthropological catastrophe, yet a triumph for the communist system. The author describes this world as uncivilized and aggressive. Therefore, oriental constructs displaced and ridiculed utopian narratives and monumental images that can be traced in American tourists' writings.

American tourists in Ukrainian cities

The American travel books show the geography of Ukraine in detail. Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, Odesa, and Kyiv are the subjects of curiosity for the travellers. They witnessed the birth of new proletarian cities and new everyday practices. In this section, I aim to reveal the distinctive features of the American conception of Ukrainian urban identity, presented during the period when the

proletarian ideology was layered upon the existing ones that had not yet been erased.

A significant aspect is the meticulous consideration of the representation of Zaporizhzhia as a newborn city. In various texts, that are available for review, I have observed a stereotypical depiction of Zaporizhzhia as a peripheral industrial city situated around Dnieprostroy as a symbol of proletarian victory (Юферева, 2021; Юферева, 2023). Darling's vision and testimony expand the understanding of urban everydayness beyond the industrial discourse.

The narratives of American tourists had a significant impact on the Western perception of the USSR. By confirming the idea that this was the country of the future, they thereby strengthened ideological myths in the Soviet Union itself. This trend was beneficial to the authorities. This strategy led to the fact that the voices of Ukrainians and about Ukrainians were not heard due to their complete dissolution in the noise of propaganda and totalitarian repression. Today we need to reflect on this situation. The systematic presentation of archival data and its in-depth semiotic, imagological examination will reveal how representatives of another culture view Ukrainian identity.

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