Some officials even accused her openly of becoming a communist. This was of course rubbish, but her good relations with the USSR did not escape notice—after all, she had spoken up for human rights in the USA—and she was under constant surveillance in Hollywood.

It emerged in the 1980s that back in 1955, before she was even thirty years old, a secret dossier had been opened on her. The American authorities have admitted that they have an ‘extensive’ file on her, and according to the Sunday Times in London this dossier contains material on foreign policy, as well as questions of defence. The paper says that in the eyes of the special services Marilyn Monroe had become a ‘security risk’. So they simply got rid of her. Whether this is so or not, maybe the future will tell.

Obviously many foreign writers have already written about America. Even so, everyone sees his surroundings in his own way, so perhaps my own impressions of America and the Americans are also relevant. I worked in the USA for eight years, with only one short break, and I often came up against Americans in their ordinary lives, as well as in politics. At first we rented a small house in a quiet Washington street and then, when I was made ambassador, we moved to the embassy on 16th Street, a five-minute walk from the White House.

America in the late 1930s and early 1940s made a big impression on me. At first glance, American cities seemed utterly unlike not only Russian cities but also the European ones my wife and I had seen, which were much calmer and where one could feel the breath of history. If you compared New York with, say, London or Florence or Venice, you would think they were on different planets.

Here it was the breath of technology one felt, and innovation, and everywhere the buildings seemed to shout after you: ‘We’re not like you Europeans. We make noise, we hum, we roar, and we like it. The dollar, the dollar, that’s all we want.’

Yet, strange though it may seem, American towns eventually came to remind me of Russian towns. For a long time I couldn’t work out why, and then I got it. At first I’d been distracted by the striking external differences between, say, New York and Moscow, but then, as I became immersed in the everyday life, I realised that they both absorbed the new and cast off the old in the same way.

In any big American city everything is in motion. When we first arrived, New York was already inundated by cars, and the metallic clang of the overhead railway was augmented by the rumble of trucks and the frequent howl of the police and fire-engine sirens, day and night. The cacophony excited the population and clearly affected their psyche, and without it New York would not be New York.

Unfortunately, in recent decades, Moscow has been going the same way. Under the pressure of urbanisation, many of its old streets and squares have been defaced with bland, indefinable architecture. Dozens of interesting buildings have been destroyed. Straight streets and straight lines now dominate, and the national character of the city has been lost. The environment has been spoiled, the city has become noisier.

The noisy streets of New York were as straight as if they’d been drawn with a ruler. The buildings looked gigantic. On the other hand, Washington was quieter. As the capital, populated mostly by government officials, it was as it were a counterpoint to New York, and no building was (or is) allowed to be higher than the cupola of the Capitol.

One odd feature of the Washington of those days was the extraordinary number of dogs that were allowed to roam free, and I recall an incident in this connection.

Out of sheer curiosity our young son, Anatoly, went into the local church during the sermon. He told us about it: ‘I’m sitting and listening. The preacher drones on for a while and then, at the end of his sermon, he starts to get excited and ends up practically screaming. The people aren’t exactly bored, but they aren’t very joyful either. Then they start passing a huge cup around and everyone’s throwing money into it, sometimes even paper money. But I had practically nothing on me. What could I do? It would be shaming not to give something, so when the cup was about to reach our row I got up and left. People gave me disapproving looks and one old man even hissed at me. But I felt better once I went outside. I wanted to get home. I saw the bus approaching the stop and started to run like mad to catch it, when all of a sudden I was being chased by a lot of dogs. One dog howled just like the Hound of the Baskervilles and it bit me just as I was jumping on the bus. If I was superstitious, I’d say I was being punished for ducking out of the church like that.’

We were worried about the bite, but the American doctor we
consulted reassured us: 'Nothing to worry about. We haven’t had rabies in Washington for many years now.'

Anatoly’s remark reminds me of the many American superstitions I encountered. Despite all their technological achievements, most Americans still seem to believe in miracles, raising the dead, astrology, magic, witchcraft, all kinds of messiahs, vampires and fortune-tellers.

However, Americans have one quality which we Soviet people can admire unreservedly – their business efficiency. Its roots presumably go back to the time when pioneers came to settle and survived the harsh conditions only through the sweat of their brow and sheer guts. American efficiency struck me right away. Americans don’t work at half-speed. Whether they are selling hot-dogs or popcorn on the street, or building an apartment house or a shopping mall, growing wheat at home or drilling for oil in foreign parts, they don’t just work well, they work with total dedication. They never hold meetings to discuss what would seem to us to be important questions about methods. They simply know they have to work better than anyone else, and if they don’t they know they’ll soon be unemployed. The world of American business makes full use of the fear of losing one’s job, and idlers, layabouts and drunks get no wages.

With the exception of communists, all the people I spoke to in America liked to talk about American democracy, yet none of them seemed to have a clear perception of what real democracy, real rule by the people, actually is. They used words learned in school, like their fathers and grandfathers before them.

Even George Washington’s contemporaries in slave-owning America talked about freedom and thought they were living in a democratic country. Under Abraham Lincoln they talked about the power of the people, and in Theodore Roosevelt’s day the press glorified the American democracy which the administration was imposing by force on the peoples of other countries, especially in Latin America, while at home the working masses were being squeezed harder and harder by big business.

So what is the situation like today? Soviet visitors to the USA are struck by the strange (to them) sight of people standing in line for a job, or for unemployment benefit, or just for a bowl of soup. If you ask someone how he got into this situation, he’ll tell you:

'I haven’t got a job, my family’s got nothing. I’ve tried looking for work, but I haven’t found any.’ And if you ask him who’s responsible he’ll say: ‘That’s how it is. This is a democratic country – one guy finds a job, another doesn’t.’

It’s obvious that since childhood this man has believed that unemployment, with all its consequences, is a feature of democracy. Even the most oppressed minorities, the blacks, the Puerto Ricans and Hispanics, sing the same refrain: ‘The United States is a democratic country.’

As for the American trade unions, they are concerned entirely with the workers’ material interests, not with questions about the social order, or domestic and foreign policy. They may participate in presidential elections, but even then they only have the chance to vote for a representative of the ruling class. If you ask a trade-union member whether he regards the USA as a democratic country, he’ll say he does, and he will say this regardless of the glaring fact that eight or nine million Americans are daily denied subsistence. His conviction is not shaken even by legislation which has taken away from workers many of the social gains they struggled for, only to transfer the resources to the military budget. After all, American democracy is also a democracy of the military-industrial complex, and the Pentagon’s arms race is big business.

As for the views of those at the top of US society, in business or the arts, they overwhelmingly proclaim that in America democracy is at its most perfect.

The economist John Maynard Keynes, for example, although he was an Englishman, fits excellently into my comments on American democracy, since many of his ideas about state interference in the economy were practised in the United States. Admired by Western theoretical economists and American millionaires alike, Keynes’s ideas were embodied in the policies Franklin Roosevelt applied in order to overcome the economic crisis that had brought him to power. The main principle he stressed was that the ills of capitalism could be overcome by means of state-monopoly regulation.

I first met Keynes in 1943 in Atlantic City at the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) Council, one of the first wartime conferences held to discuss the economies of the countries occupied by Hitler. Keynes was there on behalf of the British government and, although he remained in the
background, he was an influential figure among those who set the 
tone for the conference.

For instance, he told me on one occasion: 'The Western 
Allies, above all the USA and England, have common interests, 
not only in the war against fascism, which we're going to win. 
They will have just as much interest in co-operating after the 
war.'

Although he was careful not to make predictions, he seemed to 
suggest that Britain's colonial empire would be in a parlous state 
after the war, in which case Britain would be in need of economic 
help from her powerful American ally.

I asked him, 'Isn't it threatening for Britain to be in a situation 
where she can no longer be independent of America?'

Instead of replying directly, Keynes said, 'Take note of Britain's 
great potential, which I'm sure she will still have after the war.'

I then asked him, 'How would you apply your theoretical views 
to the difficult period that is going to come for the anti-Hitler 
powers?'

Weighing his words, Keynes replied: 'I don't believe in social­
ism. The capitalist countries will continue to develop along the 
same path they have followed for hundreds of years. That doesn't 
mean the world is going to be divided into black and white. 
Elements of convergence will occur, and the governments of the 
capitalist countries are going to need much more flexibility in 
dealing with economic problems. It is therefore logical to antic­i-
pate more state interference than ever before - but in harmony 
with the interest of the entrepreneurs, rather than against them. 
It is important that both sectors assist in overcoming the state's 
economic difficulties.'

By 'difficulties' Keynes no doubt meant 'crisis', so I asked: 
'What, then, is your view of Marx’s arguments about the inevita-
ibility of economic crisis in capitalist society?'

His answer was curious for the time: 'I recognise that Marx’s 
argument had good grounds. But capitalist society has now de-
veloped and the possessing class has learned from experience how 
to cope with upheavals in the economy.'

I said, 'One of the main points in Marx's political economy was 
his theory of the law of surplus value and his analysis of the inner 
workings of capitalism. What is the main thing in what is now 
called Keynesianism?'

He thought for a while and then said: 'To be brief, the main 
point in my theory of state regulation is the need to maintain both 
effective demand and full employment.'

The capitalist countries achieved neither of these basic aims after 
the war. Neo-Keynesian schools were formed, some leaning to 
the left, some to the right, but none of them helped to save 
capitalism from its constant ills. Since the Second World War, 
the capitalist economies have been characterised not by effective 
demand but by almost permanent inflation and vain attempts to 
avert economic crisis, which have manifested themselves as falls 
in production, under-use of capacity, and fluctuations in the invest-
ment and currency markets. As for full employment, just ask the 
millions who are out of a job.

My personal impression of Keynes was of a man who knew his 
own worth. His imposing appearance set him apart. Elegant in a 
dark suit of superb English cloth, he preferred to talk of big things 
and did not indulge in the social chit-chat so beloved of his fellow 
countrymen. An interesting man, a subtle conversationalist, a 
scholar of prodigious talent, he intelligently served his class and 
the system in which he and his forebears had grown up.

When the subject of America is being discussed, I am often asked, 
'What are Americans really like?' This is not a na€ïve question. 
There are research institutes in the Soviet Union entirely devoted 
to the study of the United States. Their books are widely read, 
their articles appear in the press and their members appear on 
television. Their observations of America and the Americans are 
very impressive. And yet even they have probably missed much. 
I myself have wondered if I really know the Americans. I spent 
in all more than eight years in the USA on party and government 
work, not counting all the trips of one or two weeks, but I still 
can give no clear answer. I can, however, identify some common 
features, some characteristic traits.

I am, for example, firmly of the view that public opinion in Amer­
ica is less well informed than it is in Europe, and one of the main 
reasons for this is that the people at the top, who control the news 
media, hand out biased information, especially on foreign policy 
matters as they relate to the USSR and the life of the Soviet people. 
Another typical feature of average Americans is that they will say, 
'You look like a million dollars', meaning, 'You are looking well'. 
I have known so many Americans who, when talking about their
friends or family, refer to their success in life, when that success has consisted simply of building up capital. No one earns more praise in the USA than a good businessman. People don’t usually ask: ‘How did he make his capital, where did it come from?’

Americans cannot see that capital yields a profit to its owners only because other people are exploited. Ordinary Americans see people out of work or suffering racial discrimination, and millions homeless and illiterate, but there are countless distractions to cloud their view, to distort their normal human responses. There are of course people in the USA who openly and courageously carry on the struggle for equality, who do not bow down to the dollar, but they are very few. Once upon a time, before the name of Abraham Lincoln had dimmed, fighters for freedom sought refuge in America from foreign oppression. But today it is seldom fighters for freedom who seek refuge there any more; it is those who want to get closer to Mr Dollar.

What, then, is the attitude of ordinary city folk to Soviet people on the human level? In this, I have to say that the Americans are no different from people in other countries. They are courteous and civil and they want to know more about the USSR. Throughout my time in America, apart from occasional anti-Soviet demonstrations organised by various minority groups, neither I, nor any of my family, nor any of my embassy staff, was ever insulted or shown disrespect. On the contrary, we noticed that Americans showed special courtesy when they were dealing with Soviet citizens. There were unfortunate incidents, of course, but these were with either junkies or thieves, and such people don’t usually stop to ask for your passport. Ordinary Americans have always received Soviets with great interest and still do. This applies not just to officials but to others, such as representatives of public bodies, artists, scholars and tourists.

For example, in 1943 two major figures of Soviet Jewish culture, the famous actor and chairman of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee Solomon Mikhoels, and the Yiddish poet Itzik Fefer, came to appeal to the American Jewish community for support for the Soviet war effort, and they made a big impression on the American public at large. They addressed audiences mostly in the large cities, such as New York and Washington, and were everywhere received rapturously. As soon as they arrived in Washington, they asked us to arrange contacts for them with a wide American public, and we did whatever we could to assist the venture.

In the course of their brief stay in the USA, Mikhoels and Fefer acquired hundreds of new friends who in turn began to participate in various kinds of public activity aimed at developing friendship between our two countries. Mikhoels in particular left a deep impression with his bitter attacks against the Nazis. Many of the most varied social groups wanted to meet him, since he was well known in America as a great theatrical figure.

Certainly, American culture is rich and varied, and, as I have had frequent occasion to observe, not devoid of sharp contradictions either.

The great Czech composer Antonín Dvořák, who for three years in the last century was director of the National Conservatory in New York, where he composed his New World Symphony, declared that the American composer who incorporated Negro melodies in his music would become the founder of the American school. That composer was to be George Gershwin, who took the blues and the spirituals and the chants of the slaves on the plantations of the old South and made them his own. He became famous and the world became aware of the existence of an authentic American musical culture.

I arrived in Washington two years after Gershwin’s death, but I well remember the yard-high lettering on the billboards advertising his opera Porgy and Bess.

But it is the exception that proves the rule, and a strict rule it is. Profit is the pitiless filter through which everything to do with culture and art and the country’s spiritual life has to pass. Only that which promises a return on capital can survive. There is nothing obvious to suggest which cultural figures are to merit praise, but there are countless means which determine who shall be raised up and who cast down. One is the press and the mass media, and for the most part and in the last analysis they serve the interests of the ruling elite.

There are occasions when a talent appears that in other circumstances would do credit to the USA and enrich the cultural life of other countries as well; but society’s tentacles and the ultimate subordination of everything to the laws of capitalism distort such talents, in both the literal and metaphorical senses of the word.

Such a case was surely that of the short-lived singer Elvis Presley. Performing in a style that was just short of indecent, he
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was the idol of American youth for twenty years. His managers did everything to squeeze the last drop out of this gifted performer and America was amazed by the prolonged resistance Presley put up against his exploiters. The people who were pushing him further along the path of vulgarity succeeded only in breaking the health of this goose that laid the golden egg. He became seriously ill, and the media was full of it. Instead of treatment, however, he was given more contracts for countless performances that would bring huge profits to his backers. It was well known long before his death that he was addicted to narcotics and stimulants, but the octopus would not loosen its grip. Presley's talent collapsed and he died at the age of forty-three.

There are of course Americans who understand what is going on and who condemn it. But they are helpless against the almighty dollar and the spiritual devastation it wreaks.

6

Tehran and Yalta

To travel from the Soviet Union to the United States during the war, when the direct transatlantic route was out of the question, was no simple matter. The only reliable way was to fly right across Siberia and the Soviet Far East to Alaska, then south through Canada and the western United States and across to Washington. I made the trip three times.

The route across Siberia and Alaska was arduous, and our pilots nicknamed it 'the Mazuruk line', after Hero of the Soviet Union Major-General Ilya Mazuruk, a famous pilot and chief of polar aviation.

The flight from Washington took five days, one way. Siberia seemed endless. The plane flew on for hours, but always below was the taiga. That was when I first realised just how vast our country is. Somewhere above Yakutia we observed a huge fire, its broken front extending for tens of kilometres into the taiga. The glow made me think of what it must be like on the front, where at that time our soldiers were dying.

I flew that route for the last time in 1944, and on that occasion the weather produced some surprises for us. I had been appointed head of the delegation to the Dumbarton Oaks conference which was to produce the UN Charter, and the delegation included leading experts on international law. We flew without incident to Chukotka, but then we were stranded for more than twenty-four hours in the tiny settlement of Uelkal, on the shore of the Krest gulf. The plane could not take off because of the weather. The wind was hurricane force and though it was August one could feel the cold breath of the north.

Uelkal consisted of a few huts. After we had been settled in one