This article explores representations of McCarthyism by four of the largest newspapers in the Soviet Union in the twelve years following World War II (1945-1957). Unsurprisingly, these contemporary accounts of events in American politics—from within the House Un-American Activities Committee to the meetings of grassroots opposition groups to the wave of anti-communist fervor sweeping the country—were often shaped or selected to fit a Marxist narrative. Articles often presented events in terms of a struggle between the working people who desired the ‘ideal of democracy’ found in the Soviet Union and the reactionary members of the American government. As Joseph McCarthy’s influence grew, he provided the Soviet newspapers no shortage of material with which to contrast an America portrayed as tightly controlled by fascists with a propagandized image of the Soviet Union.

The McCarthy era was one of the darkest periods of American political history. Fear became the predominating factor orienting political life at the expense of freedoms enshrined in the Bill of Rights. Yet even in this diminished form, personal freedoms in America remained far more extensive than in the Soviet Union. If McCarthyism made America more closely resemble the Soviet Union, how did the U.S.S.R. view this development? To answer this question, I will examine several major newspapers in the Soviet Union and how they covered McCarthyism. Although this is a somewhat top-down approach to analyzing these reactions, because the Communist Party controlled Soviet public opinion to such a great extent, analyzing the Soviet media provides valuable insight into the kinds of open discourse about McCarthyism that occurred. From the end of the Second World War to the death of McCarthy in May of 1957, Soviet newspapers presented McCarthyism as a manifestation of American fascism. These publications highlighted oppressive aspects of McCarthyism in order to make the Soviet Union appear superior to the United States by comparison, and they glorified progressive resistance to it to show that even in the heartland of the enemy, dissenters pushed for change that more closely aligned with Soviet ideology.

The government of the Soviet Union strictly regulated the media as a means of controlling the information to which its citizens could be exposed. During the first twelve years following World War II, from 1945 to 1957, the press in the Soviet Union remained tightly controlled by the Communist Party, as it would for many years following. As such, the newspapers discussed in this article constitute sanctioned opinions and subject matter if not direct communication from the state to the masses. Nevertheless, even within these bounds a spectrum existed in terms of freedom of expression among these newspapers. Pravda, which translates as “truth,” issued “the official voice of Soviet communism and the Central Committee of the Communist Party.” An equally official publication, Izvestiia, which translates as “reports,” served as the voice of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. At the other end of the spectrum, newspapers targeting the intelligentsia of the Soviet Union presented more thoughtful and critical pieces on culture and the arts both domestically and internationally. The most unrestricted of these papers, Literaturnaia gazeta, “allowed Soviet Russia’s preeminent authors, poets, and cultural figures a particular podium for commentary” and focused on literary and intellectual subject matter. Finally, Sovetskaia kul’tura covered the arts and culture, including many critical articles on major events and reviews of literature, theater productions, and other artistic pieces. By examining these four newspapers’ coverage of McCarthyism at its height, a well-rounded understanding of how they treated this political development in the United States can be ascertained.

The importance of how these publications discussed, analyzed, and critiqued McCarthyism cannot be overstated. The extraordinary totalitarian power the Communist Party of the Soviet Union exercised over those under its control meant that there was little room for disagreement with the opinions expressed in these papers. By controlling the news and ‘liquidating’ those who expressed dissenting opinions, the Party could influence people’s thoughts by only allowing them to be exposed to particular ideas and information. Ironically, this kind of power over the minds of citizens was a major aspect of what these papers criticized about McCarthyism.
A PICTURE OF AMERICAN OPPRESSION
In the Soviet press, McCarthyism meant thought control and the suppression of freedom of expression. This kind of oppression is contrasted with depictions of the arts flourishing in the Soviet Union. In keeping with its focus on literary and artistic life, an article in the July 1, 1952, issue of Literaturnaia gazeta compiles statements from The New York Times critics who are disturbed by the political climate and its effects on artists. One expresses the opinion that “artist-creators…do not dare to say what they think…The macabre persecution of ‘heretics,’ the fanatical suppression of the individual - all that is commonly understood by the common name of McCarthyism, triumphs.” The August 17th edition of Izvestiia from the same year ran a similar article presenting its readers with evidence of suppression of thought in the United States from the American journal The Nation. It quotes the chairman of the New York Theater Critics Club as saying “[t]he actors are afraid to play, writers are afraid to write, directors are afraid to put on plays.” By citing American sources these articles present a persuasive picture to readers of an America terrorized by ruthless overlords. The Izvestiia article concludes with the dark outlook that “in the US one cannot think freely, cannot freely create, without risking being put behind prison bars.” In the Literaturnaia gazeta article this situation is contrasted starkly with a glowingy depicted Soviet one: whereas “Broadway,” under the control of the American government, “cultivates military psychosis, contempt for the human race, rudeness and vulgarity, the theater of socialism fights for peace, fosters respect for people, and surrounds its employees with care and attention.” Thus, the article not only decries the suppression of free expression in the American arts, but it also depicts the subject matter that these artists are compelled to create works about as crude and backwards. Then, it pronounces the Soviet arts as being enlightened and its artists as free and supported.

In the August 20, 1953, issue of Sovetskaia kul’tura, the picture of American oppression is even worse; it reports that in addition to the creative class of artists and writers, “led by McCarthy, the Senate Subcommittee on Internal Security and the House of Representatives Commission investigating anti-American activities, subject[s] teachers, professors and even university students to investigation.” This article contends that “everyone whose views do not coincide with the reactionary views of the obscurantist McCarthy and his colleagues is being categorized” as “non-loyal” and therefore a security risk that must be dealt with. The article highlights an atmosphere of fear in educational institutions and states the goal of McCarthy and company is “to take full control of educational institutions, turning them from educational authorities into…training [schools] of obedient soldiers.” On July 7, 1954, an Izvestiia article discussed the American government taking “total control over the convictions and thoughts of citizens” by using a variety of surveillance techniques that penetrate into even the most remote backwaters of American society and punishing those whose views do not align exactly with those of McCarthy and his cronies. Even as far back as October 28, 1945, Izvestiia published an article citing California representative Ellis Patterson calling the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) “[r]eminiscent of Japanese control of the mind and the activities of the German Gestapo.” These bleak depictions of the United States were a powerful way in which these newspapers could persuade Soviet citizens that they lived in far superior conditions to their American counterparts.

THE AMERICAN GOVERNING CLASS: FASCIST, CORRUPT, ABSURD
While the Soviet press portrayed American society as incredibly oppressed, it also vilified the perpetrators of McCarthyism as fascist and reactionary, seeking to crush progressivism. Again using a source from America to make its perspective appear more concrete, on July 17, 1948, the Literaturnaia gazeta quoted former Assistant Attorney General O. John Rogge as saying that HUAC “from the first day of its existence [was] headed only by pro-fascist members of the [C]ongress,” and that the newly-elected chairman of the committee, J. Parnell Thomas, had even been “a member of the fascist terrorist organization the Ku Klux Klan.” In this way, the article conflates so-called fascism with bigotry. The same newspaper announced on January 18, 1951, that the American Congress, from which the committee drew
its members, had only gotten worse with its reconstitution after the midterm elections, taking the stance that “in its composition this [C]ongress is perhaps the most reactionary in the whole history of the United States,” and that “in full accordance with the ‘emergency situation’ proclaimed by Truman, the Congress will do its utmost to strengthen the process of US fascism.” If Congress and HUAC were fascist, however, Joseph McCarthy, in the eyes of the Soviet press, was nothing short of a neo-Nazi.

Understandably, these newspapers reserved their harshest rebukes for McCarthy, depicting him as wildly delusional and his actions comparable to those of leading Nazis. Izvestiia on January 7, 1953, described McCarthy as an “obscurantist and fascist…put[ting] forward the most fantastic accusations against individuals and entire organizations, with no facts or evidence to back up his accusations.” The Literaturnaia gazeta took far greater liberties in characterizing McCarthy. On July 17, 1952, it called him a “rabid reactionary” and “a pathological liar who possesses the insolence of street hooligans.” In its January 18, 1951, issue it even went so far as to call him “the modern American Goebbels” and a “zealous advocate of the Nazis.” On July 7, 1954, Izvestiia added to these portrayals of McCarthy as a neo-Nazi by naming him “a candidate for the successor to Hitler.” These extreme descriptions of McCarthy may seem absurd, but they fit in perfectly with the image the Soviets sought to portray of an American government controlled by ‘fat-cat’ capitalists.

The Soviet papers also incorporated a Marxist interpretation of McCarthyism into their articles, emphasizing the power of political lobbying and characterizing American politicians as the pawns of Wall Street capitalists. According to the Literaturnaia gazeta on July 24, 1948, “[a]fter Roosevelt, the well-fed gentlemen from Wall Street came to power, trying to establish a political regime in that country which, by honor and conscience, can only be called a fascist one.” This Marxist interpretation of all power in America being held by capitalists is foundational to the image these newspapers sought to paint of the United States. It gives the Soviet Union the moral high-ground as the champion of the working man. Significantly, all reports of corrupt dealings in Washington by Soviet newspapers have this moral undertone. Therefore, when on January 7, 1953, Izvestiia reported that “McCarthy received $20,000 from lobbyists of Pepsi-Cola company, after which he, in the interests of this
company, began zealously to oppose government control over the supply of sugar," it not only highlights McCarthy as financially corrupt but also reinforces the image of a morally corrupt American system of government. The willingness of McCarthy to support particular policies on behalf of corporations is taken by Izvestiia to be indicative of an entirely corrupt system, and it uses examples like this to remind its readers of their true enemy, the bourgeoisie.

**“However, these newspapers also presented their readers with a kind of dark humor about McCarthyism, perhaps as another approach to making their readers feel more satisfied about living in the Soviet Union rather than America.”**

These newspapers clearly described a dismal situation for the common man in the United States. If he dared to step out of line and hold an opinion contrary to the ones espoused by McCarthy and other reactionaries, then he is persecuted because these fascist politicians were loyal only to the capitalists of Wall Street. However, these papers also presented their readers with a kind of dark humor about McCarthyism, perhaps as another approach to making their readers feel more satisfied about living in the Soviet Union rather than America. A satirical column of the Literaturnaia gazeta on June 30, 1948, depicted Karl Mundt, co-author with then-Representative Richard Nixon of a bill to keep communists out of government, as physically intolerant of the color red. It said that if he came in contact with an object painted red “a nervous rash” would appear on his skin, and it concluded with the punchline “[s]uch a refinement of sensations can truly be envied by a Spanish bull.”24 Similarly, on June 20, 1953, the Literaturnaia gazeta ran an article about a proposed bill by California Senator Hubert Scudder to mandate the destruction of a painting by progressive artist Anton Refregier in the San Francisco Post Office on the logic that “the prevailing color of the picture is red. Consequently, the whole fresco is red. This mural is clearly subversive and is intended to spread communist propaganda.”25 Although the latter article concerned a real event and the former invented a condition for Mundt, a fixation on the color red was certainly an element of McCarthyism, and the Literaturnaia gazeta effectively mocked it. Thus, the Soviet press did not only treat McCarthyism as a serious menace, but at times depicted it in a humorous light to make the Soviet Union appear far more sane and reasonable compared to an American government riddled with absurdities.

**THE U.S.S.R. STANDS FOR DEMOCRACY**

These newspapers certainly vilified McCarthyism as a reactionary, oppressive force, but they also focused on what was being suppressed in addition to highlighting the individuals and groups that suffered under McCarthyism. In particular, the Soviet press characterized McCarthyism as anti-democratic and made clear the irony that a country proclaiming itself as the pinnacle of democratic freedom in the world actually suppressed democracy. An article in Pravda on March 21, 1946, reported that “American liberal and progressive figures, artists, writers, trade unionists

The characterization of an anti-democratic American government did not end there. A March 26, 1950, article titled “The political circus in Washington” criticized senators for only caring about reelection and stated that “the main political parties of the USA, both Democratic and Republican, completely ignore the democratic demands…of their people.”28 It further blasted the American government for going so far as to suppress democracy in other nations. On March 19, 1954, an article covered a trip of Senators Bridges and Symington to Western Europe where they supposedly worked to spread McCarthyism by demanding of foreign governments “repression against the democratic forces of Western Europe with threats of a reduction in military orders placed by the United States in [those] countries.”29 This denouncement of the Senators added to the Soviet Union’s case that it was the leading proponent of democracy while the United States actively suppressed it. On September 21, 1953, Andrey Vyshinsky, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, delivered a speech—subsequently published in Izvestiia—in which he framed American involvement in Korea as part of a larger pattern of “subversive activity…against the countries of people’s democracy,” including “reviving German militarism, creating a dangerous hotbed of new aggression…[and] abandoning those solemn international commitments aimed at promoting the

Frank Spence

67
restoration of Germany as a peace-loving and democratic state."30 Meanwhile he affirmed the Soviet Union's stance as protector of peace and democracy, calling these American actions "pathetic...attempts to distort and cast a shadow over the relations existing between the Soviet Union and the countries of the democratic camp, based on mutual trust, respect and fraternal cooperation."31 In this manner, Izvestiia portrayed McCarthyism as a global menace to democracy through the meddlesome and extortionist practices of the United States government and asserted Soviet superiority as a promoter of democracy rather than a detractor.

PROLETARIAN RESISTANCE
While a decisively negative tone characterized much of the Soviet press coverage of McCarthyism, these newspapers also highlighted resistance to this oppression, whether from within the American government or from without, as a means of presenting their readers with a hopeful picture of a United States in which a grassroots progressive movement could never be eradicated. An October 28, 1945, article in Izvestiia reported on a "group of progressive members of the House of Representatives...[who] condemned the activities of [HUAC] and demanded the liquidation of this commission, since it...encourage[d] 'the persecution of the Reds,' incite[d] racial enmity and defend[ed] pro-fascist elements."32 Demands like these also came from progressives in the general population and were covered frequently. Later that year, on December 5th, Izvestiia published an article about "[twelve] large organizations, including the Congress of Industrial Unions (PPC), the National Negro Congress, [and] the National Guild of Lawyers" who had "stated that they are starting a campaign to liquidate the [House Un-American Activities Committee]."33

In Literaturnaia gazeta, articles presented more thorough explanations of the meaning and significance of such resistance. A May 5, 1948, piece discussed numerous progressive American "writers, journalists, artists, composers, [and] scientists" who had signed a letter sent to the newspaper and published in the previous issue that affirmed their commitment to the cause of peace and democracy.34 It elaborated on the backgrounds of many of these individuals before proclaiming that these "[r]epresentatives of the advanced American intelligentsia who raised their voice in defense of peace and democracy, and all progressive masters of American culture, are not alone. They are supported by millions of ordinary people in America."35 This optimistic view of the agitation of the masses for progressive reform that would ideologically align the people of the United States closer to the Soviet Union is repeated in another article published December 4th of that year. This article presents a dark portrayal of the West, saying "[t]he Fascist plague already penetrates into all the pores of the state life of America and England, France and Italy. Increasingly, in the countries of Western Europe and America, Hitler's methods of governing peoples are used."36 However, it then asserts that this "new 'Führer,' and all the contenders for this post cannot drown out the ever-growing rumble of the revolutionary, progressive, and liberation movement throughout the world."37 This extremely Marxist outlook is a hopeful one, and it glorifies these advocates of Soviet ideological principles as part of a movement of millions that will inevitably overcome the reactionary forces of capitalism to establish a communist state like the Soviet Union.

CONCLUSION
The Soviet press's response to McCarthyism involved two main themes: vilification of the architects of this reactionary movement and praise of those who dared to stand against it. Avoiding entirely the irony that the environment in the Soviet Union could not have been further from supporting freedom of expression—the Communist Party would never have permitted journalists to draw such parallels—these publications depicted the American government as corrupt, fascist, anti-democratic, and controlled by the bourgeoisie. All of these criticisms levelled at the United States either implied or were accompanied by outright statements that the Soviet Union represented the opposites of all of these negative qualities. Thus, the Soviet press served as a font of propaganda to inspire love of the state and disgust with America. Even articles that presented events with fairly straight reporting are clearly part of a broader pattern of selection bias to portray McCarthyism in the most negative light possible and progressives in the United States in glowing terms.

The four newspapers examined in this paper (Izvestiia, Pravda, Literaturnaia gazeta, and Sovetskaiia kul'tura) published articles on McCarthyism throughout the first twelve years following World War II, and they reached a vast audience. Coverage peaked in 1953 and 1954, during the height of Joseph McCarthy's influence, with ninety-six articles in the former year and eighty-six articles in the latter, that included the terms "McCarthy," "McCarthyism," and "House Un-American Activities Committee." Furthermore, these four newspapers comprised the two most widely distributed papers in the Soviet Union and the two most prominent papers for the intelligentsia. With circulations at their heights of nearly eleven million copies of Pravda, seven million copies of Izvestiia, and four million copies of Literaturnaia Gazeta among a Russian population with a literacy rate over 81 percent by 1939, these papers made it into the hands of many citizens.38 Thus, readers of all kinds in the Soviet Union encountered this press coverage of McCarthyism on a regular basis.

Ultimately, Soviet newspaper articles on McCarthyism should be understood as serving the purposes of the state. The Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. was among the most totalitarian regimes in history, and it wielded the media as a powerful tool to influence opinion. Having no alternative
viewpoints to balance the ones advanced by the regime, the Soviet press supplied its readers with a worldview rather than allowing them to develop informed opinions. While McCarthy may have sought to quash dissenting opinions in the United States, that state of affairs had long since become the reality in the contemporary U.S.S.R.

---

Endnotes

[4] This newspaper was published under the name Sovetskoe iskusstvo from 1944-1952. Subsequently it became Sovetskaia kul'tura.
[6] Note: All quotes from Soviet newspapers have been translated from the original Russian into English by Google Translate.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Sillen, "'Tears' by Brooks Atkinson."
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[20] Rozanov, "UNDER THE CAPITAL DOME."
[21] Zavyalov and Evgeniev, "McCarthyism is a threat to the world and the security of peoples."
[23] Mikhailov, "'The battle for... beans.
[31] Vyshinsky, "On measures to treat the threats of a new world war."
[32] "Members of the US House of Representatives Demand the Liquidation of The 'commission for the Investigation of Anti-American Activities.'"
[33] "Campaign in the United States for the liquidation of the 'commission to investigate anti-American activities,'" Izvestiia, December 5, 1945.
[35] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.