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Segal, Joes, Romijn, Peter, Scott-Smith, Giles

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PART I

Arts and Sciences Between the Blocs
I

An Unofficial Cultural Ambassador
Arthur Miller and the Cultural Cold War

» Nathan Abrams

Introduction

Andrew Ross remarked that the Cold War was a ‘profoundly hegemonic moment’ in American history. I have argued elsewhere that the onset of the struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union from March 1947 onwards produced an anticommunist hegemony which, in doing so, co-opted willingly the group known as the New York Intellectuals since such intellectuals were vital to its development, extension and maintenance. In contrast, in the following chapter I shall present a case study of an intellectual who attempted to resist this hegemony, Arthur Miller. In doing so, however, he was ultimately co-opted and rejected by both the United States and the Soviet Union.

Miller was explicitly unwilling to assist the anticommunist hegemony in America. While acknowledging the totalitarian nature of the Soviet regime, he did not think that America represented a better alternative. He wrote: ‘the work of art in which we really examine ourselves, or which is critical of society, is not what this government regards as good propaganda.’ ‘This attitude toward culture,’ he felt, ‘is a disservice to us all’ because it rendered the country ‘open to extremely dangerous suspicions which can spread and stain’ its whole effort. What is more, its attitudes towards culture ‘have often made it possible for Russian propaganda to raise

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1 I would like to thank David Caute, Jordi Cornella-Detrell, Howard Davis, Paul Dukes, Natalia Egorova, Helena Miguélez Carballeira, Denise Youngblood and my colleagues and students who participated in the Shark Tank seminar, for their invaluable assistance in producing this paper. Much of the research for it was made possible by the Dorot Foundation Fellowship in Jewish Studies at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin.


fear of us in foreign peoples.'

Miller was not prepared, therefore, to disseminate pro-American propaganda during the Cold War. He would never 'genuflect' before anybody. His belief in the universality of art repelled any notion of its specific or contingent mobilisation: ‘I am making a claim for art as a communion of the human spirit and therefore by definition something [which] cannot be nationalistically confined or even used politically, for both political and national concepts are concepts of exclusion, devices for the wielding of worldly power.’

Furthermore, Miller implicitly criticised those writers, artists, poets and intellectuals who lent their services to the American effort. ‘I believe that once we assent to the idea that high policy alone is sacred, and that every other value can easily be sacrificed to it, we shall have abdicated our independence as writers and citizens.’ Those who did so sacrificed their critical autonomy in the service of the state for ‘the mission of the written word is not to buttress high policy but to proclaim the truth, the truth for whose lack we must surely die.’ Yet, he also felt that those who were silent were guilty too: ‘we have by silence given this consent, and by silence helped to raise the state to a kind of a power over all of us.’ Overall, he believed that ‘freedom to write, to create unmolested and unblackguarded by government is at least equal to the sanctity of high policy.’

Miller thus attempted to fulfil the function of that type of intellectual who, in his own words, ‘takes on the task of correcting power and defending the truth against it (...) of speaking truth to power.’ In addition to his theatrical production, Miller constantly contributed articles to newspapers, as well as political and intellectual journals throughout his life. Miller was not just content to write plays or to write about his plays, he also commented on contemporary affairs where he could. He used his plays, articles, speeches and novels as vehicles to resist what he perceived to be the deleterious effects of the Cold War on American domestic freedoms, as well as the Soviet treatment of its intellectuals, writers and Jewish citizens. An unforeseen result of this activity, however, was that, whether through choice or otherwise, Miller became embroiled in the Cultural Cold War and, in

5 Ibid., p. 96, 97.
6 Arthur Miller, letter to Honorable Nathan Kaplan, Chairman, NYC Youth Board, 28 Nov. 1955, p. 5, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin (hereafter HRC).
7 Arthur Miller, letter to ACCF and the American Committee for the Liberation From Bolshevism and the Union of Soviet Writers, 7 Feb. 1956, Box 14, Folder 11, Arthur Miller/ACCF relations, American Committee for Cultural Freedom Papers, Tamiment Library, New York University, New York (hereafter ACCF), p. 3.
8 Arthur Miller, ‘Speech Before the Author’s League,’ unpublished manuscript, 14 May 1957, Box 64, Smaller Works, S, HRC, p. 3-4.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., p. 4-5.
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a sense, was used by both sides to further their ends. He became what I call an ‘unofficial cultural ambassador.’

On the American Front

Almost from the moment that Arthur Miller hit the public consciousness, his works, most notably *All My Sons* (1947) and *Death of a Salesman* (1949) were identified as Marxist critiques of American capitalism and war conduct. The FBI described the former as ‘party line propaganda’ and the latter as ‘a negative delineation of American life’ which struck ‘a shrewd blow against American values.’ Several weeks after his play *All My Sons* opened, a letter to the *New York Times* accused it of being communist propaganda. It certainly did not help Miller that left-wing organs in both the United States and the Soviet Union (see below) interpreted the play as an attack on American materialism and hence viewed it favourably. The *Daily Worker*, for example, praised *All My Sons*, predicting its candour would lead to its closure (but then removed its backing when the opposite occurred), and approved of how *Salesman* ‘clearly and passionately presents a social picture of a man who has struggled all of his materialist life, thoroughly indoctrinated with the American (capitalist) dream.’ Jack Warner then informed the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) that Miller ‘practised some sort of subversion’ and Louis Budenz testified that Miller was a ‘concealed communist.’ Miller’s refusal to alter for the screen his screenplay *The Hook* because it was originally rejected as being too pro-communist confirmed for many the belief that he was a subversive. Harry Cohn, President of Columbia Pictures, sent him a telegram which stated: ‘IT’S INTERESTING HOW THE MINUTE WE TRY TO MAKE THE SCRIPT PRO-AMERICAN YOU PULL OUT.’

The belief that Miller was a communist was further confirmed for many by the expression of his oppositional Cold War stance through his signing a multiplicity of petitions and statements, which supported various communist causes and criticised government policy. Miller affirmed the legality of the Communist Party and opposed what he saw as its unlawful repression. He protested against

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14 *New Masses*, 18 February 1947, p. 28; *PM*, 31 January 1947, p. 16; *Daily Worker*, 31 January 1947; *New Masses*, 18 February 1947, p. 28.
17 Miller, *Timebends*, p. 308.
18 *Daily Worker*, 16 April 1947. See also *Investigation of the Unauthorized Use of United States Passports*, p. 4664.
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the ‘shameful persecution’ of the German anti-Fascist refugee, Gerhart Eisler.\(^{19}\) He joined in the call for the abolition of \textit{HUAC}.\(^ {20}\) He was listed as a sponsor of the World Youth Festival of 1947 in Prague that was organised by the communist World Federation of Democratic Youth.\(^ {21}\) He attempted and failed to obtain financial assistance from the State Department in order to send his play, \textit{All My Sons} (1947) to the festival.\(^ {22}\) He did, however, donate the rights of this play to the Polish League of Women in Poland, which was identified as a communist organisation.\(^ {23}\) In June 1949, he participated in a call for a bill of rights conference to be held in the Henry Hudson Hotel, New York City.\(^ {24}\) According to \textit{HUAC}, Miller also sponsored the World Congress for Peace held in Paris, although he denied this.\(^ {25}\) In May, he sponsored the Far East Spotlight for Friendship with New China and its ‘China Welfare Appeal,’ a relief drive to send aid and assistance to the Chinese people.\(^ {26}\) He supported the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee in that year, too.\(^ {27}\) When the American Legion threatened to picket the planned New York production of Sean O’Casey’s \textit{Cock-a-doodle Dandy}, Miller proposed to mobilise other playwrights to form a counter-demonstration in support of the freedom of the theatre.\(^ {28}\)

But the key moment of Miller’s initial resistance to the anti-communist hegemony was his attendance at the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace of 1949.\(^ {29}\) The Waldorf Conference, as it became known, was proposed by the fellow-travelling National Council for the Arts, Sciences and Professions (\textit{NCASP}), to discuss cultural and scientific links with the Soviet Union. The \textit{NCASP}, which sponsored the conference, was very much located within the Soviet Union’s peace campaign: it had supported the call for the 1948 peace conference in Wroclaw, Poland; it demanded clemency for all the convicted members of the Joint Anti-

\[\text{References}\]

19 \bibitem{Ibid.} p. 4665-4666.

20 \bibitem{Ibid.} p. 4668.


25 \bibitem{Ibid.} p. 4679.

26 \bibitem{Ibid.} p. 4680-4681.

27 \bibitem{Ibid.} p. 4681.

28 Miller, \textit{Timebends}, p. 322.

Fascist Refugee Committee who refused to testify before Huac; it joined in the calls for the dismantling of Huac and for Truman to negotiate peacefully during the Berlin blockade. After Wallace’s defeat in 1948, the NCASP switched its focus towards advocating world peace. The conference was described as ‘the last major effort of the Stalinists to win and neutralize radical opinion among American intellectuals.’ Miller described it as ‘a kind of crossroads’ because thereafter an irrevocable split between the anti-communists and the anti-anticommunists appeared.

The effects of these actions soon surfaced as Miller came under attack in his homeland. He recalled in 1959 that, ‘I was already under attack, politically. And since I was famous now, I was fair game for columnists and calumnists, and such people, who could get their names in the paper by attacking me.’ For several weeks the World-Telegram, the Journal-American, Walter Winchell and Ed Sullivan in his column for the Daily News had been patriotically assaulting Miller’s background. Indeed, Miller’s FBI file revealed that Winchell’s attacks were motivated by J. Edgar Hoover himself.

Consequently, Miller suffered from unofficial blacklisting in film, television and radio. In January 1947, as All My Sons was about to transfer to Broadway, the Catholic Church intervened but this was probably more on religious than political grounds. Nevertheless, the combined complaints of the Catholic War Veterans, the fiercely anti-communist journal The New Leader, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the blacklisting publication Counterattack, set up in May 1947 by three ex-FBI agents, led to the cancellation of its presentation to the US soldiers in occupied Germany and Austria in August of that year. Counterattack stated that its production in Germany would ‘help Stalin in his efforts to convince the German that the US is controlled by heartless plutocrats.’ The Veterans’ leader, Max Sorenson, had defined it as a ‘Party Line propaganda vehicle.’ This was echoed by the fiercely anti-communist New Leader.

As Miller was researching for a script on juvenile delinquency for the New York City Youth Board, Huac warned the Board that Miller was under investigation.

33 Miller, Timebends, p. 250-251.
34 Robins, Alien Ink, p. 313.
35 David Caute points out that this was most likely due to Miller’s refusal to cut the line ‘A man can’t be Jesus in the world.’ Caute, The Dancer Defects, p. 205.
36 Sorenson, quoted in Miller, Timebends, p. 238.
37 Ibid.
as a possible communist. After protests by the Catholic War Veterans and the American Legion the city eventually withdrew its assistance and the project died. The Legion also threatened to boycott Columbia Pictures' production of *Death of a Salesman* since Miller had refused to issue an anti-communist statement in the press. The Legion had already succeeded in shutting the road production.

In the American-occupied territories of Germany and Austria the US Army implemented performance bans on pieces that were either openly directed against the politics of the United States or were antimilitary. Although the director of the US Information Services Branch's Theatre and Music Section, Ernest Lothar, wanted to stage Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* in Vienna, he could not change the opinion of the US Office of Military Government in Germany (OMGUS-Berlin), which cabled the Civil Affairs Division of the State Department to state: 'Play's theme regarded as harmful to Reorientation Program. Request no further consideration be given its use.' Richard Wagnleitner observed: 'This ban naturally had nothing to do with the quality of Miller's work, which had been especially praised in New York as the best drama of the year. The contents of the play, offering an extremely critical, yet realistic, portrayal of American war profiteers, had been the true grounds for disqualification.' Again, matters were not helped by the staging of the play at the Vakhtangov Theatre in Moscow.

Yet, in 1949-1950, *Salesman* opened in Düsseldorf and Munich simultaneously, at the very moment when the United States pointed to West Germany as a symbol of American freedom at the beginning of the Cultural Cold War. The staging of Miller's plays in West Germany, therefore, functioned as devices in the Cultural Cold War struggle. As Edward W. Barrett, former Assistant Secretary of State and the coordinator of the Campaign of Truth under President Truman, wrote, 'extraordinary American performances abroad somehow enhance respect for America and the desire to cooperate with America.' Indeed, the visit of Miller to Munich where he was invited to give a reading from *The Crucible* was considered so important by the officials there that the local government cancelled, in the city-owned Kammerspiele Theater, one of the largest in Munich, a complete

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40 Miller, *Timebends*, p. 315.
41 Ibid., p. 322.
43 Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War*, p. 188.
performance on 31 March, in order to vacate it for his reading.\(^\text{47}\) Caute points out how *Salesman* occupied second place among American plays on the West-German stage during those years, even if Miller believed that the play, along with everything else he wrote, had been removed from the US Army’s repertoire in Europe.\(^\text{48}\)

Three years later, however, the US Information Services Branch listed Miller as an ‘inappropriate’ author and his works were banned from appearing in the America Houses abroad. Between February and April 1953, the State Department issued a series of directives prohibiting the use of materials written by ‘controversial persons, Communists, fellow travellers, and so forth.’ This included those who took the Fifth Amendment before congressional committees and anyone who was perceived to be too left-wing, too critical of America, or whose material was ‘detrimental to US objectives.’ As Miller recognised at the time: ‘The State Department has interfered with the circulation of American books abroad, American music and musicians, and American painting.’\(^\text{49}\) Because he fell into one or more of these categories Miller’s books were removed from State Department and overseas libraries. The logic of such a policy was deeply flawed for, as Ramón Espejo Romero has pointed out, Miller’s ‘plays helped to create a certain respect for American culture, showing that within it there also were dissenting and critical voices.’\(^\text{50}\) Writing in Mexico, following a production of *Death of a Salesman*, Vane C. Dalton commented that ‘to acquaint the Mexican audience with a great play by one of America’s most distinguished contemporary authors is of undeniable cultural importance: it is a very effective means of promoting in this country a sound appreciation of North America’s values which extend beyond technology or purely material advantages and comforts.’\(^\text{51}\) Cynthia P. Schneider also noted that Miller’s work, like jazz and rock ‘n’ roll, ‘enabled people living under repressive regimes to experience moments of freedom.’\(^\text{52}\) Indeed, during the 1940s and 1950s his plays were produced around the world including, as we shall see below, the Soviet Union, often to critical acclaim, and undoubtedly they helped to sell

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47 Hugo M. Weichlein to Arthur Miller, 9 March 1961, Box 64, Folder: Speech – Munich, Germany 3/31/62 CORRESP., HRC.
49 Miller, Speech to the National Assembly of the Authors League of America, 14 May 1957, HRC.
America's image. It was surely, then, for this reason that at the same time as Miller was being banned by the American authorities abroad, the US government adopted the seemingly contradictory policy of allowing Miller to participate in person in its cultural exchange programmes. Shortly after Stalin's death in 1953, for example, Miller met his Soviet counterparts to discuss their work and the context in which it was formed.53

Nevertheless, in 1954, in yet another conflicting manoeuvre, Miller was denied a passport by the State Department to attend the opening of The Crucible in Brussels. The American Legion had been pressing the FBI to act upon Miller's 'red ties' and, although there is no direct link between the Legion's demands, Miller's passport was revoked. Natalie Robins concluded that 'an accumulation of many pressures led to the [passport] denial.'54 This prompted protests from the playwright Tennessee Williams and, somewhat ironically, the liberal anti-communist group the American Committee for Cultural Freedom (ACCF). The ACCF opposed the State Department's action in withholding Miller's passport on the grounds that such a move was counterproductive in the propaganda war against the Soviet Union since it would 'serve to make him a martyr in the view of our European Allies.'55 Likewise, the ACCF attacked the American Legion's plan to protest the Glenwood Players of New York's production of Salesman as 'a threat to cultural freedom in this country' because it would mirror the Soviet Union's banning of artistic endeavour simply because of the author's political views.56 However, the ACCF could do little when the leading man, Thomas E. Paradine, a past national vice-commander of the American Legion, quit during the middle of rehearsals when he learned about Miller's left-wing connections.57

Although the State Department claimed the reason for the denial of his passport was that it was not given sufficient time to check on allegations that Miller had been associated with communist causes, his passport was surely revoked in order to restrict his movements in Europe. Based upon the sort of thought that motivated NSC 68's assertion that 'dissent among us can become a vulnerability,' Miller was surely deemed a harmful threat to the hegemony's careful attempt to woo the hearts and minds of European intellectuals during the Cultural Cold War.58 Indeed, it has been remarked that the FBI, the CIA and the office of the Attorney General were 'vigilant to the point of obsession regarding the travels of those thought to be dangerous to the national interest by virtue of past Commu-

53 Ibid., p. 6.
54 Robins, Alien Ink, p. 312.
55 Telegram from Sol Stein (executive director of the ACCF) to The Glen Players, 12 November 1954, telegram from Sol Stein to Thomas E. Paradine (of the American Legion), 12 November 1954, Box 14, Folder II, ACCF.
56 ACCF Press Release, 31 March 1954, Box 14, Folder II, Arthur Miller/ACCF relations, ACCF.
58 NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security, 14 April 1950, p. 43.
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niss sympathy.' The government feared that intellectuals would be used by the Soviets ‘to prevent them from serving our ends, and thus to make them sources of confusion in our economy, our culture and our body politic.’ Miller recognised this: ‘That I am opposed to much of what passes for American domestic and foreign policy is certainly true. However, in this particular instance the issue would seem to be whether, in the struggle for men’s minds, the presence on foreign soil of one Arthur Miller is likely to damage the prestige of the US.’

Ultimately, Miller’s absence in Belgium probably did more harm than good for the United States. Representatives of the Belgian government, its monarch, as well as a host of Belgian intellectuals, were in attendance and a sensation was caused when the US ambassador stood up and took a bow in Miller’s place without explaining why the playwright was not there in person. As Miller said of the denial of his passport: ‘It didn’t harm me, it harmed the country; I didn’t need any foreign relations.’ Realising the potential damage of such attacks as counterproductive to their cultural and intellectual efforts in Europe, the State Department quietly ordered the Passport Division to issue Miller his passport two years later.

Miller’s impact as a cultural ambassador was also demonstrated by his clash with the ACCF. The ACCF represented a community of anticommunist intellectuals whose self-perceived function was to protect free culture. It was a key ally in the anticommunist hegemony’s propagation of the Cultural Cold War. Thus the dispute with the Committee brought Miller into direct conflict with some of the most prominent individuals who were cooperating with the anticommunist hegemony. The ACCF ‘deplored’ Miller’s political views and took every opportunity of reiterating this claim publicly, as well as repeating the refrain of its private communiqués. Indeed, at times, it seemed the ACCF expended more energy into trying to destroy Miller’s reputation than it did decrying Stalinism and protesting the Soviet Union’s censorship of intellectuals. Michael Harrington observed: ‘When Irving Kristol was Executive Secretary of the ACCF, one learned to expect from him silence on those issues that were agitating the whole intellectual and academic world, and enraged communiqués on the outrages performed by people like Arthur Miller... in exaggerating the danger to civil liberties in the US.’ Kristol attacked Miller in 1952 for ‘expressing absurdities with such an earnest solemnity that they even pass

60 NSC 68, p. 52.
61 Miller, quoted in New York Post, 12 July 1956.
62 Arthur Miller, quoted in Newsweek, 3 February 1964, p. 52.
63 See Press Release from ACCF, 31 March 1954; Telegram from Sol Stein to The Glen Players, 12 Nov. 1954; Telegram from Sol Stein to Thomas E. Paradise (of the American Legion), 12 Nov. 1954, Box 14, Folder 11, Arthur Miller/ACCF relations, ACCF.
for plausible discourse.'65 In the following year, the ACCF proposed and agreed to disseminate as many copies as possible of Robert Warshow’s highly critical article, ‘The Liberal Conscience in The Crucible,’ which vehemently assailed Miller and his play.66 Some two years later, the ACCF’s executive director, Sol Stein, offered the Committee’s support to the critic and ACCF member Eric Bentley in a threatened libel action by Miller and Tennessee Williams over passages in his book The Dramatic Event.67 The pretext of Stein’s offer was that the libel suit ‘constitutes a matter affecting cultural freedom’ since it ‘might be seen as highly inappropriate to a free society.’ He concluded his letter with the observation: ‘In any case, I have never felt that Arthur Miller, at least, is particularly enamoured of a free society.’68

At no time was this clearer than in 1956. During January and February of that year Miller claimed that he had received invitations from the ACCF, the American Committee for Liberation from Bolshevism, and the Union of Soviet Writers to issue a statement on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the death of Dostoevsky.69 In his reply to these organisations Miller attacked the Soviet Union for ‘cultural barbarism.’ At the same time, however, he denounced the United States for not only depriving him of his freedom, but also for the lack of protest from other writers at this suppression.70 In effect, Miller equated the United States and the Soviet Union for their respective lack of artistic freedoms.71 In reply, the ACCF denied inviting Miller. It then congratulated Miller’s attack on the Soviet Union and regretted that he did not articulate such a stance back in 1949. The crux of the ACCF’s response, however, was its outrage at Miller’s ‘near equation of these episodic violations of the tradition of political and cultural freedom in the United States with the official governmental policy of the Soviet Union...’72 The ACCF’s response to Miller clearly brings into focus their differing discourses of freedom. Since Miller believed freedom was absolute, the effects of suppression in both countries were indistinguishable, only the process differed. From its position of hegemonic co-operation the ACCF, on the other hand, found equations between the

65 Irving Kristol, letter to New York Times, 10 August 1952, Box 3, Folder 1, Correspondence A, ACCF, p. 1.
67 Sol Stein, letter to Eric Bentley, 4 January 1955; Edward E. Colton, letter to Eric Bentley and Horizon Press, n.d., Box 3, Folder 4, Correspondence B, ACCF.
68 Ibid.
69 Miller, letter to ACCF, American Committee for Liberation from Bolshevism, and Union of Soviet Writers, 7 February 1956, Box 14, Folder 11, Arthur Miller/ACCF relations, ACCF, p. 1.
70 Ibid., p. 1-2.
71 Ibid., p. 3.
72 ACCF Press Release, 13 February 1956, Box 14, Folder 11, Arthur Miller/ACCF relations, ACCF. See also, Statement by ACCF on Arthur Miller Letter, 14 February 1956.
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United States and the Soviet Union inconceivable. Within its particular discourse, America typified freedom and if it was abused it was done in an unintentional fashion; in the Soviet Union, on the other hand, artistic suppression was systematic. Freedom in these contexts clearly did not signify the same thing and the ACCF vigorously fought to privilege and naturalise its discourse whilst striving to contain Miller’s counter-discourse. To this end a flurry of activity occurred. The committee requested Radio Liberation to broadcast their statement and James Farrell (a member of the executive committee) wrote to the New York Times accusing Miller of ‘gratuitous exaggeration [sic].’

In 1956, Miller was rewarded for his efforts by honorary membership of the American Center on Theater Arts in Rome. The Center was a public library for consultation and research covering American music, dance, art and folklore, supported by the American National Theater Academy (ANTA), which was in turn financed by the State Department. Internationally, ANTA promoted artistic exchanges between the United States and Europe as well as entertainment for American troops serving abroad. It began in 1949, with a US tour of Hamlet throughout Europe, culminating in a performance at Elsinore Castle in Denmark, the actual setting of the play. During the 1950s, ANTA sponsored such projects as the American National Ballet Theatre’s tour of Europe, and American participation in the Berlin Arts Festival in 1951. Productions showing different sides of life in America were played to European audiences including Oklahoma and Porgy and Bess. Hence it functioned as an official site for the propagation of the Cultural Cold War. Was Miller aware of this connection? The letter announcing his award stated: ‘I am sure you realize the importance of this Center here.’

The View from the Soviet Union

Miller first received favourable attention in the Soviet Union in the late 1940s. His popularity initially stemmed from his resistance to HUAC. His plays, in written rather than performed form, were received in a similar fashion; for example, the ‘liberally inclined literary journal’ Novyj mir introduced Death of a Salesman.

74 Ann d’Arbeloff Guerrieri to Arthur Miller, 14 December 1956; Arthur Miller, letter to Ann d’Arbeloff Guerrieri, 24 January 1956, Arthur Miller Papers, Box 55 A (cont.), HRC.
75 See Wagnleitner, Coca-Colonization and the Cold War, p. 192; Barrett, Truth Is Our Weapon, p. 283.
77 Guerrieri, letter to Miller.
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thus: ‘The play depicts the tragedy of an average American family whose faith in the saving powers of “private enterprise” is crumbling.’\(^79\) Eleven years later, the *Literary Encyclopaedia* echoed these sentiments: ‘In the tragedy *Death of a Salesman* (1949, Russian translation 1956) Miller departs from conventional norms of the theatre in order to unearth the sources of illusions of American “success” and the crash of these illusions.’\(^80\) A 1959 review in *Pravda* called it ‘a profound social tragedy of present-day America. The salesman’s tragic destiny is depicted in the play as a logical consequence of the inhuman laws of the capitalist world... At the same time, Miller’s play mercilessly exposes one other side of present-day bourgeois ideology – its lack of ideals, and man’s oppressive sensation of the absurdity of his existence.’\(^81\)

Consequently, Miller’s plays were translated into Russian not long after they came out in America and were subsequently widely performed in the Soviet Union: *All My Sons* appeared in Russian in 1948 and was staged by the Moscow Theatre of Drama in 1958; *The Crucible* was translated in 1955 and staged in 1962 by the Moscow Stanislavsky Theatre; *A View from the Bridge* and *A Memory of Two Mondays* were translated in 1957 and the former was produced by the Moscow Art Theatre in 1959; *Incident at Vichy* in 1965; and *The Price* in 1968. Strangely, and eloquently, however, it took until 1956 – seven years after it first appeared – for *Death of a Salesman* to be translated and another two for it to be staged by the Leningrad Pushkin Theatre of Drama in 1958 and the Moscow Art Theatre in 1960.\(^82\) These plays ‘appeared under the official rubric of critical commentary on the “limitations of the bourgeois state,” in the mode typical of that period of Soviet ideology.’\(^83\)

In terms of performances, Miller benefited from the ‘thaw’ following Stalin’s death in 1953 during which time Soviet theatre witnessed a ‘revival of vitality.’ ‘Greater boldness in the choice of repertoire was officially encouraged,’ according to Nick Worall, ‘and the bounds of what could be contained within the parameters of socialist realism became more flexible.’ Consequently, the ‘former hostility to the Western repertoire, which had existed under the aegis of Stalin’s cultural commissar, Andrei Zhdanov, was replaced by a greater degree of openness to what was happening in the West. Here the way was led by Oleg Efremov at the Sovremen-


\(^80\) Friedberg, *A Decade of Euphoria*, p. 197.

\(^81\) *Pravda*, 29 July 1959.

\(^82\) Friedberg, *A Decade of Euphoria*, p. 197.

nik, who staged seminal productions of important British and American plays’ and the work of Miller began to establish itself as ‘standard components of the Soviet repertoire.’

From 1953 until the late 1960s, therefore, the attitude of the Soviet authorities to the plays and prose of Miller was initially very benevolent. They were favourable because they considered him to be a communist, an interpretation in line with, as we have seen, that of the American authorities, in particular the FBI. Miller was ‘pure’ because he never joined in with the popular anti-Soviet crusade of the 1950s, he had publicly opposed the Vietnam War from the outset, and he had led the campaign to establish PEN centres in the USSR. A performance of The Crucible in 1963, for example, received approving attention for its contemporary American references, particularly to ‘Ethel and Julius Rosenberg and other victims of the disgraceful McCarthy era.’ And a 1964 volume of the Theatrical Encyclopaedia described him as ‘a progressive playwright, conscious of social problems, and heir to the best traditions of American drama.’

Yet, the Soviet authorities did not take any chances that there might be any slippage between their interpretation of Miller’s works and the audience’s. In violation of its own laws, Western literature was published and sometimes censored without the knowledge, let alone consent, of the authors, a common practice that lasted until 1973 in the Soviet Union. Although Miller’s plays (all in Russian translations), All My Sons, Death of a Salesman and View from the Bridge, were translated and regularly staged in Soviet theatres until the late 1960s and despite its sympathy towards the author and support for him during the McCarthy period, they were all altered and censored to varying degrees to suit whatever the prevailing Soviet view of the Cold War was at that time.

The Soviet translation of Death of a Salesman in the February 1956 issue of Novyj mir ingeniously altered the title to Čelovek Korotromu tak vezlo, ‘The Man Who Had All the Luck.’ By (perhaps confusingly) taking the name of another of his plays, one that had not been produced, the translator had ‘heightened the play’s

85 Izvestija, 29 January 1953.
86 Friedberg, A Decade of Euphoria, p. 197. Why was Miller chosen when there was a wide range of other possible choices that the Soviets could have selected? The answer lies in the fact that he was American. It is also possible that Miller’s choice of formal structure for his plays and the adoption of a non-Brechtian realism appealed to both the authorities and the general public in Russia. I would like to thank Denise Youngblood and David Caute for pointing this out to me.
87 Miller recalled: ‘No request was ever made to me from any Soviet source to make changes in my works produced or published there. As you doubtless know, they have not ordinarily asked permission to produce or publish foreign works either, and never did in my case.’ Consequently, he was not always happy with the results. Friedberg, A Decade of Euphoria, p. 21, 22.
ironic portrayal of American “success”. Furthermore, a letter from Gala Ebin to Miller’s agent, Kermit Bloomgarden, revealed other changes. Ebin referred to the ‘distortion’ and ‘subtle paraphrasings in the translation [...] strengthening the Soviet interpretation of the play [...] which emerges as an outright condemnation of the capitalist system!’ She continued to say that: ‘The mood of the play is set with the act curtain – a loud, ugly painting of New York skyscrapers, threatening to crush the stage and the audience. In the course of the play Willy Loman’s daydreams and illusions are destroyed one by one by the faulty, inhuman American economic system.’ Official Soviet praise for the 1959 Leningrad production was thus fulsome. The review in Pravda praised it for mercilessly revealing ‘another side of contemporary bourgeois society – the lack of ideals, the oppressive feeling of men’s pointless existence.’ It portrayed ‘the legitimate result of the inhuman laws of the capitalist world. [...] Willy’s consciousness is poisoned by false bourgeois propaganda that in America all people have equal opportunities. [...] Only at the price of his life does man buy his illusory “freedom” in the capitalist world.’

The critical reception was also positive and the Moscow journal Teatr called it ‘poetic, concrete and profound.’ Audiences liked it too and the play was a hit in both Leningrad and Moscow.

Incident at Vichy was published in Inostrannaja literatura [Foreign Literature] in July 1965. Although Soviet literary journals avoided Jewish issues during the mid-1960s, it was most likely published because, in the words of Friedberg, it was viewed as ‘an indictment of man’s irrational inhumanity to man’ and provided, in the release by the Nazis of an arrested Jewish businessman, evidence supporting the Soviet claim that Nazi anti-Semitism was aimed only at working-class rather than bourgeois Jews. The text was also altered: specifically, the removal of obscenity and direct references to ‘penises’ and ‘cocks.’ Yet, precisely because the play touched on the topic of anti-Semitism and persecution of the Jews, a forbidden theme at that time even when broached in connection with World War II and Nazi atrocities, the play was never actually produced despite being translated into and published in Russian. In 1966, the Sovremennik Theatre rehearsed the play and even gave several ‘full dress run-throughs’ but, as with plays of similar ilk, it was banned and the general public never got to see it.

88 Friedberg, A Decade of Euphoria, p. 21.
89 Gala Ebin, letter to Kermit Bloomgarden, 8 September 1959, Box 24, Folder: Death of a Salesman – Foreign Productions 1953-1962, HRC.
90 Pravda, 29 July 1959.
91 This review was excerpted in a letter to Arthur Miller, 17 June 1960, Box 24, Folder: Death of a Salesman – Foreign Productions 1953-1962, HRC.
92 Friedberg, A Decade of Euphoria, p. 32, 33.
93 Ibid., p. 32.
Strangely, one might say in light of its anti-McCarthy message, *The Crucible*, as Friedberg notes, was ‘one of the most heavily censored [texts] to appear in the USSR in the first post-Stalin decade.’ Miller commented in retrospect that *The Crucible* was often presented either when ‘a dictator is about to arise and take over, or he has just been overthrown’ and consequently it ‘was one of the first foreign works to be done after Stalin’s death.’ The play was so heavily altered, particularly in the denuding of Miller’s own authorial comments, that it ‘was reduced to little more than a costume drama.’ The reasons for this were the play’s equal relevance to 1950s America and the Soviet Union, a point which Miller made in his preamble to the play. In particular, Friedberg shows how two long passages from the first act, in which Miller sets the context of the play in colonial America, were deleted because ‘[t]he applicability of Arthur Miller’s remarks to the Soviet Union’s own history, specifically, to the degeneration of Lenin’s authoritarianism of the early revolutionary years into the reign of terror of the Stalin era, was far too transparent. The profoundly subversive passage was not allowed to stand in the Soviet version of the play.’ Of course, then, ‘Miller’s explicit comments on the applicability of the experience of the Salem witch-hunts of the eighteenth century to the fate of nonconformists’ in both Western and communist states, could not stand.’ One wonders why it was they even bothered to translate it in the first place but obviously Miller’s popularity, reputation, status and use were too much to ignore.

By 1969, however, Miller had fallen out of favour in the Soviet Union. Already in 1967 its praise had become more muted and Miller had been downgraded from a ‘progressive playwright’ to a ‘liberal democrat.’ In part this was due to his two-fold activities protesting against the official treatment of dissident Soviet writers and intellectuals and of Soviet Jews. From 1965, Miller’s protest against Soviet artistic repression was often conducted under the auspices of PEN. As its international president, he travelled to many countries, including those behind the Iron Curtain. As a consequence, Miller became an unofficial cultural ambassador for the West, particularly in his attempts to bring the Soviet Union into PEN, one of the conditions of his accepting its presidency. PEN itself became a theatre for international diplomacy. In addition to official meetings between PEN and the Soviet Writers’ Union, several unofficial Soviet emissaries showed up at PEN congresses. And during the mid-1960s, Frances Stonor Saunders tells us, ‘the CIA made every

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95 Friedberg, *A Decade of Euphoria*.
97 Friedberg, *A Decade of Euphoria*, p. 49.
98 Ibid., p. 50.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid., p. 197.
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Effort to turn PEN into a vehicle for American government interests’ and channelled funds to it through its various front organisations. Miller did have ‘a suspicion of being used and wondered suddenly whether our State Department or CIA’ were behind his being approached to be president ‘because they couldn’t otherwise penetrate the Soviet Union, and they figured that travelling behind me could be their own people.’ In fact, his speculation was half-correct: his FBI file later revealed that he was chosen because he was acceptable to both sides.

Nevertheless, despite his attempts to bring the USSR into the PEN fold, which were ultimately unsuccessful as the Soviets wanted to alter the PEN constitution, this did not prevent Miller from protesting the treatment of their writers. On 13 June 1966, for example, in a speech delivered before the Inaugural Session of the 34th International PEN Congress in New York, Miller addressed the session as its president. He used the occasion to speak out against the arrest of Soviet writers who were tried for the political implications of their works and sent to jail for long terms and the suppression of Yiddish literature in the USSR. Four years later, again under PEN auspices, Miller spoke out against the 1965 Sinyavsky-Daniel trials which he saw as the Soviet analogue to McCarthyism.

Furthermore, in 1969 Miller criticised the internal situation in the Soviet Union in general and in Soviet literature in particular. He also complained to Yekaterina Furtseva, then Soviet Minister of Culture, about the numerous and what he saw as crude changes that the Soviet translators had made to A View from the Bridge. The publication of his book In Russia in 1969, even though it was not published in the Soviet Union, led to severe criticism and was taken as further provocation. As Martin Gottfried points out, ‘the simple use of Russia in the book title indicated Miller’s changed attitude toward the Soviet Union and international communism’ – from outright admiration to implicit condemnation. Christopher Bigsby added: ‘This was the country which thirty years earlier he had admired as a progressive force, a bastion against fascism and anti-Semitism. Now he went there in part to challenge its practices, particularly with respect to those writers who wished to lay claim to proscribed freedoms.’ Enough copies of the book had infiltrated into the country, and Radio Liberty broadcast the entire text of In Russia.

102 Saunders, Who Paid the Piper?, p. 362; for details on the covert funding see p. 366.
103 Ibid., p. 364. Miller, Timebends, p. 567.
107 Friedberg, A Decade of Euphoria, p. 22; Arthur Miller, ‘In Russia’, Harper’s Magazine (September 1969), p. 44.
108 Friedberg, A Decade of Euphoria, p. 197.
in the USSR as part of its propaganda campaign, to cause the Soviet government to take notice of it. The result was official displeasure, particularly with his preface for the book, which was attacked as ‘anti-Soviet.’ After that in the newspaper Literaturnaya Gazeta (Literature Newspaper) an article was published in which the Soviet writers fiercely condemned Miller and reminded him that he had forgotten how they defended him during the years of McCarthyism. Miller commented: ‘The irony is that many Americans who read a preface I wrote recently for my wife’s book of photographs about Russia thought it was pro-Soviet.’

Miller’s other activity in the international arena was devoted to addressing the plight of Soviet Jewry. In October 1963, Miller participated in the Conference on the Status of Soviet Jews in New York and delivered a speech entitled ‘I Am Bound to Protest.’ In it, he expressed his ‘reluctance to disturb the new climate of political rapprochement with the Soviets by such a protest’ because ‘I would hate to think that I had done anything, however slight, to damage the chances of peace.’ Yet he stated it was his duty to speak out nonetheless and in the hope that it would advance ‘American-Russian understanding.’ The Cultural Section of the Soviet Embassy questioned Miller as to why he wanted to participate in such a conference. In return Miller questioned the Soviet representative on the persecution and oppression of Jews in Russia. When this was reported in America, the Morning Freiheit – the Jewish section of the CPUSA with which Miller had had much in common during the 1940s having written for its paper Jewish Life – criticised Miller’s inquiries into the state of Jewish life in the USSR. ‘Everything demonstrated that the guest was not properly informed.’ Nonetheless, this did not prevent the paper from approvingly printing Miller’s remark: ‘Were it not for the Soviet Army, there would be no Jews in the world. This dare not be forgotten.’

Paradoxically, at almost the same time in 1964, Miller contributed a piece to that very fiercely anti-communist journal which a decade and a half earlier had identified his All My Sons as CP propaganda, The New Leader. In it, he described ‘a methodical campaign to discredit, degrade and, it would seem, to obliterate

111 Ivanyan, When the Muses Speak, p. 298.
115 Ibid.
the Jew as Jew,’ continuing to say: ‘It is no good writing vile things in your press about Jews, and then go on and on denying that you are practicing anti-Semitism. An anti-Semite who cannot conceive he is an anti-Semite is nevertheless an anti-Semite if he does anti-Semitic things. [...] I feel it proper and necessary to protest.’ Following a request from Moshe Decter of Jewish Minorities Research, Miller subsequently wrote to the Soviet Prime Minister Andrei Kosygin to appeal on behalf of the Soviet Jewish writer Yosif Kerler who had applied for and been given an exit visa to emigrate to Israel but which was later arbitrarily withdrawn with no explanation provided.

Miller’s public criticism of the Soviet treatment of Alexander Solzhenitsyn and other writers was the final straw and his twenty years of popularity was reversed in a single stroke by the end of 1970. Miller was blacklisted, a television production of The Price cancelled, and his plays banned in toto. Such a ban was an extreme measure, even by Soviet standards, especially in light of Miller’s previous status in the Soviet Union. Even more significant was the Soviet Union’s explicit desire to announce the ban when the plays could simply have failed to appear on Soviet stages without any announcement whatsoever. Miller concluded from this: ‘it is clear that I am personally the object of interdiction as a bad influence.’ He concluded: ‘The fact is inescapable that by attacking me personally the regime is warning Soviet writers that a new time has begun. Once again, in effect, you are either with us or against us. Either you serve as a publicist advertising the Party line or you cease to exist in stage or in print.’ Miller continued to protest nonetheless. In December 1973, he signed a letter (along with John Updike, John Cheever and Richard Wilbur) publicly deploring the harassment of Solzhenitsyn. He also protested the treatment of the writer Andrei Amalrik and requested clemency.

In 1974, in the New York Times, he berated Nixon’s policy of silence in the face of continued Soviet repression as consent which was ‘effectively strengthening the most illiberal elements in the Soviet Government.’

The Soviet ban on Miller’s work had little to do with literature and much to do with politics. With the arrest and trial of Andrei Siniavsky and Yuli Daniel in September 1965 – their ‘crime’ being the pseudonymous publication of literature critical of the Soviet Union abroad – the thaw of the 1950s and 1960s began to come to an end, and greater suppression of dissent was much in evidence. As Michael

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118 Moshe Decter to Arthur Miller, 23 December 1966; Box 68, Folder: Jews in Russia, hrc; Arthur Miller to Andrei Kosygin, 9 March 1966, Box 68, Folder: Jews in Russia, hrc.
120 American PEN Newsletter, 10 (December 1973).
Kort points out: ‘These arrests sent out a shock wave, as these men were under attack simply for their writing, not for any overt act of defiance.’

The aftermath of the Prague Spring in 1968 saw the rise of the new branch of Communist dictatorship, creating what was called ‘Brezhnev Stagnation’ and ‘supracensorship.’

It was the product of the victory of the old-line conservatives, the neo-Stalinists, over the more liberal minded within the Soviet bureaucracy. Brezhnev clearly seemed to be appeasing this bloc when, against his own policy of détente, his rule became increasingly heavy-handed and he permitted a series of trials against dissenters.

Miller himself felt he was banned for the Soviet Union to appear more revolutionary again in order to mollify the mood of the Third World and revolutionary youth movements, and also to bring its ideological face more in line with China now that rapprochement had been reached. Indeed, there was some validity to this last point for the Soviet reluctance to repudiate the whole process of de-Stalinisation had been one of the stumbling blocks to a full agreement with China. But Miller’s claim should be taken with a pinch of salt as the Soviet Union was banning many authors, Western and otherwise, at that time.

Furthermore, it was part of a crackdown on dissent. The period saw a new campaign to liquidate internal ideological dissent and stop the infiltration of liberal ideas into literary and scientific thinking by keeping Soviet intellectuals in line. By taking such a high-profile playwright as Miller the Soviet Union was not only announcing its intentions to its own people, but it was also sending out a powerful message to the wider world, hence the need for its announcement. Miller himself felt, ‘that they have chosen me to warn the others’ as ‘a token demonstration to show how far they [the Soviet authorities] are prepared to go.’

Sunday Express columnist Graham Lord commented, it is ‘pretty ironical when you consider that some Americans are themselves highly doubtful about Mr Miller’s politics, believing that if he is not exactly a Communist he is at least a fellow-traveller of impressive mileage.’

Where *All My Sons* had been attacked in the United States for being Marxist it was banned in the USSR because it suggested that capitalists could be ethical if they tried. *Salesman* was also banned on the grounds that it was anti-Soviet. Bigsby, however, suggests an alternative explanation for the ban: ‘exception was taken by a minor functionary to what she believed to be an unflattering photograph of herself.’

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126 I would like to thank Denise Youngblood for pointing this out to me.
Conclusion

Arthur Miller presents a fascinating study during the Cultural Cold War for the way in which he became almost a floating signifier for both the United States and the Soviet Union. The intended universality of his art was such that it lent itself so readily to (unintentional) ideological usage. Thus, during interlocking periods, Miller was co-opted or rejected by both sides and his plays were promoted, produced and banned, as each country took the same words and invested them with contrasting meanings at times. When he was officially unpopular in the United States, most notably the 1950s, he was at the height of his fame in the Soviet Union. Likewise, in the 1970s, when interest in Miller’s past communist and/or fellow-travelling activities had declined, he was banned in the Soviet Union. As far back as 1957, Miller recognised what was going on when he wrote: ‘I can say from my experience that plays and playwrights are also considered as bearing upon high policy, and are justified as being forbidden to go abroad, while within the country other arms of government are used to organize them out of circulation.’

Both sides sustained interest in Miller from 1947 to 1965 clearly illustrated his importance within the Cultural Cold War. Wittingly or otherwise, Miller was mobilised as a key figure in the United States’ struggle against the Soviet Union and vice versa. Although Miller did not position himself as a ‘Cold Warrior,’ hence his refusal to join the ACCF and similar organisations, his conscious self-positioning was almost superfluous and he functioned as an unintentional Cold Warrior nonetheless. His position was such that his actions or those against him could be utilised as either pro/anti-American or pro/anti-Soviet propaganda. This was demonstrated by the controversies surrounding the withdrawal of his passport, the boycotts of his plays, and the Dostoevsky affair in the United States and the translation, staging and banning of his plays in the Soviet Union. As a consequence, Miller was mobilised as part of the United States and Soviet Union’s respective Cultural Cold War campaigns without his direct consent. And yet, Miller was aware, at the time, that the State Department was involved in the spread of American books, music and painting overseas. Thus, in the words of Jordi Cornella-Detrell, he may also have been guilty of ‘playing the game.’

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130 Arthur Miller, Speech to the National Assembly of the Authors League of America, 14 May 1957, Box 64, Folder: SPEECH – before authors league 5/14/57 Excerpts in NY Times 5/15/57. HRC.
132 Miller, Speech to the National Assembly of the Authors League of America, 14 May 1957. HRC.
133 Jordi Cornella-Detrell, remark made during Shark Tank Seminar, Bangor University, 30 October 2008.