Russia and the United States: Reflecting Cross-Culturally

A major conference on the interaction between Russian and American cultures took place on the IU Bloomington campus, February 13-15.

The conference was organized by Nyusya Milman of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, with the support of the Russian and East European Institute (REEI) and other IU units.

It featured not only outstanding intellectuals from Russia and the United States but also a multi-media approach to analyzing how Russian and American cultures have been influencing one another since World War II, with emphasis on the much accelerated mutual encounters of today's global mass culture.

The conference opened with poetry readings by Lev Loseff, Ilya Kutic, and Vladimir Gandelsman, followed by a welcome reception. The next day's sessions featured panels on “Russians Discovering America,” “Americans in Russia,” and a video showing of the Russian film, “The Return of Nathan Baker,” the first showing of this film anywhere in sixty years and the first ever in the United States. In the evening, participants enjoyed a concert of Russian music, including an outstanding performance by Olga Polonskaya, a student of Nelli Shkolnikova of the IU School of Music.

Saturday's sessions dealt with “Melancholy and Nostalgia” and “The American in Russian Films of the Cold War Era.” Film, slides, and music were also analyzed in sessions not specifically devoted to film. In the afternoon, two round table discussions took place, one featuring the conference contributors and the second, IU students. Participants summed up the results of the presentations and explored the larger issues raised by them. Everyone expressed the wish that the conference could be made an annual event at IU.

It is noteworthy that the conference drew the attention of leading Russian journalists Olga Timofeeva, deputy chief editor of Obshchaja gazeta; Alexander Genis, anchor at Radio Liberty; and Irina Prokorova, editor-in-chief of Novoe Literarnoe Obozrenie. IU faculty from Slavics or REEI who participated as chairs or discussants included Andrew Durkin, George Fowler, Jerzy Kolodziej, Vadim Liapunov, Nina Perlina, and David Ransel.

Upcoming Conferences & Workshops

May 7, 1997
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