

International policy in its cultural dimension: from Lenin to Putin

“Layers and Connections of the Political”

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Abstract

In 1919 after the Versailles Peace Conference an official of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs wrote in his report: "Russia has no external friend to whom selfless support could count in a difficult time. Everyone - both friends and enemies - consider our homeland exclusively as a means of enrichment. Our orientation and our policy must be exclusively Russian." Exactly one hundred years later Vladimir Putin in his celebratory speech said on December 31, 2018: "We will have to solve many urgent tasks ... And we can only do it together. We have never had and will never have helpers. So, we have to be a compact, united and strong team."

There is a certain historical continuity in Russia's self-positioning towards the rest of the West. However, Russia has never been a deedless actor in East-West relations and has never left the initiative in the hands of the other party. One of the key activities was cultural diplomacy, obviously linked to economic and diplomatic policies, but at the same time representing a force with important potential. In my paper I analyse different strategies of cultural policies in their chronological path, carried out by different state and parastatal institutions (VOKS, cultural associations of the Italy-USSR type, Russkij mir, etc.), as well as messages' content. The paper will focus on the images that the Soviet/Russian government tried to form of the country in order to facilitate, promote or, on the contrary, justify the difficulties encountered in other areas of international relations.

Author information

Olga Dubrovina has a PhD in Human sciences from Modena and Reggio Emilia University and a PhD from Moscow State University Lomonosov. 2015-2018, adjunct professor at Modena and Reggio Emilia University where she lectured Russian history and culture; 2019, teaching assistant at University of Molise. Author of “In the reflection of the enemy ... Representations of Soviet Russia in Italy during the interwar period.” Editor AIRO-XXI, Moscow, 2019. ISBN: ISBN 978-591022-419-7 (in Russian) and editor of “Battles in Russia. Don and Stalingrad 75 years later,” Edizioni Uicolpi, Milano, 2018. ISBN: 9788840020365 (in Italian).

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Wednesday, 16th June - Session 5 - 10.30-12.00 CET (Webex) - Panel - *Beyond Traditional Cold War Understanding: Economic and Cultural Elements in East-West Interactions*

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