

Katarzyna Hauzer

Institute of English Studies
Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland

So This Is Peace? The Postwar Ventures by John Steinbeck, Irwin Shaw, and Robert Capa

This paper is an attempt to analyze literary ventures by John Steinbeck, Irwin Shaw and Robert Capa in which text and pictures make their own commentary. *A Russian Journal* (1948) is an unusual record of “the great other side of Russia,” wherein Steinbeck and Capa struggle to present the Soviet Union deprived of its ideological context. The authors make a sweeping journey through the USSR, portraying the landscapes and ways of life of ordinary Russians who were emerging from the rubble of WWII with the hope of peaceful coexistence of capitalism and communism in the atomic decade. The challenging task of demarcating culture with politics produced an intriguing travel narrative in which the power of observation is inherent in Steinbeck’s insights into Russia’s cultural landscapes and its memories of war, not in its Cold War state of mind. Similarly, Shaw and Capa take up a delicate task, reporting on the labyrinths of war in a newly developing state in the Middle East. *Report on Israel* (1950) is a powerful depiction of several wars at a crossroads where verbal assessment and photographic artistry often compete with one another. The spirit behind *A Russian Journal* and *Report on Israel* is a reminder of the postwar era’s instability and the human dimension of political changes. Both literary perspectives, unknown to a wider audience, serve as unique historical documents and skillfully arranged postwar profiles of countries and cultures traveling along a swinging rope between war and peace.

John Steinbeck, Irwin Shaw, and America’s most acclaimed war photographer, Robert Capa, have turned restlessness into a professional trademark. *Once There Was a War*, *The Moon Is Down* and *Bombs Away* are Steinbeck’s journalistic attempts at recreating the social and political texture of the WWII years in Italy, England, Scandinavia, and northern Africa. Irwin Shaw’s frontline itinerary provided the most prized background for his bestselling novel. *The Young Lions* is based on his experiences with the U.S. Army in North Africa and Europe, where Shaw witnessed the liberation of Paris as a member of a documentary film unit. Robert Capa’s inspection of

international grounds resulted in his world-famous "Falling Soldier," the most moving depiction of the loyalist campaign of the Spanish Civil War of 1936, as well as his "slightly out of focus"¹ D-Day selection of the daring amphibious invasion with the first wave of U.S. troops landing on the beaches of Normandy on June 6th 1944. This sensational record of Omaha Beach comprised 72 photographs that Capa shot at extreme risk to his life, and was followed by extensive coverage of the advance of American infantry and armored forces into the French countryside and further inland. Capa's exuberant collection ranges from photos taken in Great Britain, France, Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia to his final images of Japan, Laos and Vietnam, taken moments before he was killed stepping on a landmine in 1954.

The immediate post-WWII reality presented the onetime war correspondents with new challenges. Two years after the Second World War ended, Steinbeck, Shaw and Capa were back on track penetrating distant countries and cultures, hoping for a bright future, which soon turned out to be bleak and deceptive, offering illusory hopes of peace and security. The clearly set goals of presenting the American audience with insightful views of the cultures that had suffered the most in WWII led the preeminent journalists to rarely trodden territories. The artists' postwar destinations were the Soviet Union and Israel, where the peace which had been wanted for so long was being jeopardized by newly emerging global and regional conflicts: the Cold War and wars for independence. The results of the unusual literary undertakings were *A Russian Journal (ARJ)* by John Steinbeck and Robert Capa, published in 1948, a product of the uneasiness of the times, and *Report on Israel (RI)* by Irwin Shaw and Robert Capa, published in 1950, a picture-and-text portrayal of the birth of a nation.

In 1947, when the Cold War began in earnest after Winston Churchill's historic announcement at Fulton, Missouri that the Iron Curtain had been drawn across Eastern Europe, Steinbeck set out to explore the unexplored. Jay Parini, Steinbeck's biographer, reveals the intricacies of the Russian initiative when he writes:

Frantic for a break from Gwyn, who was once again arguing with him about 'every little detail of domestic life,' as he told Pat Covici, Steinbeck followed up a suggestion that he do some reporting from Europe for the *Herald Tribune*. One night, again in the bar of the Bedford [Hotel], he ran into Robert Capa, the photographer whom he had met during the war in Europe, and Capa suggested that they go to Russia together to do a book. He would photograph the ordinary Russian at work or play, while Steinbeck wrote a diary-like text to accompany the pictures. The idea was that Russia portrayed in the press was not the 'real' Russia. Ideology aside, the people of Russia were like you and me, argued Capa, who was [in Elaine Steinbeck's words] 'one of the most charming men in the world' (376).

Interested in the human dimension of postwar Russia and determined to familiarize Americans with "the great other side" of the evil empire (*ARJ* 4), Steinbeck set out to record everyday life without expressing any prejudices or geopolitical terms. Unlike other Western reporting about Russia at the time, the narrative was intended to portray the landscapes and the modes of existence of people living under Soviet

¹ A reference to Robert Capa's book of war memoirs, *Slightly Out of Focus*, which explains his D-Day experience.

rule – their memories of war, everyday struggles and nuclear fears. Robert Capa's readiness for a new photographic challenge along with his relaxed, if not jocular, approach to political matters made him a perfect match for Steinbeck. This is what each of them had to say about their collaborative Cold War venture:

It will be necessary to say first how this story and how this trip started, and what its intention was [...]. In the papers every day there were thousands of words about Russia. What Stalin was thinking about, the plans of the Russian General Staff, the disposition of troops, experiments with atomic weapons and guided missiles, all of this by people who had not been there, and whose sources were not above reproach. And it occurred to us that there were some things that nobody wrote about Russia, and they were the things that interested us most of all. What do the people wear there? What do they serve at dinner? Do they have parties? What food is there? How do they make love, and how do they die? What do they talk about? Do they dance, and sing, and play? Do the children go to school? [...] There must be a private life of the Russian people, and that we could not read about because no one wrote about it, and no one photographed it [...]. And so we decided to try it—to do a simple reporting job backed up with photographs. We would work together. We would avoid politics and the larger issues. We would stay away from the Kremlin, from military men and from military plans. We wanted to get to the Russian people if we could (*ARJ* 3-4).

[A]t the beginning of a newly invented war which was named the cold war... no one knew where the battlefields were. While I was figuring what to do I met Mr. Steinbeck, who had his own problems [...]. To make it short, we became a cold-war team. It seemed to us that behind phrases like "Iron Curtain," "cold war" and "preventive war" people and thought and humor had fully disappeared. We decided to make an old-fashioned Don Quixote and Sancho Panza quest—to ride behind the "iron curtain" and pit our lances and pens against the windmills of today (*ARJ* xvii).

How accurate and complete is the picture of the Russian people Steinbeck and Capa exhibit before their native audience? To what extent did Steinbeck realize that the artistic parameters he had set writing about only what he saw and with a great deal of emotion and understanding, making scarce comments on politics, would blur the picture of the Soviet individual consciousness he had so much wanted to discover? Are there any unintentional political implications in Steinbeck's eyewitness account? How convincing is it in its attempts to recapture the Soviet weariness with WWII and ordinary people's ulterior eagerness to live in peace in the times of a new, escalating conflict: the Cold War?

Steinbeck's travelogue format allows for a rich observation of the diversity of landscapes of the Soviet republics. As long as the writer remains faithful to his environmentalist perspective, much praised by critics and regarded as his literary trademark, his records of the natural world unravel the stark beauty and a safe, uncontroversial truth about Stalin's dominion. Steinbeck's enchantment with Russia's panoramas comes alive in his respectful attention to the scenic beauty sorely damaged by warfare. Only Georgia's sights and vegetation are "magical" because "the Germans never got there, neither with planes nor with troops" (*ARJ* 144). Of Lenin-grad the diarist recalls "the scars of the long war [...]" – the trenches, the cut-up earth, the shell holes, now beginning to be overgrown with grass" where some areas "were

pitted and scabbed like the face of the moon" (ARJ 12). The roads on the outskirts of Stalingrad, all unpaved and ruined, were a pitiful reminder of the incredible defense of the city and stood in sharp contrast with the landscape far beyond, oblivious to the immensity of destruction. Steinbeck observes:

On the open steppe, which stretched away as far as you could see, there were herds of goats and cows grazing. The railroad track paralleled the road, and along the track we saw lines of burned-out gondolas and freight cars which had been fired and destroyed during the war. The whole area for miles, on all sides of Stalingrad, was littered with the debris of war: burned-out tanks, and half-trucks, and troop carriers, and rusting pieces of broken artillery (ARJ 113).

Similarly, the riverboat excursion on the magnificent Volga river does not make it easy to exorcize the memory of the war atrocities. The wide and placid river snakes and twists across the plain, but the view of the shoreline is not entirely pleasing to the eye: "From the river one could see as a whole the destruction of the city" (ARJ 123).

In *A Russian Journal* it is evident that rampant Soviet censorship prevented Steinbeck and Capa from seeing the entire picture. The writer's commitment to "honest reporting" (ARJ 4), in which trying to understand men is "a base theme" (Shillinglaw 1), was subjected to numerous restrictions imposed upon the curious rambblers from the West by their often invisible local guardians. To an astute reader it is by no means surprising that the pair was led to Soviet-approved locales and to people with unspoiled records. The American visitors begin their sweeping forty-day journey through the U.S.S.R. under the umbrella of the Intourist organization. The book moves at the pace of the trip itself, operating on a system of multiple departures and returns to and from Moscow. The itinerary of the trip makes it easy for Russian authorities to monitor their movement. Steinbeck never mentions to what extent he is aware of the KGB's watchful presence. Yet, as John F. Slater points out, he is ready to "strike a bargain with Russia" and "fashion a fresh style to suit a novel occasion" (96).

Just as Steinbeck's travel routes were carefully prearranged, the Soviets had good reason to scrutinize Capa and his powerful lenses. Whereas Steinbeck was allowed to take notes of a short tour in a dilapidated monastery which had been half-ruined by German shell fire as a result of the Nazi's hasty retreat from Kiev, Capa's pictures of "a wild-eyed, half-crazed woman [...] crossing herself monotonously and mumbling" (ARJ 60) were intercepted by the Russian censors. According to Alex Kershaw, the KGB prevented the publication of the photos because they showed the country's failure to recover from the loss of more than twenty million of its citizens (186n). At the Moscow airport, on their return home, Steinbeck and Capa learned that the photographs of the half-starved young woman with a wild dog look, living underneath the Stalingrad rubble, were missing. To Steinbeck, the girl on her knees who "had retired [...] into the old wilderness of pleasure, and pain, and self-preservation" was "a face to dream about for a long time" (ARJ 118). To the Soviets, she was a clear antithesis of the great triumph of the war. The dreadful sight of the remnants of the city severely scarred after the most epic siege of WWII, in which the Red Army's victory over Field Marshall von Paulus, the commander of Hitler's Sixth Army, turned the tide decisively in favor of the allies in 1943, was to appease

“the terror of the camera” (ARJ 122). As Kershaw notes, even after witnessing Berlin in 1945, Capa was shocked by the extent of the devastation (185). The shock was superseded by subsequent humiliation. The barefoot, filthy orphan living under the rubble was beyond the photojournalist’s reach, as picture-taking of what Steinbeck called “heroic travesty on modern living” (ARJ 115) was not allowed. Another half-truth of the Russian story contributed to the authors’ genuine disappointment.

The camera’s inconvenient habit of capturing select but inevitable patterns of actuality was feared more than Steinbeck’s verbal assessment of the country. Whereas Capa seeks and is occasionally prevented from documenting the severe austerity of a postwar wasteland, Steinbeck records the new reality, blissfully unaware of the subtleties in the convergence of the recently ended war and the newly-begun conflict. Perhaps the greatest weakness of Steinbeck’s project is his inability to see the war as part of a still vaster Cold War configuration. The writer’s ignorance places one of the most significant scenes of *A Russian Journal* in an emotional rather than political realm. A passing column of the remaining German prisoners of war, marching in their army uniforms through the streets of Kiev – wretched survivors from an ignominious defeat in 1944 – is made almost invisible and, according to Steinbeck, the only condemnation for the Nazi oppressors is the victors’ inattention. The author-observer writes: “[The Ukrainian people] look through these prisoners and over them and do not see them. And perhaps this is the worst punishment that could possibly be inflicted on them” (ARJ 62). Typically, when the book’s format of reportorial objectivity breaks down, Steinbeck is lost in the complexities of the Communist regime. His comment is a clear indication of a greater political ignorance which makes it hard for him and other Westerners to believe that the Soviet people were victims, too, of the new circumstances. The fact that they looked away from the prisoners shows not only their empathy but their totalitarian fears, as well. Soviet citizens were afraid of the slightest connections with foreigners, for they knew, as Ukrainian Professor Yuriy Sherekh, then living in Munich, makes clear in his thought-provoking essay “Why Did You Not Want to See, Mr. Steinbeck?”, “a person who has any connections with aliens in the USSR, outside the official rules and norms, disappears” (qtd. in Kershaw 186n). As critics seem to agree, occasional omissions and negligence in the reports from behind the Iron Curtain have a serious impact on the transparency of the Soviet mindset Steinbeck and Capa had promised to disclose for the American reader.

Similarly, behind the words of plenty in Steinbeck’s descriptions of local feasts, a dark truth is hidden. The U.S. visitors’ exhaustion from overeating and drinking on what Professor Wolodymyr Stojko refers to as their “vodka tour” contrasts with the excess of deaths owing to malnutrition and sickness resultant from the 1946 famine that had killed millions of rural Russians, as well as from severe rationing inflicted upon the post-WWII Soviet society. Steinbeck’s text makes no mention of these abnormally high mortality rates owing to the food shortage which lasted up to the harvest of 1947. The writer’s one-sided impressions of the cityscape on his second visit to Moscow are commented on by Jay Parini when he writes: “Now, with many new buildings on view, the streets clean, and the Russian people well-fed, he encountered an atmosphere of progress. He seems to have been strangely unaware of Stalin’s atrocities, which had been widely rumoured if not documented by western journalists” (378).

The temper of the times is best revealed, perhaps, in casual conversations in which, among endless WWII reminiscence, such words as "peace," "atom bomb," and "preventive war" appear. Here, conversely to Steinbeck's objective, an obtrusive political theme is treated with reportorial curiosity and allegiance. Just as the two superpowers of the new world order wrestle with the prospects of an open conflict, in the Russian travelogue there are two Steinbecks groping with cultural understanding and ideological admonishment. The toasts raised to "peace, always to peace" (ARJ 65) and to "the abolishment of curtains of all kinds" (ARJ 181) incite questions whose relevance clearly pertains to the imminence of the Cold War. The indisputable presence of newly emerging fears can be clearly seen in Steinbeck's depiction of the otherwise neglected aspects of the global political unrest. The following excerpt is too meaningful to be overlooked. The visiting American journalist observes:

Our hosts had many questions they wanted to ask us. They wanted to know about America, about its size, about its crops, about its politics. And we began to realize that America is a very difficult country to explain [...]. We tried to explain our fear of dictatorship, our fear of leaders with too much power [...].

They asked about wages, and standards of living, and the kind of life a workingman lives [...]. And then they spoke of the atom bomb, and they said they were not afraid of it. Stalin has said that it would never be used in warfare, and they trust that statement implicitly. One man said that even if it were used it could only destroy towns. "Our towns are destroyed already," he said. "What more can it do? And if we were invaded we would defend ourselves, just as we did with the Germans. We will defend ourselves in the snow, and in the forests, and in the fields."

They spoke anxiously about war, they have had so much of it. They asked, "Will the United States attack us? Will we have to defend our country again in one lifetime?"

We said, "No, we do not think the United States will attack." [...] And we asked them where they got the idea that we might attack Russia.

Well, they said, they got it from our newspapers. Certain of our newspapers speak constantly of attacking Russia. And some of them speak of what they call preventive war. And, they said, that as far as they are concerned, preventive war is just like any other war. We told them that we do not believe that those newspapers they mention, and those columnists who speak only of war, are true representatives of the American people. We do not believe the American people want to go to war with anyone.

The old, old thing came up, that always comes up: "Then why does your government not control these newspapers and these men who talk war?" And we had to explain again, as we had many times before, that we do not believe in controlling our press, that we think the truth usually wins, and that control simply drives bad things underground. In our country we prefer that these people talk themselves to death in public, and write themselves to death, rather than bottle them up to slip their poison secretly through the dark (ARJ 54-56).

In *A Russian Journal*, many cultural encounters offer hidden meanings, discovered by the visiting Americans only in the later stages of their travels. Their indomitable will to explore the world beyond their initial comprehension shows particularly well in a Moscow scene in which surveillance, when finally noticed, is approached with less irritation and more playfulness and humor. One of the most emblematic

moments of the early Cold War climate of mutual distrust is codified in Chapter Three of the diary:

Three huge double windows overlooked the street. As time went on, Capa posted himself in the windows more and more, photographing little incidents that happened under our windows. Across the street, on the second floor, there was a man who ran a kind of camera repair shop. He worked long hours on equipment. And we discovered late in the game that while we were photographing him, he was photographing us (ARJ 21).

One may argue that the pair's pioneering goal to show "the great other side" of America's wartime ally and its immediate postwar antagonist was accomplished only partially. To many critics, what could have been a spellbinding portrait of ordinary Russians of whom Steinbeck thought the same as Americans turned out simple in content and superficial mainly due to the then-current obstacles, such as omnipresent red tape, Communist propaganda, censorship, and the writer's naiveté. However, as Slater aptly remarks, Steinbeck's aim in *A Russian Journal* was "to focus on surface and allow the reality to speak for itself" (99). More importantly, the author's intention to present the Soviet Union deprived of ideological context as well as his insistence on demarcating culture with politics both failed. Reporting on the "private life of the Russian people" in Stalin's Russia was in itself a political act. Nevertheless, the politically delicate task of exploring Cold War Russia, which Susan Shilliglaw gently dismisses as "circus-style diplomacy" (ARJ xix), contributes to a remarkable document showing the failure of two systems to communicate with each other. John Ditsky reaffirms the view when he says, "Steinbeck's [text] clearly intends to entertain; his ambience is sensual as well as personal [...]. The picture of the Soviet Union which would result from Steinbeck's choice of tactics would thus be self-justified in terms of the fiction writer's duty to select detail, rather than attempt - like the scholar - to present the total picture" (25). Evidently, the power of observation is in Steinbeck's insights into Russia's cultural landscapes and its memories of war, not in its Cold War state of mind.

Meanwhile, Irwin Shaw and Robert Capa's *Report on Israel* is advertised as "a superb example of modern journalism" (RI book cover), penetrating deep beneath the surface of events. Alex Kershaw, Capa's biographer, contends, "The book was Capa's most successful collaboration with a writer, far superior to *A Russian Journal*. Shaw's lyrical analysis and Capa's deeply sympathetic portraits combined to produce reportage of the highest caliber" (210). While the methodology applied by Steinbeck in dealing with the unpolitical reality of Soviet Russia was rejected by the writer-cameraman team in Israel, there are similar patterns in their coverage.

Like the Russian book project, *Report on Israel* is a joint work of two unusually perceptive observers. Here again, text and pictures make their own commentary. The velocity of events in Israel, celebrating the first anniversary of its nationhood in May 1949, made it nearly impossible for Shaw and Capa to avoid political issues. The two journalists arrived on separate assignments exactly a year after Great Britain had decided to remove all its troops from the Middle East, and the United Nations, eager to give Jews a refuge following Hitler's persecutions, endorsed the creation of the state of Israel. The newborn country was invaded by several surrounding Arab nations the day the British left. The attack was unsuccessful despite numerical superiority, and the United Nations' mediators were able to bring about

a shaky truce that confirmed Israel's existence in May 1948. Months earlier, when Steinbeck and Capa indulged themselves in the explorations of everyday lives of the Russian people, Israel was enjoying the Soviet-American consensus: the United Nations decided on the partition of Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish state on November 29, 1947. This rare occasion of agreement of the two superpowers during the Cold War was subsequently interrupted by a Russian delegate to the United Nations, Andrei Vishinsky. His address before the General Assembly a year later testified to the global range of the Cold War, and consisted of a lengthy denunciation of the policies of the Global Powers, accusing them of interfering with democracy and peace in Korea, Greece, and Palestine as well as harming Europe's economy with the Marshall Plan. He said, "After the termination of the recent war, the Government of the United States has changed its foreign policy: from a policy of fighting against aggressive forces, the United States has passed over to a policy of expansion [...]. Such a policy is inciting the psychosis of war, sowing restlessness and fear among the broad masses which strive for peace and peaceful creative labor" (qtd. in Chambers et al. 1073). The Cold War reached a new level of intensity. Immersed in the new uneasy reality, Shaw and Capa took up a delicate task, reporting on labyrinths of war in the newly emerging state in the Middle East. *Report on Israel* is a powerful depiction of four wars at a crossroads: the Second World War, the Cold War, the war for independence and a personal war.

In the stories of Irwin Shaw's Tel Aviv interviewees there are no easily perceptible affinities with either Americans or Russian Communists. Both possess vices and virtues, and neither is considered a good alternative to Israel's self-sufficiency. In his descriptions of the busy life of "the unbeautiful coastal city" (RI 34), Shaw describes the brusque confidence of the Israeli:

In some cases, [...] visiting American businessmen and engineers have encountered considerable stubbornness when they have tried to be helpful [...]. Sometimes, though, there is a reason for Israeli stubbornness, but it must be searched out. American architects, appraising the climate and the California-like sweep of the scenery, have tried to get the local builders to put large windows in their houses. But the Israeli builders [...] insist upon putting narrow, inaccessible windows in the new houses. There is the matter of the sun, which burns more fiercely and brightly here than in California, but it may also be that memory of years living in a land where a man sitting behind a wide window made an excellent target for a sniper's bullet cannot be erased overnight (RI 46).

Where the architecture of the cultural and commercial capital of the state, as well as the kibbutz areas, follows the dictates of war, the everyday conversations engage in similar patterns from which self-pity is surprisingly absent and political inclinations vary domineeringly, depending on individual experiences from the not-so by-gone past. Shaw writes:

In Israel, a state sprung from the massacre of six million Jews and the desperate action of a small, poorly prepared, and ill-equipped army, tragedy and heroism are common-places and are spoken of in flat, routine tones. Everybody has escaped the gas chamber by a half hour or heard mortar shells drop outside his windows for days at a time. The German pogrom in Europe has bereft every newly arrived family, and the young men of the land have in childhood fought strange engagements in the desert and behind the

mud walls of Arab villages [...]. Death sits at every café table and modifies every conversation (RI 38-39).

The following pages of the travelogue make up a complex anthology of incredible adventures of the recently arrived in Jerusalem and Galilee, and present a wide spectrum of political preferences which are rooted in the past rather than reflecting Cold War apprehensions. Shaw's understandings of war, violence, victimhood, vengeance, and the difficult promise of peace are expressed in the story of a Berliner with a concentration camp number tattooed on his arm, showing his fondness for the Russians who "on the day of liberation, had rounded up seven hundred and fifty German soldiers and ordered them to run five kilometers to a prisoner-of-war cage. Those who lagged were shot on the road" (RI 40). The subsequent passage of the narrative reports on the bitterness against the Russians of "a delicately pretty Polish girl," a victim of a labor camp in Siberia, who is "strongly pro-British, believing them to be the most civilized of peoples (she lumps the native-born Jews and all American immigrants together as being coarse, unmannerly, and materialistic)" (RI 40). Similarly to Steinbeck, who masks his political leanings behind journalistic objectivity, Shaw does not comment on the justness of such views. Yet, unlike Steinbeck, he is unafraid to supplement some of his stories with undisguised partisanship. Occasionally, Shaw's etiquette of neutrality abandons him, and his comments on East Europeans "fleeing from the memory of agony [...]" and the capricious threats of life in the countries under Soviet dominance" (RI 88), or "a lively Communist faction [which] was shrewdly exploiting [the unemployment in Haifa]" (RI 115), or an Arab member of the Knesset, the Israeli Parliament, "loyally cocking [his] ears toward Moscow" (RI 47), or the Iron Curtain countries "showing an increasing enmity toward Zionism" (RI 36) all made him an easy target for propagandistic reviews unraveling his "literary decline" in the works following *The Young Lions* and his "socially conscious" tales of the 1930s, all much embraced by literary circles of the left. Dedicated to his work as an objective observer more than a political commentator, Shaw cites instances of "considerable mild friendliness" (RI 87) between Israeli and Arab commanders, the anti-Semitic calculations of both East and West as well as the harsh living conditions of Palestinian refugees and Israeli nationals alike. However, such recognitions of bipartisan truths do not make it easier for Shaw to get out of the quandary. Overwhelmed with hundreds of stories told by exiles populating the new land in thousands, speaking fifteen languages, representing divergent systems of culture and escaping various kinds of oppression, Shaw concludes that the massive immigration of Jews from the diaspora "loom[s] as a huge, dark puzzle for a nation rich in puzzles" (RI 33).

Just as *A Russian Journal* is an incomplete picture of early Cold War Russia, Shaw's account is not a definitive study. A broad influx of stories makes the report an endless work-in-progress. With his literary focus, the author is able to note, "No book could be up-to-date about Israel. Crisis follows crisis there week after week" (RI 7). Dependent on unstable political alliances, the country's infant period is a time of confusion, where "peace [...]" has turned out to be almost as menacing as war and perhaps even more exhausting" (RI 6-7). The writer imposes upon himself and Capa the role of "chroniclers of confusion" (RI 7), scolding other modern journalists for their nonchalance, overconfidence and self-imposed omniscience. He gives full vent to his sense of the trade, going from general statements to specifics:

When we hear the tone of certainty in a writer's voice today, we have a tendency, with good reason, to mistrust him. We sense ignorance, propaganda, or the desire to deceive us into the belief that the world is simpler than it is. Palestine has certain advantages for the journalist. [...] It has been a subject of violent interest to the world for twenty-five hundred years, and it is a small place and the confusion is at least concentrated there. Its confusion also has the dramatic virtue of being crucial to its inhabitants [...]. Nothing is safe [...]. In a mortal experiment they play all the roles (RI 7-8).

A seemingly vague statement, Shaw's assessment is not alienated from accuracy. Israel's policy of non-identification in the early Cold War period was expressed by the country's first prime minister. Speaking before the Provisional State Council on September 27, 1948, when the war with the Arabs was still in progress, David Ben-Gurion explained the rationale behind the principle of non-identification with either of the contending blocs in the emergent Cold War: "We have friends both in the East and in the West [...]. There is no identification between a small and a big nation, except if the small nation completely subordinates itself, or if the big nation is composed entirely of angels. We do not want to subordinate ourselves to anyone, and we do not believe that angels rule anywhere" (Shlaim 659). This, however, did not bring about a viable solution in the post-independent period and, following the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 as well as other external circumstances, Israel's nonalignment was soon abandoned in favor of explicit identification with the West.

Just as two schools of thought were competing for control over Israel's foreign policy (pro-East or pro-West leanings in global diplomacy and retaliation or negotiation in the conflict with the Arabs), the rhetoric of Robert Capa's photo-narratives shows a radiant internal struggle. A Jewish veteran of the Second World War and a passionate idealist, Capa photographed the birth of a Jewish homeland and the resultant war for independence with personal involvement. He referred to the war of 1948, which he covered a year before his second trip to Israel with Irwin Shaw, as "a personal war" (Kershaw 202). It was here amid the fighting of the Negev (of the Haganah and Irgunists) over an illegal shipment of weapons aboard the ship *Altalena* that Capa's motto was realized: "If your pictures are no good, you aren't close enough." When he was wounded, he quipped, according to Irwin Shaw, "That would be the final insult – being killed by the Jews!" (qtd. in Kershaw 207). Capa's unsurpassed images, often shot from under sniper fire, provide the most lyrical and dynamic coverage of an unquiet region. When, in 1948, the international audience was more tuned to peacetime, Capa brought them a rude awakening. The editors of *Illustrated*, which featured more than twenty of Capa's photographs, announced that "Capa and his cameras have captured the atmosphere of the Holy Land War, the misery of death, the peril that comes from a sniper's bullet. Robert Capa [had] found another war" (Kershaw 203). In his in-depth survey of Capa's finest work, *The Definitive Collection*, Richard Whelan ascertains that the Hungarian-born journalist, many of whose relatives had been victims of the Nazi Holocaust, took a strong personal interest in the foundation of Israel and even considered settling there himself (467).

Understandably, many critics remarked on the decline of Capa's reportorial objectivity in what came to be his "personal war." Capa's narrative reveals a consistent rhetorical viewpoint. Noticeably, his photographic artistry is evident in shots from

which "joy radiates from faces, young and old" (Kershaw 211n), which show more consideration to the Israeli pioneers than the landless Palestinian refugees. In fact, the competitive approach to better verbal and pictorial representations of "truth" led both artists astray. The weakness of *Report on Israel* is in Shaw's scarce attempts at being more considerate to the Palestinian diaspora and Capa's intimate photo essays mythologizing his ancestors, the Israeli, whose civilized soldier-pioneer-defender look is measured against the Arab desert-dwelling nomad-aggressor image. Following hints from the authors of "Vision of a New State," the pattern of misrepresenting Arabs in Capa's pictures seems consistent. The Jewish perspective on the war and thus Capa's pro-Israel stance is implied in the captions of the July 3, 1948 issue of *Illustrated*, wherein Capa refers to the Jews as the "defenders," suggesting which faction is the victim and which the aggressor (Mendelson and Smith 197). Generally, as Mendelson and Smith disclose abundantly, Capa's photo stories argue in favor of the new state, glorifying the Israeli efforts in settling, or rather reclaiming, the land. In all fairness, as Kershaw explains, it should be pointed out that all correspondents were expected to be cheerleaders for the Israeli cause if reporting from the Jewish side. Also, Israeli citizens were more eager to pose for pictures, and Capa was prevented from venturing into the Arab-controlled areas bordering Jerusalem and other cities because of the perils his Jewish ancestry might cause for him (Kershaw 211). Whether this justifies the lack of the Arab presence in the story is left for the reader to decide.

Perhaps the most moving depiction of the "siege mentality" is the photograph "Lunch and memory" (RI 142), which records a row of men bent over their midday meal, all situated against a wall marked with holes in the shell-shocked kibbutz Negba. The picture competes with Irwin Shaw's recognition of similar decorative patterns in the marks the Arab-Israeli war left behind. Where Capa's lens scrutinizes artillery-battered homesteads, Shaw speaks of the "streets [...] marked with the pretty, flowerlike design of explosions" (RI 84), or "an air of impoverished innocence about the deserted town[s]" (RI 123). Not surprisingly, both authors experience difficulty in distinguishing between war and beauty. Shaw's reports from Galilee are especially graceful and impressionistic. He shows his recognition of the mysterious spirit of the place which sustains its image of a beautiful war zone, a contradiction in terms. With a poet's eye for concrete detail, Shaw shares his final comments on the troublesome neighborhood of Arab and Israeli existence:

To the north rise the Lebanese hills, framing a landscape of olive and orange groves, and of green fields cut into formal patterns by rows of blackish-green cypress trees. The air is clear and cool and mountainlike, and in the distance, to the west, the Mediterranean gleams in the sunlight. The temporary buildings of the *kibbutz* were of the usual wooden prefabricated type, making the place look a little like an Army camp, except for a new rose garden here and there [...]. Not far away, the ruins of the former Arab village of Kabri, reduced in the fighting, caught the light of the settling sun [...]. Except for little scurrying green lizards, flickering off the path among the rocks, there was no life visible in Kabri. A mosque, opened by artillery fire, gaped to the sky, a portion of a dome, painted a delicate blue, projecting sorrowfully up against the evening light. Any place where men have lived and where they no longer live is sad, but it was so easy to image the crowded, noisy, simple life of the tiny village that its present silent ruin was doubly oppressive (RI 121-123).

To conclude, despite easily sensed deceptions: shooting scenes at carefully approved locations, half-controlled communication and the peripheral presence of the Cold War in *A Russian Journal*, as well as the underrepresentation of the Arab exiles and the threads of personal involvement in *Report on Israel*, both works escape the easy label of "propaganda piece." The spirit behind these narratives is a reminder of the postwar era's instability and the human dimension of political changes. Both literary perspectives, unknown to a wider audience, serve as unique historical documents and valuable illustrations of the postwar profiles of countries and cultures swinging between war and peace.

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