

Stayin' Alive in the Cold War: Disco and Generational, Racial, and Ideological Currents in the 1970s-1980s

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The Cold War is often defined by the political and economic conflicts between the Soviet Union and the United States in the post-Second World War era, with scholarship centering on the motivations of such historical titans as Truman, Stalin, Kennedy, and Gorbachev. This is understandable, as history is characterized by the major decisions of leaders who looked out, as realists would suggest, for the people's own self interest. This portrayal of history, however, is a limited scope of the past. Popular culture, for instance, has the ability to offer insights into the societies it seeks to entertain and influence and, although superficially appearing to be only an apolitical aspect of society, popular culture can often become an inherently political tool.

The Cold War era was vast, lasting a half-century and affecting every aspect of the various nations involved. Moreover, that half-century included within it various cultural transitions that arguably indirectly affected the Cold War experience. The emergence of the musical genre of disco captivated the American public in the mid- to late 1970s, with recent scholarship focusing on the genre's impact on American gay, black, and Hispanic populations (see *Echols*, [Hot Stuff](#)). Playing such a large role in popular culture in the United States, disco was destined to have to have some impact on the Cold War world and, seen here through such figures as Soviet youth, African musicians, and the Olympics games, the genre did indeed reflect generational, racial, and ideological struggles in the 1970s and 1980s.

Disco and the Generational Divide

The Soviet Union in the 1970s was faced with the emergence of the musically revolutionary 1960s in the United States. The Soviet government was fearful of the emergence of rock 'n' roll in the USSR, as evidenced by the Soviet Ministry of Culture's establishment of guidelines for public creation of rock bands, which also outlined the length of band member's hair and the volume of their music.¹ Despite Soviet regulation, by the late 1960s these state-certified rock bands began performing Russian language versions of popular Western pop music, most notably from the Beatles.² Beatlemania caused Komsomols, Soviet youth political bodies responsible for propaganda education, to shut down concerts in Moscow featuring Beatles music, suggesting the limits of Soviet attempts at cultural isolationism.³

Discotheques, known as *tantsploshchadka*, became a staple of entertainment in the 1970s Soviet Union. The Komsomols had attempted to use popular music as a propaganda tool since the late 1960s. A café at Moscow University served as the first location where the Komsomols invited students to a "listening hour" which focused on Soviet propaganda, followed by three hours of "dancing hours," where youth were allowed to engage in disco and social interaction. Formal disco clubs subsequently opened throughout the Soviet Union in the early 1970s, solidifying their venue for the Komsomol to launch an "official ideological campaign."⁴ From the café in Moscow University to the emergence of formal disco sites, Soviet officials saw disco as something not to be feared, unlike rock 'n' roll. Disco did not appear to dramatically alter Soviet youth. The disco image, immortalized in films like 1977's *Saturday Night Fever*, was drastically different from the rock image of the 1960s American counterculture or the punk era. Rather, men wore fine suits and short, styled hair, a more appropriate image for Soviet officials.⁵

The Soviet Union's Komsomols were determined to make disco music a tool of ideological propaganda. In 1981, a national conference was held to encourage local Komsomols to open up new disco clubs, with the conference even offering advice on the types of equipment needed and how to properly train deejays. Disco was not expressively political, like Bob Dylan of the American folk revival. Rather, Soviet officials saw disco as a way to deal with dissatisfied youth, citing increases in the national crime, drinking, and divorce rates.⁶ Growing boredom among youth in the Soviet Union was considered a rising problem. "It's hard to find good rock records here. It's hard to find interesting books. Movies are boring. TV is boring. The newspapers are boring and don't tell the truth. There's hardly any excitement in our lives," said

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¹Timothy W. Ryback, "The Soviet Rock Scene, 1970-1979," In *Rock around the Bloc: A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 150.

²Hendrick Smith, "Soviet Rock Musical Taps 'Jesus Christ Superstar' Tunes" *New York Times*, November 6, 1974

³Ryback, "The Soviet Rock Scene," 64.

⁴Sergei Zhuk. "Chapter 12, in *Rock and roll in the Rocket City: the West, identity, and ideology in Soviet Dnepropetrovsk, 1960-1985*, (Washington, D.C: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2010), 215-216.

⁵Ryback, "The Soviet Rock Scene," 159.

⁶Jim Gallagher, "Soviets use disco to limit discontent," *Chicago Tribune*, May 17, 1981.

a Moscow teenager in 1981.⁷

It should be noted that while Soviet officials approved of disco's rise in popularity, they supported the playing of Soviet artists rather than the disco hits of Donna Summer and the Bee Gees from the United States. Rather, Soviet artists were supposed to become headliners to compete with western musical powerhouses.⁸ Western disco was not banned, however, in the Soviet Union, proving too popular to contain even within the state-run Soviet record label "Melodiya". Melodiya began to release Western disco albums without requiring that a Soviet album be released in the United States and Europe: a usual prerequisite before release.⁹

Disco's growing popularity in the Eastern bloc and the Soviet government's manipulation of the genre for ideological promotion reflects the political power of music in the late 1970s. Embracing disco, the Soviet Union officially invited the disco group Boney M to perform a ten concert tour of the communist nation in 1978, one of the few foreign bands to have been allowed into the country until then. A disco group largely ignored in the United States, Boney M was a mixed-race group of West German origin, consisting of four black members.¹⁰ The group's performance did not go without any censorship, with Soviet officials prohibiting the group's main anthem, ironically titled *Rasputin* (alluding to the last Czarina's mysterious spiritual counsel).¹¹ Boney M was also prohibited from being "too sexy," as the group's first 1976 hit single "Daddy Cool" was often performed with a number of instances of female moaning.¹² Such a ban seemed to limit part of Boney M's appeal as a disco group. "The erotic element [of Boney M] accounts for 50 per cent of their success," Boney M's producer Frank Farian describes.¹³

Boney M's 1978 Soviet tour solidified the Soviet's commitment to harnessing disco as an ideological tool. Some spectators noted the tour offered a relief to their normal, dissatisfying life in Soviet society, with one Russian general noting that, despite not being interested in the disco group, he attended "since it's a big social event I had to come."¹⁴ Others noted "it's not really great music, but it's quite a show," and there were reports of unlucky ticketless citizens experiencing sickness at the idea of not being able to attend the concerts.¹⁵ Soviet youth's obsession with disco is seen here as not a love of the actual music itself, but rather as an escape from what appears to be a mundane societal life and a yearning for a more hedonistic, leisurely culture. This obsession is one that British sociologist Richard Hoggart would regard as youthful "barbarism," a culture that would be ideologically susceptible to the "machine" of globalization and dominated by mass markets, and a society that Hilary Pilkington would assess in a review of Russian youth as obsessed with "the neon lights of America."¹⁶

Similar to the Komsomol's control of discos in the Soviet Union, the Communist party in the People's Republic of China also embraced disco after the genre's fall from popularity in the mid 1980s. Although banned during Chairman Mao's culture revolution in the late 1960s, dance was being embraced by the 1980s, mainly due to the fact that the music was a way to gain favor with Chinese youth and that the Chinese government saw disco dancing as an African folk dance. "My daughter taught me how to dance the disco. I feel it's good for the health of old people, just like doing the *tai ji quan* [a kind of traditional shadow boxing] and *he xiang gong* [a kind of breathing exercise done while imitating the motions of a flying crane]... disco is an African folk dance," one elderly Chinese veteran remarked.¹⁷ Disco in communist China transcended generational barriers, much as it had in the United States in the late 1970s. Bill Wardlow, a Billboard Magazine writer commented, "There are teen discos, even kiddie discos with soft drinks and senior citizen discos. The music hasn't divided parents and children, as previous popular music did."¹⁸ Disco was being heavily accepted by older Chinese, because it was, "more civilized [for the seniors], because you don't have to touch each other" one young Chinese worker noted.¹⁹ By 1985, dance lessons became compulsory for workers throughout China and not to the dismay of some Chinese youth; some Guangzhou youth complained that, "one or two dances a week was simply not enough."²⁰

⁷ Jim Gallagher, "Russia's young rebels," *Chicago Tribune*, November 21, 1982.

⁸ Gallagher, "Soviets use disco to limit discontent,»

⁹ Ryback, "The Soviet Rock Scene," 160.

¹⁰ Yarden Arar, "Sound: Europe's Boney M takes aim at the U.S.," *Chicago Tribune*, August 17, 1980.

¹¹ Ryback, "The Soviet Rock Scene," 161.

¹² Dan Fisher, "Boney M: Pop goes to the Proletariat," *Los Angeles Times*, December 15, 1978 and YouTube, "Boney M – Daddy Cool," Youtube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E5gNYVia2rg&feature=BF&list=QL&index=2> (accessed February 20, 2011).

¹³ Alice Siegert, "Black is beautiful music to German ears," *Chicago Tribune*, June 29, 1977.

¹⁴ Fisher, "Boney M."

¹⁵ Craig R Whitney, "Western Disco group is rocking Moscow," *New York Times*, December 10, 1978.

¹⁶ Hilary Pilkington, "Understanding youth culture in the West," in *Russia's Youth and its Culture: A Nation's Constructors and Constructed* London: Routledge, 1994), 19-20.

¹⁷ Daniel Southerland, "Saturday night fever in Peking," *Washington Post*, April 29, 1985.

¹⁸ Alexander Auerbach, "Industry boom," *Los Angeles Times*, February 21, 1979.

¹⁹ Jim Mann, "'Ready to Boogie': Pop music: China picks up the beat incomplete source," *Los Angeles Times*, February 15, 1985.

²⁰ "Rock music finally cracks China's cultural wall," *New York Times*, February 26, 1985.

The political implications of allowing disco music and dancing for communist China were tremendous. Chairman Mao's Cultural Revolution tightly restricted social behavior in the country, and any hint of democracy or "mass participation [could] easily lead to chaos."²¹ Once deemed by a Chinese anti-western propaganda musical guidebook as, "decadent" and causing "rapid and continuous leaping and twisting,"²² disco's embrace in the mid 1980s was not expected. As one Chinese defector remarked in 1985, "Before, the party organization wanted to control everything, including the people's use of their free time [...] To tolerate disco means losing a little control."²³ China's acceptance of disco was not overlooked abroad. In a letter to the *Los Angeles Times* in 1979, Albert King correctly predicted that if China were to embrace capitalism and western values, such an action would inevitably bring about the acceptance of Western cultural trends, such as "rock 'n' roll, disco dancing, or evangelism."²⁴ Indeed, disco allowed western pop culture, and indirectly western ideology, to seep into the once-tightly controlled communist China.

Race in the Disco Era

The Soviet Union's invitation to Boney M also highlighted race as a prominent theme in the Cold War of the 1970s. The role of music in the Cold War is predominantly discussed in academic scholarship with respect to jazz's, not disco's, rise in the first half of the twentieth century. The United States' State Department sponsored such well-known jazz musicians as Dizzy Gillespie and Louis Armstrong to tour "Near and Far East" nations, such as Turkey and Afghanistan, as well as East European nations like Poland in 1958.²⁵ Pianist Dave Brubeck noted that his 1958 State Department-sanctioned tour of Europe was "making a circle around the Soviet Union," a nod suggesting that even the musicians of the American tours understood the ideological implications of their performances.²⁶ In 1962, clarinetist Benny Goodman would be the first American jazz musician to tour the Soviet Union. Soviet Premier Khrushchev was quoted as saying he was "very pleased and delighted to be at the concert" despite American disappointment that Khrushchev's appearance at the concert "dampened the enthusiasm" of the youthful Soviet audience.²⁷

The American government had some trouble with using jazz musicians as ideological tools in the Cold War, however. Notably, African American musicians saw the American government's treatment of blacks in their own country as deplorable. Louis Armstrong canceled his State Department-sanctioned 1957 Soviet Union tour because of the Federal government's response to Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus's opposition to the racial integration of Little Rock's public schools. Armstrong contended, "The way [the United States] are treating my people in the South, the [US] Government can go to hell," later saying that if he did tour the Soviet Union, Armstrong would "do it on [his] own."²⁸

Furthermore, images of racial persecution in Alabama and elsewhere in the South were, by 1963, widely covered in the international press.²⁹ Soviet propaganda posters depicted the United State's message of liberalism as hypocritical in regards to American treatment of blacks, suggesting that America, and therefore American capitalism, fostered intolerance and hatred.³⁰ This negative press solidified American civil rights legislation in the mid 1960s. By the end of the 1960s, however, the Cold War had little effect in encouraging greater calls for civil rights in the United States. Calls for civil rights reform were limited to the view of formal legislative equality and not of the broader inequalities of America's political and economic systems. As legal historian Mary Dudziak contends, "Racism might be an international embarrassment. Class-based inequality, however, was a feature of capitalism,"³¹ and therefore would eventually cease to be an effective marketing topic to Soviet critics.

While race was a central theme of America's turbulent experience in the 1960s, the 1970s and the disco era did not, by any means, see race lose prominence. The Carter administration struggled to contain communism in Africa, and thus aggressively pushed for a "majority rule" policy in white supremacist states such as South Africa, Namibia, and Rhodesia. The Carter administration saw this empowerment of majority African populations as a way to divert communist revolutions on the continent.³² With the emergence of civil rights in the 1960s, Africans Americans gained more political

²¹ Timothy Cheek, "Reform: Mao is dead, long live Mao!" in *Living with Reform China since 1989*, (New York: Zed Books, 2006), 55.

²² Jonathan Broder, "China music 'critics' rip bourgeois boogie: China," *Chicago Tribune*, February 20, 1983.

²³ Southerland, "Saturday night fever in Peking."

²⁴ Albert King, "Capitalism in China: Can disco be far behind?" *Los Angeles Times*, November 25, 1979.

²⁵ Stephen A. Crist, "Jazz as Democracy? Dave Brubeck and Cold War Politic," *The Journal of Musicology*, 26, no. 2, (Spring, 2009), 133-174.

²⁶ Crist, "Jazz as Democracy?," 133-174.

²⁷ Penny M. Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 108.

²⁸ "Louis Armstrong, "Barring Soviet Tour, denounces Eisenhower and Gov. Faubus," *New York Times*, September 19, 1957.

²⁹ Mary L. Dudziak, "Losing Control of Camelot," in *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 176.

³⁰ For example, see "Freedom, American style," 1950, by Nikolay Dolgorukov and Boris Efimov.

³¹ Mary L. Dudziak, Conclusion, to *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 252.

³² Thomas Borstelmann, "The End of the Cold War and White Supremacy" in *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 253.

clout than ever before, and thus more lobbying power in regards to issues of their interests, especially involving American foreign policy towards Africa. In 1977, Carter nominated Andrew Young to become the first African American Permanent Representative to the United Nations, a position bestowed upon a man who helped bring Carter nearly ninety-four percent of the African American vote in the president's election.³³

Carter's interest in African sovereignty and his symbolic embrace of civil rights further limited Soviet criticism of American racial inequalities beyond Dudziak's assertions. Disco, the largest selling musical genre throughout Carter's presidency, saw race as a prominent issue. Despite the obvious fact that some of the most popular American disco stars, like Gloria Gaynor and Donna Summer, were African Americans, race played a factor in attempting to downplay America's growing image of tolerance. The Soviet Union's choice of Boney M for a tour of Russia in 1978 was suspected of being racially driven. Band member Liz Mitchell noted that she "heard from a Jamaican official that we may have been chosen because we were black. He said there were rumors that Russians might bring over Bob Marley because of the racial thing," suggesting that the Soviet Union was hoping to create an image of racial tolerance and, as the *New York Times* reported, to "demonstrate its racial liberalism."³⁴ If such an assertion is correct, music can be seen here as a clear tool in the Cold War, one used to positively bolster the Soviet Union's image in both the domestic and international stages.

Despite Soviet hopes that Boney M would serve as evidence of national tolerance, sociologist Hilary Pilkington notes that racism was not only highly prominent in the Soviet Union, but was also viewed as a sign of higher social stature among Soviet youth. She discovered that people of non-Slavic descent were often referred to as "Soviet blacks" or "our blacks" by Soviet youth,³⁵ with Soviet youth seeing racial discrimination as an almost Western custom and thus a pathway toward a more liberal identity. Pilkington's analysis displays the limits of the Soviet ideological campaign message of racial acceptance and suggests the Soviet image of racial harmony was little more than a façade. Boney M may have been selected for a tour of the Soviet based on the band's race. Nevertheless, their selection was one symbolic on the systemic, international level, not one to improve racial tensions in the Soviet Union internally.

Disco also played a role in race relations in African nations on the Carter administration's radar. In South Africa's largest city, Johannesburg, multiracial disco clubs were rapidly established despite apartheid polices, such as a liquor ban on clubs that served more than one race and the taboo practice of multiracial dancing. Many of these clubs were Americana-themed, with names like "Club New York City" and "San Francisco" and interior decorations of American icons like replicas of the Statue of Liberty. One club owner of a multiracial club noted, "We are interested in attracting many more Afrikaners (white South Africans), especially the young ones. If we could get them to come in significant number and they could see how we get along, then they would see they have nothing to fear when blacks get into power."³⁶

By the late 1970s, white controlled South Africa was becoming surrounded by recently liberated, black ruled nations. Once a loyal ally to the United States, white controlled South Africa feared United States President Carter's campaign promises of human rights would threaten their stability. Ian Smith, the South African foreign minister, pessimistically predicted, "Carter will put the screws on us."³⁷ President Carter, however, would avoid formally sanctioning South Africa in the late 1970s, agreeing with Andrew Young's assertion that U.S. corporations in the apartheid nation fostered models of racial tolerance, with Carter noting that "South Africa is like the South fifteen years ago."³⁸ Carter suggested that, as evidenced by disco's apolitical ability to bring black and white South Africans together in multiracial clubs, South Africa's problems could be altered within its own borders, swayed only by American music and symbolic ideology.

Olympic Disco

By 1978, the same year West German disco icon Boney M toured the Soviet Union, the musical genre of disco was being embraced by Soviet officials. Later that year, the Soviets purchased \$40 million dollars in disco sound equipment to serve the over 400 disco clubs established in the Soviet Union by 1978.³⁹ Disco clubs could now financially operate separately while still under the authority of the local city governments. By 1979, Komsomol-sponsored disco nights were generating large profits from admission to the disco clubs alone.⁴⁰

Despite growing popularity in the Soviet Union, disco faced its critics in the Soviet press. Genrickh Borovik, a Soviet journalist, wrote that Studio 54 was only attended by "a privileged few," with patrons usually experiencing "glit-

³³ Thomas Borstelmann, "The End of the Cold War and White Supremacy," 250 and Sue Onslow, "Terrorists or freedom fighters?" in *Cold War in Southern Africa: White Power, Black Liberation*, (London: Routledge, 2009), 179.

³⁴ Dennis Hunt, "When Boney M. rocked in Russia," *Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 1979.

³⁵ Hilary Pilkington, *Russia's Youth and its Culture: A Nation's Constructors and Constructed* (London: Routledge, 1994), 255.

³⁶ Caryle Murphy, "Multiracial disco-nightclubs flourish in Johannesburg," *Washington Post*, July 26, 1978.

³⁷ Onslow, "Terrorists or freedom fighters?," 179.

³⁸ Borstelmann, "The End of the Cold War and White Supremacy," 255.

³⁹ "Decadence in Russia?" *Chicago Tribune*, September 4, 1978.

⁴⁰ Zhuk. "Chapter 12," 229

tering, noisy and nonstop loneliness.”⁴¹ Borovik noted that Studio 54’s drinks were severely overpriced, making up the “financial basis” of the club.⁴² *The Los Angeles Times* responded by describing how not only did Moscow’s main disco clubs only attract Soviet elites, but also maintained a strict 10:00 p.m. curfew and served only nonalcoholic drinks. This claim, however, is debated, since Zhuk claims that many disco clubs served alcohol by 1983, which increased their profits by over “5,000 rubles every week.”⁴³

With the popularity of disco rising, the Soviet Union, “of all people,”⁴⁴ the American newspaper *Chicago Tribune* would emphasize, decided to include a discotheque in the center of its Olympic Village in Moscow to be used for the upcoming Olympics in 1980. On March 21, 1980, just four months before the opening ceremonies, President Carter announced that the United States would boycott the games, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Some of America’s allies reluctantly joined Carter’s boycott, notably Canada, Japan, and West Germany.⁴⁵ Carter stipulated that the US boycott was “preserving the principles and the quality of the Olympics.”⁴⁶ The Olympic Charter, the compilation of the principles and bylaws of the Olympic movement, states that “any form of discrimination with regard to a country or a person on grounds of [...], politics [...] is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement.”⁴⁷ The Cold War inevitably forced such apolitically aimed institutions, like music and sport, to plunge into the ideological struggle.

With most of Western Europe still attending the games in Moscow, Cold War ideological tensions remained. Despite compliments by athletes regarding the spacious living quarters in the Olympic Village and imported Western services, like twenty-four-hour restaurants, most athletes’ responses to the games were negative.⁴⁸ Athletes cited rude security guards at the Olympic Village along with the general feeling of Moscow not being a lively place. As said by one Mexican athlete regarding the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City, “We gave our hearts to the people who came. There was an open social life. Here [Moscow] that is not true. Here, I see too many police. In the stadium when I stopped to exchanged pins with other athletes, five or six people came together and immediately the police came to watch what we’re doing.”⁴⁹ During the Moscow Olympics, travel into the capital city by other Soviet citizens living elsewhere was forbidden. Since over two million non-Muscovites entered the city daily, many of Moscow’s shops, stores, and general city life remained oddly emptied.⁵⁰

Like feelings among Russian youth in the late 1970s, boredom was also cited as a chief complaint among Western athletes, many of whose events, like swimming, were completed early on during the two-week tournament. The Olympic Village’s disco floor seemed a likely gathering place for the bored athletes. The tightly guarded Olympic Village was the site of a food fight following the Soviet authorities’ closing of the Village’s disco floor at 11:00 p.m. “The music stopped and everyone wanted to keep dancing,” a Mexican diver recalled.⁵¹ While there were conflicting reports on the food fight riot, some witnesses reported the crowd being so upset at the close of the disco that the disgruntled patrons began chanting “Liberate Afghanistan” to anger Soviet officials.⁵² That the lack of disco caused such furious, politically-induced language suggests that disco held a more powerful place than simple leisure. Disco, and the freedom to dance later than the state-regulated time, were representative of abstract Western values to the rioting athletes. Because the Cold War began to bleed into the worlds of sport and leisure, as it had with the after-hours disco ban, athletes felt free to show retribution in the form of active political and verbal protest.

The irritated athletes, mostly from Western nations like Great Britain and Australia, noted that the disco floor was the place to “blow off steam,” not the other Soviet arranged entertainment like ballets, tours of farms and schools, and circuses. “God, there isn’t even a way to blow it all out after your events are over,” remarked one Australian.⁵³ Disco provided a means for escape for western athletes. Without this seemingly relaxing leisure activity, Soviet officials would face not only systemic acts of ideological defiance, like the United States-led boycott, but also grassroots opposition over a seemingly harmless, apolitical entity like dance music.

⁴¹ “Dreams of fame and money: Discos thrive on illusions, Soviet says,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 19, 1978.

⁴² Borovik, “Mass Culture ‘78: Disco-Trance,” 9-10

⁴³ Zhuk, “Chapter 12,” 229

⁴⁴ “Russian rhythm,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 2, 1979

⁴⁵ Allen Guttmann, “The Cold War and the Olympics,” *International Journal*, 43, no. 4, Sport in World Politics (Autumn, 1988), 554-568.

⁴⁶ Frank Litsky, “Carter, in plea to athletes, is firm on Olympic ban: Final decision by May 24 Carter firm on Olympic boycott question posed by athlete willing to sacrifice,” *New York Times*, March 22, 1980.

⁴⁷ International Olympic Committee, “Olympic Charter,” <http://www.olympic.org/olympic-charter/documents-reports-studies-publications> (accessed February 24, 2011).

⁴⁸ Barry Lorge Washington, “The beat goes on in high-rise life of the Olympic Village,” *Washington Post*, July 20, 1980.

⁴⁹ Jim Gallagher, “Boredom has Olympians jumping,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 30, 1980.

⁵⁰ Artemy Troitsky, *Back in the USSR: The True Story of Rock in Russia*, (Boston: Faber and Faber), 6.

⁵¹ “Bored Athletes Go on Rampage at Russ Disco,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 28, 1980.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Gallagher, “Boredom has Olympians jumping.”

Conclusion

By the late 1970s, disco fever began to fade in the United States, partly due to brewing homophobic and racist elements from those who felt the genre was not true rock 'n' roll.⁵⁴ By late 1983, Soviet authorities had closed prominent disco clubs erected for the 1980 Olympic games like the Resonance and the Bluebird, and had banned dancing and all non-Soviet approved music at many other of Moscow's surviving discotheques.⁵⁵ Soviet government official Konstantin Chernenko expressed that western music was "part of an arsenal of subversive weapons aimed at undermining the commitment of young Russians to the Communist ideology."⁵⁶ In communist China, disco seemed to be a part of the nation's open door policy. Despite a requirement that individuals' western music be screened by Chinese authorities, by 1986 under Premier Deng Xiaping, China became ever more relaxed towards former disco artists like Michael Jackson.⁵⁷

Whether it is in China or South Africa, disco's implications of the Cold War in the 1970s stem from the genre's ability to encapsulate and represent western pop culture and ideology. This caused a struggle from not only communist states but also proxy states that both the East and West competed against for influence. Disco's relationship to dancing and capability to continue rock n roll's appeal prominently to youth challenged the post 1960s era of activism and cultural battles in the United States and the Cold War world.

Disco was a musical form not as threatening as Western rock or jazz. In fact, quite the opposite is true, as seen with Soviet and Chinese officials using the genre as a way to expand ideology to susceptible youthful audiences. Dancing was attractive to young and old persons who felt, as the disgruntled Olympians felt in 1980, that blowing off steam on the dance floor transcended Cold War tensions. As American disco historian Peter Shapiro notes, "Ultimately, disco was and is about inclusivity and community, about pleasure and leisure rather than labor, about democracy of the dance floor rather than idols of the stage."⁵⁸ More importantly, if disco, although seen as something largely *apolitical*, is used on the systemic and grassroots level as a reflection of power, like banning disco records or simply attending a Boney M concert in Moscow, disco becomes inherently *political*. Seemingly apolitical aspects like seventies disco, can provide an innovative and intriguing look into the past and challenge the idea that only governmental titans like Kennedy or Khrushchev are the main elements of the Cold War and history in general. Despite the Cold War's immense ideological struggle, Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive" did just that, and thrived.

⁵⁴ Linda Martin and Kerry Segrave, *Anti-Rock: the Opposition to Rock 'n' Roll*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), 231.

⁵⁵ "Future of Moscow Discos is in Doubt," *Los Angeles Times*, August 11, 1983.

⁵⁶ Martin and Segrave, *Anti-Rock*, 247.

⁵⁷ Martin and Segrave, *Anti-Rock*, 245.

⁵⁸ Peter Shapiro, *Turn the Beat Around: the Secret History of Disco*, (New York: Faber and Faber, 2005), 289.