



Илья ИЛЬФ  
Евгений ПЕТРОВ  
Одноэтажная Америка

*Рядом с нашей машиной идут еще сотни машин,  
сквозь них прорываются целые тысячи их, навстречу им едут  
десятки тысяч. Вся Америка мечется куда-то,  
и остановки, как всегда, уже не будет.*



Большинство великих путешествий было совершено с востока  
на запад.

Сергей Вербов.  
Новая энциклопедия относительного  
и абсолютного знания

ROCKET & TRAVEL  
КЛАССИКА

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Ilya Ilf, ????? ?????, Eugene Petrov

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Ilya Ilf , ????? ????? , Eugene Petrov

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## ???????????? ??????? Details


Date : Published by ????? ??????? (first published 1936)


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Author : Ilya Ilf , ????? ????? , Eugene Petrov

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# From Reader Review ?????????? ??????? for online ebook

## Samarrsky says

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## Ivan says

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## Yuliya says

This is a fascinating look into the minds of 2 great Soviet satirists. This is a very quick read with some  
subtleties that may only be apparent to a Soviet immigrant. The observations of these men are incisive and  
sometimes hilarious and it's very interesting to contrast their toeing of the party line with their observations  
on the American life.

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## MEGAN C says

This is an incredibly interesting book. I am surprised it took so long to get it translated into English. The  
whole thing is a real treasure mine of interesting historical details and ideas along with incredibly sharp  
commentary from the two Soviet authors.

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## Marti says

If I had not read the Twelve Chairs and the Golden Calf, I might not have had any interest in this. However, those were two of the funniest books I have ever read (and perhaps it is partly owing to the translation, but they did bring to mind a merger of Mel Brooks and Mark Twain). So when I found out they turned their satirical eye to Depression-era America, I could not wait.

However, this is less a book than a compendium of articles for the Russian equivalent of Life Magazine. Hence, it skips around a lot and is really a photo essay. I was still laughing hysterically and wish that every moment of their trip had been documented. It is almost uncanny how they focused on things that are still heavily debated today (ie. patients bankrupted by medical care).

The best chapters were one devoted to Hollywood and another on the pernicious brainwashing effects of advertising (especially by tobacco companies). They conclude that Americans have a total lack of curiosity and like to be told what to do (namely "smoke Chesterfields" and "chew Wrigley's gum"). The two Russians picked up many hitchhikers along the way. Not one of them inquired what language they were speaking to each other. However, they all talked about themselves. One 16 year old southern boy, when quizzed about racial inequality, simply said "You guys must be from New York!"

I would have given this five stars if it did not feel so incomplete.

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## Andrew Schirmer says

Astute, satirical, frequently hilarious commentary on American life by Soviet comic writers of genius accompanied by inept amateur photographs abetting the commentary. Elegantly assembled, intelligently introduced. A treasure, something you want to send to all your friends. Out of print after only five years and going for \$1000 on amazon. Snap it up if you see it.

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## Alexey Kulyashov says

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## Ilya says

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## Anton Kan says

I decided to read this book for two reasons: first, it's written by the authors of my most favorite "12 chairs"

and "The Golden Calf", and second, it's about the USA which I've started discovering several years ago. While being slightly disappointed by the narrative (well, it's a documentary, after all), I was quite impressed by the observations of the country. I was most surprised by the fact that many of the things noted by Ilf and Petrov are exactly the same as people note in the US the first place nowadays: food that is not so tasty as it is good-looking; pharmacies where you can buy anything on Earth; living "on credit"; drinking all kinds of beverages with ice; American football etc. It was all the same 80 years ago already! The book is worth reading but don't expect too much.

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### **Yulichka Dmytryshyn says**

Great read! Highly recommended for anyone who is planning their first trip to the USA. And, if you've been there already, you'll see that nothing has really changed. Tasteful humor, keen observations, truly a pleasure. Different sides of the very different America.

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### **Lorenzo Berardi says**

Serendipity happens. And this book looks like the perfect example for such an interesting phenomenon. I was randomly investigating on the shelves of a second hand bookstore while my eyes were caught by something named "Il paese di Dio" (God's country)\*.

At first I thought it had something to do with theology or whatever else connected with Watchtower or Scientology. With a sarcastic smile painting my face I turned the book on its back I read some magnificent expressions such as: "journalistic account", "russian", "comic novelists", "road trip", "1935". It was enough. I immediately started salivating just like a Pavlov's dog and I hold the book in my sweated hands caressing it like a cat.

Then for the next three months the book flirted with dust in my room. But I couldn't forget it. Thus, in a rainy Sunday afternoon, I blew away the dust from his frontpage intoxicating my flatmate and begin to read the Ilf & Petrov's adventures in US.

This book is astonishing. It's not only about its uniqueness. It's about its irresistible humour, its wit, its elegant style, its extremely careful way of observing something that doesn't exist anymore. The two Soviet writers visit the US a few years after the Great Depression without even naming it but making a portrait of a country where everything works, where people are helpful and talkative without being arrogant, where social welfare is making miracles.

At the same time they're extremely realist to show an America where virtues rhymes with vices. This has very much to do with the total lack of curiosity for what is outside the US borders or for the boring similarity of thousands of small towns where you can always choose among three kind of breakfasts, sleeping in the same furnished "camps" (motels have to come), watching the same brainless movies at the cinema.

But you can't miss this book for many other reasons too. Historical ones, for instance. Travelling coast to coast from NYC to Los Angeles and then backwards on their old "noble grey mouse colored" car. the two Russian writers meet Ernest Hemingway and Henry Ford, Bette Davis and Upton Sinclair. They visit General Electric factory and Carlsbad caves, they are introduced to Navahos and walk on the suspended

gigantic wires of a still under construction Golden Gate Bridge. They picture an exhilarating description of a football match in San Francisco and are disgusted by a corrida in Juarez, Mexico. And at the same time Ilf & Petrov make an extremely accurate social and economic account of the US, being able to foretell the clockwork mechanism that recently leads to the subprime crisis.

Moreover, I'm sure you will never forget such interesting chaperons like Mr & Mrs Adams who drove the car through the US and represent very well with their way of speaking and behaving the compendium of Ilf & Petrov humouristic side. A sense of humour masterfully built without any trivial aspect but based on cultural influences, interest for everything and a touch of Jerome K. Jerome.

\*Don't ask me why in 1947 the Italian translators chose this title. Ilf & Petrov, indeed, talk about US like "God's country" in one of the chapters, but that's not enough to justify this weird choice.

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### **Kathrina says**

The only thing wrong with this book is that it is far too short! Here's a perspective never taught in American schools -- There once was a time when the USSR and the US were allies, though the USSR looked to us as their wayward, misguided cousin, blinded by manic consumerism and an uneven class system. In 1935 the US was choking on its own mouthful of Coca-Cola, and the USSR was the emerging model of societal success. The USSR stood in awe of our industrial revolution, but in disgust of our racial and economical prejudice. Oh, how sadly those two hold hands. Ilf and Petrov give us a far too unique glimpse at our own folly (plus a few singularly American traits to be proud of), just as the world steps into a war as never before experienced on the globe, and all the puzzle pieces of allies and foes are scrambled all over again. This is a too small, but important archive of world history, and I'm grateful for the editors who took it upon themselves to preserve it, before all the negatives crumbled to dust, and the words lost their meaning over time. Thanks, Lorenzo, for this recommendation.

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### **Inna Davidiuk says**

Probably the best and the most precise guidebook of America that I have ever found. It is astonishing that everything what was described eighty years ago looks like today's reality: excessive loan taking, unhealthy fast food, shops, pharmacies, lifestyle, advertising, etc. It is really a great pleasure not only to read, but to travel with the authors.

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### **Owlseyes says**

MY musings while reading: "they" saw her as little, **yet golden**, nevertheless. Her greatness really lies on what?; ...no wonder some want it back.

"Try to see rich people, the unemployed, officials, farmers. Look for average people, because it is they who

make up America"

"I regret very much that I myself cannot tell you at the moment where America is located. Come here again on the sixth of November 1936 [presidential election day] for it will be clear then what is America and where it is located"

"The proud towers of New York were behind us"

"All of America speeds somewhere, and evidently never will stop"

...

"There are road maps published by Standard Oil, Shell, Socony, Conoco and Esso".

"[girls] At times they resemble Kay Francis, at other times Greta Garbo, before that they all looked like Gloria Swanson".

"An automobile journey across America is like a journey across an ocean, monotonous and magnificent"

"It is indecent to refrain from going to church. As for communism, that is something for dirty Mexicans, Slavs and Negroes. It is no business for Americans".

"Americans are as naive as children"

...

"The first month we resisted it. We drank no "Coca-Cola"

...

"The men who work for Ford are Mexicans, Poles, Czechs, Italians, Negroes".

"They are excellent workers; they have golden hands."

...

"But one fine trait-curiosity-is almost nonexistent with Americans. That is especially true of the youth"

"America was preparing for Christmas....The traditional Santa Claus, the kindly Christmas grandfather with a long white beard, was driving through the streets in his gilded chariot".

"Millions of Americans are in the throes of such childish ideas"

"The Indians almost never mix with the whites"...."We crossed the territory of the Navajo, yet where were those 60,000 poor but proud people?"

"Las Vegas cured us completely"

"It is forbidden to transport fruits or flowers into California".

"There are many Chinese in San Francisco"

"This is the most beautiful city in America, apparently because it is in no way reminiscent of America"

"This Hollywood is dull, hellishly dull". "All these pictures are below the level of human dignity"

"They are designed for birds' brains, for slow-thinking human cattle of camel-like lack of fastidiousness".

"In America there are many religions and many gods".

## SOUTHERN STATES

"Here even the churches were separate, for example one for the white Baptists and another for the black Baptists. When the Baptist God several years hence returns to earth, in order to destroy soviet atheists who help one another, he will be delighted with his establishments in the south of America"

"Negroes are talented people"

"Negroes are impressionable people"

"Negroes possess a strong imagination"

"Negroes love nature"

"Finally, negroes are expansive".

## AMERICA'S DEMOCRACY

"And if one will read carefully the text of the American Constitution, it is easy to discover there grandiose and equitable sections which would seem to guarantee the general welfare. Nevertheless [Charles] Lindbergh fled, while the Constitution in the capitalist country is merely a bronze tablet...".

"It was an amazing spectacle" [Senate commission]

"Our journey came to an end.""And throughout that entire journey we never once stopped thinking of the Soviet union"

"Terrible are the crimes of American capitalism".

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**"When the Majestic sailed past Wall Street, darkness fell and lights appeared in the skyscrapers. In those windows gleamed the gold of electricity, but perhaps also real gold. This last golden vision of America escorted us to the very egress into the ocean".**



This is a sort of "libelish", some would think, communist paper on the America of the mid-thirties. A very critical view on America.

Ever since the two soviet humorists had been there much has changed (I mean, especially on the race issue), yet some traits still remain, on the religious, economic, sociological fields, and on the culture, at large. The last pages of the book are dedicated to the presentation of solutions for America; on top of it would appear wealth distribution, according to Ilf and Petrov.

I repeat, it's a political, "libelish" paper made by two brave Russian men, who, nevertheless, saw beauty and found a lot to learn inside the capitalist foe. Some instances are just true, crude portrayals of the then-reality. Yet biased, no doubt, by this tainted communist view and a sort of old rivalry/competition between those two nations: the USA and the then-USSR; something which, in my view, will remain for decades to come.

I close my commentary with the pictures which appeared recently in Moscow.

Russia-America is a complicated relationship. At times a very, very hard one.

...

"Eighty years ago, the Soviet writers Ilya Ilf and Evgeny Petrov headed out to explore America. Now, the Goethe-Institut invited author Felicitas Hoppe to follow in their footsteps. She travelled across the United States in six weeks."

in:

<https://www.goethe.de/en/uun/akt/2062...>

## Sergey Tomson says

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