



Scotland Russia

No. 34 Spring 2016

REVIEW

Breaking the ice



The Tsar's conifer
Best Russian children's books
Another day in court
Russia's cuisine



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Editorial

'Breaking the ice', our inspiring cover story by Colin Souness, celebrates the beauty of the Arctic and the achievements of Russian seamanship, engineering and shipbuilding in our inter-connected world. Elsewhere, Ruth Tittensor allows us a preview of her major new book on the 'Tsar's Conifer', the Sitka spruce, a species discovered in the temperate rainforest on the Pacific west coast of north America, which now clothes the formerly barren uplands of Scotland. Masha Bond, a Russian now living in the south of Scotland with her young family, identifies her favourite Russian children's books new and old. Ian Mitchell describes a contemporary court scene out of Dostoevsky by Gogol'. Janet Wheatcroft is the lucky reviewer of a door-stopping volume of contemporary Russian cuisine. This is the year we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the 'educational journey' 16-29 December 1816 of that same Tsar-to-be: the then 20-year old Grand Duke Nicholas (later Tsar Nicholas I) of Russia to Scotland. He was Scotland's first royal visitor for generations, and Walter Scott (then still plain 'Mr') was

drafted in to invent a suitable welcome to Edinburgh, with music and pageantry. Europe was breathing a sigh of relief following a quarter of a century of war with Napoleon, the background against which the novel 'War and Peace' by Leo Tolstoy is set. What kind of Scotland did young Nicholas discover outwith the capital? Cutting-edge armaments manufacture at the Carron Iron Works, once run by Charles Gascoigne, an English entrepreneur who had been awarded lands confiscated in the '45, and later sought employment in Russia; poverty in Glasgow, which the young Grand Duke alleviated with a generous gift of cash; New Lanark, site of an extraordinary social and industrial experiment by Welshman Robert Owen, and such a hospitable welcome at Moffat's 'The King's Arms' hotel – still going strong under a different name – that Nicholas gave the innkeeper a tip equivalent to the bill.

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Chair's notes

Jenny Carr - SRF Chairperson

Russian isolation is once again a problem. The Russian ambassador complains that “political dialogue between Russia and Britain has gone” (Times 26 Oct), Khodorkovsky recently opened his “Open Russia Club” in London to promote an open democratic Russia as an alternative to the isolationist model of the country (<https://openrussia.org/post/view/10733/>), and Sergei Guriev has just written about the economic cost of this isolation in a key article “Deglobalizing Russia” (Carnegie Moscow Center).

The SRF exists to combat this isolation, whether self-imposed or not, by promoting events and information on a wide spectrum of Russian culture and current affairs. But without the presence of Russian in the school curriculum, a vital form of public recognition of the country's relevance, this is an uphill task. And without interest and understanding on both sides dialogue is impossible.

Dialogue may be in short supply but activity is not. Leaving aside alarming developments overseas, in Scotland official Russian energies seem to be directed mainly towards celebration of the Arctic Convoys. There is also the, officially unconfirmed but if true surprising, expansion of the RT empire into Scotland. It seems that a large office for RT's Sputnik News subsidiary will shortly

open in Edinburgh rather than London as originally planned.

Against this backdrop it is especially good news that 2016 is to be a UK-Russian Year of Language and Literature. There doesn't seem to be much of a programme of events in the UK yet (the organisers are the Russian Foreign Ministry / Kompas) but an officially endorsed initiative in this field is still very welcome. There is a lot to catch up on - Russian government support for its language in the UK has been extremely limited compared to that of its peers, and is mainly directed at the dwindling number of Russkiy Mir Centres and at some of the supplementary schools for the diaspora. Maybe the Year will change that (a bit)?

By happy coincidence 2016 is also the year that the Language Show, held annually at Olympia, comes to Scotland for the first time. It will be held at the Glasgow SECC March 11-12 and entrance will be free. We think it essential that the Russian language is represented amid the mass of stalls promoting French, German, Spanish, Mandarin, Gaelic and other more widely taught languages and have paid for a small stand. We warmly invite you to visit us and to encourage your friends to come along too. As plans develop you will be hearing more - we have been promised help from the universities of St Andrews



and Glasgow, from the Russkaya Capella choir, from Ruslan Ltd, from some of the supplementary schools and several individual teachers and students. We MIGHT even get some Russian sponsorship - and that of course will be the real proof of the pudding of a Year of Russian Language and Literature. With or without support our small stand will be bursting with ideas and suggestions on how and where visitors to the Show could learn Russian and enticements to do so.

Put 11-12 March in your diary and visit us in Glasgow!

Jenny Carr
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Unveiling of Lermontov statue

By Elena Reid

On Saturday 3rd October 2015, at Earlston in the Scottish Borders, a year after the 200th anniversary of Lermontov's birth and arrival of the bust to Earlston, the official unveiling ceremony of the Mikhail Lermontov sculpture took place. Gwen Hardie represented the Thomas the Rhymer / Lermontov side and Mairi Koroleva from Moscow represented the Lermontov Family. The bust was gifted to Scotland in 2014 in acknowledgement of the link between the Thomas the Rhymer, the Lermontov and Lermontov families. Mikhail Lermontov, who died in a duel in 1841 at age 26, never got to see Scotland, but he was a descendant of a Scottish soldier of fortune, George Learmonth, who settled in Russia in the early 17th century and adapted his name to Lermontov. His standing in Russia was almost akin to that of Robert Burns. One of Lermontov's first well known ancestors was a mysterious 13th century Scottish

poet and prophet from Earlston, known as Thomas the Rhymer. Also present at the unveiling were the Consul General of the Russian Federation Andrey Pritsepov and Vice-Consul Timofey Kunitskiy along with John Paton-Day, the chairman of Earlston community council and many guests from across Scotland. We travelled from the North of Scotland representing the Highland-Russia connection Charity based in Nairn with our Russian-Scottish programme consisting of Russian and Highland dancing, bagpipes, Russian songs, music and poems. There were also performances from The Glasgow Russian Orthodox School choir, the Brian Forest Scottish Dance Band, The Small Time Splitters ukulele band and Alex MacAllister on the bagpipes. Speeches at the Earlston gathering were given by Gwen Hardie, chairperson of the local Friends of Thomas the Rhymer group, by Mairi Koroleva, the Consul General of the Russian

Federation Andrey Pritsepov, Gerald Maitland-Carew, Lord Lieutenant of Roxburgh, Ettrick and Lauderdale, and by Professor Ronald Black who gave a very interesting lecture regarding the history of Thomas the Rhymer. The speeches were then followed by entertainment portraying Scottish and Russian culture. The whole event was a fitting tribute to Mikhail Yuryevich Lermontov, a direct descendant of George Learmonth and one of Scotland's sons, who has finally come home. A historical moment and a great day. Thanks to Mairi Koroleva, Gwen Hardie and the Thomas the Rhymer group for their perseverance in making this project succeed and for helping to bring Scottish and Russian culture together.



Another day in court

By Ian Mitchell

On a bleak and sleety November afternoon, I'm sitting in a stifflingly hot court-room in central Moscow listening to the city's senior prosecutor gabbling at tobacco-auctioneer speed through the reading of evidence against seven men who sit disconsolately nearby. Three are in a metal cage guarded by two armed policemen and four are perched on a bench against the back wall. They are at liberty because they have already spent a year in pre-trial detention—the legal maximum—while their case was being investigated. If they are found innocent—and in about 1% of criminal cases in Russia that does happen—they will have given up a year of their lives for nothing more than the convenience of the investigating authorities.

I mentioned this after lunch (bulochka and a bottle of water) to one of the accused and he told me that a judge in another court was recently asked to award compensation to people improperly detained in this way. He thought that fair and came up with the figure of 5,000 roubles, which is £50, for the year. That works out at about 14p per day. He arrived at this figure after taking average earnings and deducting the costs of rent, food, power and heating, all of which had been provided by the state to the inmates free of charge for the whole period.

In this court all the non-caged accused are tagged. One is ill as a result of a year's prison food, and all seven look pale, exhausted, dispirited and resigned to a horrible fate. They have been told by their lawyers that they can expect conviction, followed by five years in jail.

The indictment concerns the first substantial theft of money from a Russian bank committed by means of computer hacking—or at least this is the first such case that has come to court. The alleged crimes were committed about three years ago, and the evidence the procurators have assembled since then is contained in 150 bound volumes of about 300 pages each. That is nearly half a million pages; perhaps a hundred million words—more than the average citizen will read in his or her lifetime. Yet I am told by one of the lawyers that none of this ties any of the accused directly to the theft.

The total sum missing is \$700,000, which represents \$1.60 (£1.00) for every page of evidence. The investigation, plus typing, secretarial services and pre-trial incarceration costs (including rent, food, power and heating) must have cost massively more

than the bank's loss. And then there is court time. The case started in the summer and the lawyers think it will run into the New Year, at the leisurely pace of one afternoon of hearings per week. Meanwhile, the caged accused accumulate compensation awards that they have a 1% chance of winning at the rate of 14p per day.

The judge is a thin-faced but not unattractive lady in a black gown, who looks utterly bored by the proceedings. She takes notes and “manages” the time-tabling, but otherwise plays little apparent part. The prosecutor is the only active person. She reads her evidence as if it is a mere formality.

There is no cross-examination—I am told that will come later. But since no transcript of the proceedings is being taken, it will be hard to refer to any specific fact or allegation and get any precision in the questioning. There used to be recordings made of court proceedings, but the authorities put a stop to that a few years ago, for reasons which one can only guess at.

Each of the accused has a lawyer sitting listening to all this, rarely saying much. One is reading a book. I am the only occupant of what passes for the public gallery. None of the accused even has a member of their family there, as is usual in the British criminal courts.

After the reading of today's evidence a few witnesses take the stand. No objections to the proceedings are raised when they say that they cannot identify any of the accused. All they are able to do is to record some detail of the computer system the bank uses to transfer money which, it transpires, is also used for general emailing and internet research. All sorts of people could have had access to it. In the circumstances, I see no possibility of proving beyond reasonable doubt any specific link to any of the accused. But then I haven't heard ALL the evidence, and I have long learned never to jump to conclusions. However, I have a nagging feeling that ALL the evidence will not be brought into court. Dark rumours of agents provocateurs are circulating.

Most of the accused do not know each other, yet they are charged with being part of a conspiracy. One came back from New York where he had been working as a computer expert for some years, intending to have a short family holiday in Moscow. The rumour is that he was asked by the FSB to help infiltrate hacking gangs and gather evidence

against them. When he refused, his passport was confiscated and soon afterwards he was accused of hacking himself. The rest, I am given to understand, follows from that, and is about as tenuous. I have no idea whether this is true or not, but I see nothing which encourages me to think it might not be.

At about 4, the judge rises and retires to her chambers. Everyone mills around as the three caged accused are led back down to the cells. One of the tagged ones offers to help the prosecutor carry some of the fat volumes of evidence away. I see them chatting amicably together, and ask him later what she was saying. She told him she has decided not to ask for sentences 5 years in jail, but 7 to 10 years instead.

One of the lawyers ventures the opinion that the real purpose of the trial is to recruit cut-prince IT talent for the FSB. Each of the convicted men will be offered a deal—after a suitable time for reflection in prison. And Russian prisons, I have been told by other lawyers, aim to break the spirit of the inmates. One of the accused offers me photographs of life inside. I say I thought that was illegal. He rubs his thumb and forefinger together as if to say, “With a little cash, everything is possible, even in jail.”

It is dark and snowy when I arrive home. Firing up the internet, I see an article on the Kommersant website (25 November 2015) reporting the fact that the Chairman of the Constitutional Court, Professor Valery Zorkin, has said that due to the threat of terrorism, he proposes to raise the level of court proceedings to “military severity” [в направлении военной суровости]. His argument is that this will help protect human rights because, he argues, the fundamental right on which all other human rights are based is the right to personal security, and only a militarised court system can provide that.

What he means by that, I imagine, is that the rights of the accused in criminal cases are too generous to the accused as they stand now. No wonder that the Duma decided last week that Russia should abrogate the authority of the European Court of Human Rights. The body which will in future adjudicate on the validity or otherwise of ECHR decisions when the Russian state (and court system) is a party will be Professor Zorkin's Constitutional Court.

Ian Mitchell is researching a book about the history of constitutional law in Russia, to be called *Russia and the Rule of Law*. His book about the judges in Scotland, *The Justice Factory*, was published in 2013 and is available at www.amazon.co.uk

Breaking the ice

By Colin Souness

Edinburgh man Colin Souness shares some of his experiences of working aboard a Russian nuclear icebreaker: Atomflot's '50 Years of Victory'/'50 лет Победы'.

Some say that arriving at destinations is less important than the manner in which we get there. In my experience I've found that reality is typically a little too textured to frame in so few words, but certainly I feel that it's often the experience of travelling somewhere that leaves the deepest impression on me, not always the objective itself. In this vein, I can think of no other undertaking in my life that holds to this more resoundingly than the experience of attaining the geographic North Pole – ninety degrees north – the modern Russian way: by nuclear icebreaker.

I've worked as a guide in the Polar Regions for almost four years now, sailing aboard expeditionary vessels to remote areas throughout the Arctic and the Antarctic. As a glaciologist, sailor and general polar fanatic I get a huge kick out of virtually everywhere we go. However, as a lifelong Russophile, Russian language student and lover of all places that are hard to reach, there has only ever been one 'holy grail' in my eyes and that is the wild, austere vastness of the Russian Arctic.

Over the course of the last two years I've crewed five separate voyages to the North Pole, each of them aboard the nuclear icebreaker '50 Years of Victory': 160m of uranium-powered, ice-breaking muscle punching 75,000 horsepower and boasting a 50 cm thick, cast steel prow. This ship, with the ability to comfortably cruise through more than 2.5 m of solid sea ice – at speeds greater than those at which many ships tackle open water – is quite literally the most powerful icebreaker (Ледокол) in the world. Working aboard her has been, and continues to be, one of the most surreal but inspiring chapters of my life. Compared to daily reality throughout the rest of the year virtually everything about life aboard The Victory (whilst en route to the North Pole) seems touched by an air of the bizarre: In every direction floes of white, glistening ice stretch from the hull to the horizon, broken in places and crumpled in others, but otherwise virtually undisrupted. It's as alien a

landscape as I think you're ever likely to find without travelling into space and settling upon another world.

The 50 Years of Victory sails from the high security 'Atomflot' facility in Murmansk, where she shares her berthing arrangements with some big names of Russian and Soviet-era Arctic seafaring history: ships like the 'Yamal', the 'Sovietsky Soyuz', the 'Rossiya' and the 'Arktika', a nuclear-powered ice breaker, launched in 1975. In 1977 'Arktika' became the first surface vessel ever to reach the geographic North Pole, a tradition maintained by subsequent ships of her type. This 'Arktika class' includes the 50 Years of Victory, which is the youngest breaker to inherit this mantle. And so, as you slip lines and are pulled, by tugboat, away from Atomflot at the outset of a North Pole trip – slowly beginning the journey northward out of the Kola Inlet – you do so in the somewhat rusted but enduringly impressive presence of Murmansk's finest.

I enjoy the extremes of this voyage... To begin in Murmansk, flanked by warships, attack submarines and some of the Northern Fleet's most prestigious vessels – vessels like her flagship the *Piotr Veliky* – and to find yourself within only two or three three days amidst the virtually untouched, ice-beset wildness of the Franz Josef Land archipelago... Very cool.

The 191 islands of Franz Josef Land, along with parts of the Novaya Zemlya Arctic island group, make up a sizeable chunk of what is now designated as the Russian Arctic National Park, or Национальный парк «Русская Арктика». This park, the head offices of which are situated in Arkhangelsk, was established in June 2009, making it one of Russia's youngest national parks. It now

protects an area totaling some 14,260 km² of Russia's western Arctic region; a beautiful and surprisingly varied place.

Franz Josef Land alone boasts unique landscapes of staggering glacial vistas, towering basaltic cliffs and ever-changing sea ice as well as important historical sites which whisper of the early days of polar exploration. It also hosts abundant wildlife including the iconic polar bear, walrus, Arctic



foxes, northern bowhead whales (which despite their worldwide scarcity are not an uncommon sight in Franz Josef Land), beluga, narwhal and numerous species of Arctic seal, upon which of course the polar bears primarily depend for food. It's stunning, and in summer – under the perpetual balm of the 24-hour daylight – it can seem almost tame. But it isn't.

The Arctic is a fierce (if sensitive) place, and without our comfortable icebreaker we wouldn't last long. The wilderness, and indeed the wildlife, can be unforgiving, and it's important that tourism be conducted responsibly. To help make sure that this happens every passenger voyage into the Russian Arctic National Park is accompanied by anywhere between three and five park Rangers who come (armed) from Arkhangelsk to make sure that both people and polar bears come away from every encounter unharmed.

The Russian rangers bring a very important dimension to the experience of working ‘up north’, functioning not only as our protectors out amongst the ice floes, but also as something of a cultural bridge. All too often I feel like passengers forget that we are guests, not only on a very sensitive Russian government vessel, but also in the Russian nation as a whole. High-end tourism of this kind can attract a certain air of entitlement, and I feel that perhaps some forget all too readily how unique an experience passage by icebreaker is, and how lucky we are to be able to travel in such a way. The Russian Arctic park rangers engage with passengers, sharing their culture, knowledge and passion with visitors from around the world. It’s not always easy for them, as language is a barrier, but they create a friendly and international atmosphere which I think is supremely important. I feel proud to call several of these park officers my friends.

We all move along as something of an eclectic family as the vast, white desert of the Arctic Ocean rumbles past under the glare of a sun that never sets; relentlessly raining light down upon us like static noise from an antiquated television. Light permeates every aspect of your life: No blind will keep it out of your cabin after you’ve turned in for the ‘night’; no clock can ever convince you that it really is 2am, and that you should probably stop drinking... It’s always there, just as the vibrations are always there, for icebreakers don’t slide along like sledges, they rumble, smash, churn and crash their way through the pack, overcoming the frozen ocean through sheer weight of steel, momentum and hard-wrought engineering.



I’d love to say that icebreaker life is like sitting in a vibrating massage chair, but then massage chairs don’t toss your dinner onto the floor or spill your drink with a sudden surprise jolt as soon as your back’s turned. You can also turn massage chairs off when you’re bored of them. This doesn’t work with icebreakers. Typing, writing, sleeping, walking, looking through binoculars... Even talking; all of these things become difficult when your world shakes constantly. Yes, although I love every minute I spend aboard the Victory, she’s certainly taught me to appreciate surfaces that don’t move.

Eventually we find ourselves at the North Pole, and I mean the EXACT North Pole; quite a feat of navigation for a ship without

maneuvering thrusters, beset on all sides by thick, sprawling sheets of ice! We secure the vessel and, when it’s deemed safe, disembark to walk upon the frozen crust of the ocean, floating above 4 km depth of water. It’s a unique, if un-nerving sensation. What a privilege to be here: The top of the planet! Here, the world literally revolves around YOU.

Many aspects of life aboard a Russian icebreaker have left a mark upon me. My Russian language skills have certainly improved, and I can now claim to be something of a connoisseur of samagon (самогон), or home-distilled spirits (Honestly, I don’t even want to know how they make that stuff aboard a nuclear vessel!). I’ve also been lucky enough to live alongside the officers and crew of the Victory, to most of whom you’d attribute the title ‘polyarnik’: a veteran of the polar regions. These men spend their lives amidst the ice, steering their hulking atomic charge through the frigid Northern Sea-route and keeping their nation’s vital shipping arteries open year-round. I say ‘men’, but would you believe that the individual who has made the most number of visits to the North pole is neither an explorer nor a captain, but a waitress: The 50 Years of Victory’s head waitress Irina Mikhaylova (of Murmansk) has staffed icebreakers during almost seventy voyages to the top of the world!

Regardless of gender or role aboard ship, the crews of these vessels see places that most people – even other Russians – never will.



The Tsar's conifer

By Ruth Tittensor



At home

The tree we call Sitka spruce grows naturally in a narrow corridor along the Pacific coast of North America. For 3,600 km from Alaska to California it colonises strands, coastal mountains and flood plains of rivers meandering towards the Pacific Ocean. It is common upwards to about 500 m altitude and is particularly abundant on Haida Gwaii and the west of Vancouver Island.

This magnificent tree is the tallest spruce on earth and third tallest of all conifers. On the Olympic Peninsula it grows to 80 m high, while the Carmanagh Giant on Vancouver Island is 96 m, but in sub-arctic Alaska it grows slowly and rarely so tall. It often reaches 300 to 500 years old with 700 to 800 years a good old-age.

Sitka spruce is characteristic of the rich, conifer-dominated Temperate Rainforest of the Pacific coast. Lichens, mosses and ferns form thick, soft ecosystems on its branches, so many animals live their whole lives in the canopy.

Sitka spruce and its rainforest home flourish in an oceanic climate of cool summers, warm winters, high rainfall and prolonged mist, preferably with over 200 days annually frost-free. Optimum annual rainfall is over 1000 mm so it thrives in British Columbia

rainfall of 2378 mm and Vancouver Island rainfall of 3016 mm annually.

Scottish woodland

After the ice sheets melted, Scots pine and deciduous trees eventually migrated across Scotland, to cover about 60% of the low-altitude landscape. After prehistoric hunter-gathering gave way to farming after about 6000 BP, the landscape was gradually changed into a humanised mosaic.

Woodlands frequently waned from human use, climate and soil changes. By the fourteenth century considerable amounts of timber were imported from the Baltic and Norway because very few big trees remained in Scottish woodlands. By 1500 AD woodland covered only 3% of the Lowlands and 8% of the Highlands. People had to intensively manage the surviving woodlands even for basic needs, but for fuel sought alternatives such as peat.

Early tree planting

Timber was needed in Scotland for ships, mansions, bridges, castles and harbours. Tools, utensils and vehicles were made from smaller wood grown on a short-term rotation. Woodland management was regulated to ensure optimum productivity. But

Scotland's native woodlands continued to decrease. By the eighteenth century, European trees such as Larch, Silver fir, Norway spruce and Sycamore had been introduced to Britain to assess their potential.

Landowners found that they grew satisfactorily on the fertile soils of lowland Britain, but in the north and west they would succeed in only some places. The reason is that they are 'continental' species: native to cold winters, hot summers and low rainfall. The 'oceanic' climate of upland Britain – with cool summers, warm winters, mist, high rainfall and wind from the Atlantic Ocean – did not suit them.

There are few native or European trees well-suited to the oceanic climate, degraded soils and almost tree-less uplands of Scotland.

Exploration of Northeast America

The Enlightenment prompted exploration for useful goods, knowledge and scientific understanding. Plants and animals were sought which might increase food production, provide fibres, dyes and timber.

The French, British and Scandinavians had explored Northeast America for several cen-



turies for fish – and plants. Naval ships with naturalists and surgeon-botanists on board were sent to survey, map and study new lands. Botanic Gardens such as the Jardin du Roi, Edinburgh and Uppsala had been set up and hoped to receive new seeds and plants found by their compatriots. Once more, trees introduced from Northeast America, such as the Tulip tree and Red spruce, grew poorly in the north and west of Britain.

Russian exploration in northwest America

Vitus Bering, a Danish captain in the Russian navy, had been commissioned by Tsar Peter the Great to lead a land expedition across Siberia followed by a voyage to discover land to the east. He was unsuccessful in the latter, but in 1741 another attempt set off from Kamchatka, with navigator Aleksei Chirikov in command of a second ship. They were separated during a storm; Chirikov sailed along the coast of Southeast Alaska. He sent two longboats to explore what appeared to be suitable shores but when neither came back he returned to Russia without landing.

But Bering's ship carried a German biologist, Georg Steller, who persuaded him to sail northeast. Eventually Steller went ashore on [Kayak Island] and made the first European study of Alaskan plants and animals, particularly inshore mammals. On the return voyage, Bering and half the crew died of scurvy, having ignored Steller's offer of prophylactic leaves and berries. They were wrecked and spent the winter on [Bering Island] where Steller carried out more natural history studies. In spring 1742 they, amazingly, built a boat from the wreck and returned to Kamchatka.

Bering's crew had killed sea otters and taken their pelts taken back to Russia. Sea otter pelts are extremely thick and warm: their high quality stimulated Russian exploration, large-scale fur hunting and far-flung settlement of Alaska.

By 1799, the hub of Russian life in Alaska was a settlement called New Archangel on an island in Southeast Alaska, later named Baranov Island after the governor of the Russian-American Company who had wrest it from its Tlingit residents.

Meanwhile, Spanish and British ships had been surveying the Pacific coast from Mexico northwards. In 1778 Captain James Cook sailed north to Norton Sound (64° N) on the Bering Sea. He landed frequently to map the coastline and seek needle-leaved 'spruce' trees with foliage reminiscent of Black spruce – with which a colleague, botanist Joseph Banks, had made an anti-scurvy drink in Nova Scotia. As [Sitka spruce] was the only shoreline spruce at some of his stops, Cook certainly used it for this purpose.

The Scottish Context

Scotland was the country from which the most prolific plant hunters set out during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Scottish Presbyterian society promoted a strong work ethic. Young gardeners were educated to primary level so could read and write; they were also trained in rural crafts. Work was hard to come by and often required travelling.

Archibald Menzies, an estate gardener, was taken on by the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. Following science lessons in his spare time he studied to become a surgeon; after naval and merchant service he took passage as official naturalist on Captain Vancouver's global voyage in 1791. He had orders to

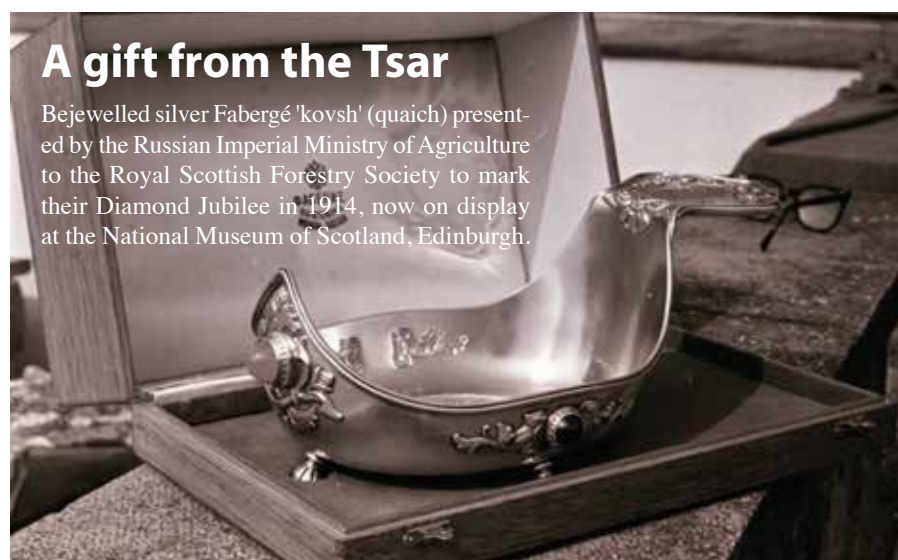
seek and enumerate new plant species, to bring home seeds and living plants and to write a diary. When the ship's surgeon was sick, he was to attend to men's health too!

By the time Vancouver's ships reached the North Pacific coast in 1792, the sailors showed signs of scurvy for lack of fresh fruits and greens. So the hunt was on for spruce trees: Joseph Banks had given the recipe for spruce beer to both Vancouver and Menzies!

While the surveyors were working from their small boats, Menzies and his helpers went ashore to search for spruce trees and other plants. They found [Sitka spruce] and [Western hemlock] trees and made an anti-scurvy infusion from foliage of one or other. These trees were just two of 400 unknown species he took back to Britain in 1795 as seeds, dried specimens or plants – along with tales of rich forests along the Pacific shore. However, Menzies made no written description of [Sitka spruce] and did not name it. That was left to others.

It was not for 35 years that another British botanist arrived on the Pacific coast. David Douglas was a gardener at Glasgow Botanic Garden chosen to travel to Northwest America and continue Archibald Menzies' work. After checking Menzies' specimens in London, he set off on a Hudson Bay Company's ship and reached the mouth of the Columbia River in April 1825.

His serious explorations started at Fort Vancouver on horseback, foot and canoe, accompanied by Hudson Bay Company employees. They slept rough and caught much of their food; Douglas collected specimens and wrote his observations. Plants were dried over an open fire at supper-time and pressed in blotting paper. They were labelled and put in an oilskin to keep out water: they had to survive the rough horseback journey back to Fort Vancouver and the long sea



A gift from the Tsar

Bejewelled silver Fabergé 'kovsh' (quaich) presented by the Russian Imperial Ministry of Agriculture to the Royal Scottish Forestry Society to mark their Diamond Jubilee in 1914, now on display at the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh.

passage to Europe. David Douglas recognised First Nations' huge knowledge of their native plants and animals and appreciated their help.

While in London preparing for his trip, he had seen a specimen of an unknown conifer collected by Menzies from Puget Sound – the inlet mapped meticulously by George Vancouver and Peter Puget. One day in autumn 1825, he recognised the tree growing by the mouth of the Columbia River and collected specimens there. In his written description of this conifer, he gave it the Latin name of *Pinus menziesii* to honour his predecessor. He was effusive, 'It possesses one great advantage by growing to a very large size ... in apparently poor, thin, damp soils ... This unquestionably has great claims on our consideration as it would thrive in such places in Britain where *P. sylvestris** finds no shelter. It would become a useful and large tree ... This if introduced would profitably clothe the bleak barren hilly parts of Scotland ... besides improving the beauty of the country.'

David Douglas realised that this new conifer would suit Scottish conditions. His knowledge of weather, soils and plants back home and his acute observations of the tree's habitat on another continent coalesced into an understanding of its potential for his home country.

To obtain its seeds he laboriously picked up cones from the forest floor, shot cones from the canopy or climbed the tall trees to pluck them. They were dried over the evening fire so that the seeds could be shaken out. He collected foliage and bark also, to ensure good specimens for botanists back home.

In 1830 he was in North America again and sent back more of its seeds from rainforests around Puget Sound: we can imagine great excitement in Britain with news that parcels of seeds had arrived! Perhaps there was even more excitement when tiny packets were received and opened inside mansions and nurseries and a few unfamiliar seeds were found inside.

Keillour Estate in Perthshire, Scotland, was first to plant the seeds, in 1834. Murthly Estate planted its first seeds in 1846, Drummuir on Speyside and Drumlanrig Arboretum in 1850.

During the later nineteenth century, more explorers travelled to the Pacific coast to collect large numbers of seeds from many trees. From these, Scottish landowners tested germination and growth. By the early twentieth century their foresters knew that Sitka spruce was the best new species to afforest tree-less upland Scotland.

* Scots pine

The Tsar's Conifer

Although Tsar Peter the Great initiated the Bering and Chirikov expedition to Siberia and Alaska it was Tsar Ivan VI by the time it left in 1741.

Russian naval expeditions carried scientists so during a voyage from 1826 to 1829, Tsar Nicholas I's survey ship 'Senyavin' had an ornithologist, mineralogist and German botanist Karl Mertens on board. They discovered thousands of unknown (to Europeans) species of plants and animals. Karl Mertens sent plant specimens to his compatriot August von Bongard who was botanist to the Tsar in St. Petersburg.

In his 'Observations sur la Végétation de L'Île du Sitcha' (published in 1833), Bongard described 222 species from that island, of which 35 were new to science. He described and named [Sitka spruce] as *Pinus sitchensis* or 'the pine from Sitcha'. Alas for David Douglas, his name of *Pinus menziesii* was never accepted because Bongard got into print first.

Names

In 1855 botanists decided it was a spruce and agreed internationally on *Picea sitchensis* alias 'the spruce from Sitcha'.

In their own language, Russians call it Ель ситхская 'the spruce from Sitka'.

Nowadays, this tree has a variety of English names such as: Tideland spruce, Airplane spruce, Coast spruce, Menzies spruce, Sitka spruce, Silver spruce, Western spruce – which describe its use, distribution or discoverers.

Scots and Russians discovered and named the world's most successful spruce along the Pacific coast of North America. Russian churchmen were the first to plant it outside its natural range on Amaknak Island in the Aleutians in 1805.

Between 1960 and 2000, Scottish woodsmen planted it in hundreds of millions on the tree-less uplands of their country and increased the tree cover of their oceanic landscape from 6% to 17%.

We should remember that First Nations of Northwest America lived with and used Sitka spruce for several millennia before Russians and Scots discovered it and took it around the world.

Ruth Tittensor's book 'Shades of Green: An Environmental and Cultural History of Sitka Spruce' will be published by Windgather Press (Oxbow Books, Oxford) in May 2016. ISBN number 9781909686779. Price £29.95. Available from all good bookshops or direct from Oxbow Books www.oxbowbooks.com

Children's books (opposite)

1. Kotik-Kotok (Kitty-Cat) cut-out book for babies and toddlers republished by Labyrinth (2015). Illustrations by Alisa Poret with folk rhymes by famous Russian writers such as Kornei Chukovsky

2. New boxed set of Pushkin fairytales - five thin books each with one fairytale with illustrated in Russian traditional style by Nikolai Bartram. Published by Klever-Media Group 2013

3. Two Crows Chatting – a collection of favourite nursery Rhymes and fairytales for the very young illustrated by Yury Vasetsov published by DETGIZ 2015

4. The Black Hen or Dwellers in the Underworld by Antony Pogorelsky. A boy is suddenly able to know everything through the agency of a hen whose life he has saved – but the knowledge ruins his life. Published by Ripol-Classic 2012

5. At Home with Clover - nature poems by Aleksei Shevchenko, illustrated by Anna Sudakova (DETGIZ 2014)

6. Parade of the Buttons – a history of buttons, their styles and uses by Ekaterina Kalikinskaya, illustrated by Darya Gerasimova. Published by Foma (2015)

7. The Magic Zoo by Ekaterina Zvereva illustrated by Galina Zinko. A story about zoo animals shrunk to fit inside a matchbox belonging to a little girl called Nika when the zoo director has to go away. Published by Foma (2014)

8. See No 13

9. The Sacred Year: a year in the Orthodox church calendar described by Ivan Shmelyov, illustrated by N. Isaicheva. Published in a silk cover edition by Pan Press (2012)

10. Dog, cat, kitty, hen: a book for learning the names of familiar animals. By Published by Melik-Pashaev

11. The Christmas Tree. A collection of stories by Russian classical writers such as Nikolai Leskov, Afanasy Fet, Alexander Kuprin. Christmas tree decorations made together by the fire, cakes baked in traditional Russian furnace filling wooden houses with irresistible aromas, songs sung, games played, famous Svyatki fortune telling and many more fascinating and magical stories about Russian traditions. Illustrated by N. Isaichova. Published by Dom Mescheryakova (2015)

12. Rainbow by Kornei Chukovsky published by Melik-Pashaev

13. Boxed set of Pushkin fairytales (see also pic no 8). Published by Klever – Media Group, 2013 Illustrated in traditional Russian style by Nikolai Bartram

Best Russian children's books

By Masha Bond

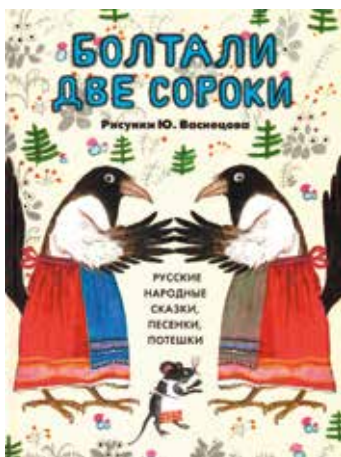
A good children's book in my view is not only about its content, it is also about being beautifully made. I have tried to pick a representative sample of Russian books, both old and new, which are attractive and interesting both to read and to look at.



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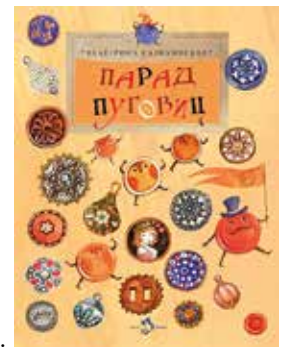
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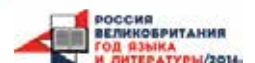
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12.



13.



The Penguin Book of Russian Poetry

Edited by Robert Chandler, Boris Dralyuk, and Irina Mashinski.

Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2015 Paperback, 592pp £12.99.

In his 2014 interview with Times Education Supplement, Dmitry Livanov, the Russian minister of education and science, suggested that all nations, including Britain, should follow Russia's example by compelling students to study their own literary canon. Livanov said that all students in Russia were expected to acquire "a golden font of cultural values" by the time they left school. He went on to say: "You can't leave a Russian school without having read poetry by Pushkin, novels by Tolstoy and Dostoevsky or short stories by Chekhov". (Quoted in: Richard Vaughan. *The Times Educational Supplement*, 5079 (January 24, 2014), p.8). As Livanov's list of authors indicates, the national literary canon that he would like to preserve in Russia is still very much oriented towards nineteenth-century literature written in Russian and widely translated outside Russia. Robert Chandler's anthology is a welcome contribution to the construction of a new pedagogical canon of Russian poetry since it includes many poets who were either not published during the Soviet period or who were only known to a small group of readers who had access to samizdat or émigré publications. It certainly differs significantly from the 1962 edition of the first Penguin Book of Russian Verse compiled and edited by Prince Dmitry Obolensky, a distinguished Professor of Balkan and Russian History at the University of Oxford.

Unlike Obolensky, Robert Chandler is not an academic. He secured an international reputation for his translations of Russian fiction, including such highly important twentieth-century authors as Andrey Platonov and Vassily Grossman. Irina Mashinski and Boris Dralyuk, Chandler's co-editors, are well-known Russian American poets and translators. It seems that their expertise in Russian contemporary poetry had a considerable impact on the inclusion of new names into this version of the Penguin anthology. In contrast to Obolensky's version, it contains only translations into English, omitting Russian originals altogether. The opportunity to read the titles of originals and translations side by side is provided by the website (<https://pbrp.wordpress.com>).

The anthology includes the works of 62 poets and spans from Derzhavin to Soviet unofficial poets of the 1970s-80s such as Elena Shvarts and Dmitry Prigov. Varlam Shalamov – who is usually known for his Gulag stories *The Kolyma Tales* – is presented in the anthology as a poet rather than a prose writer. The striking feature of the new edition of Penguin anthology is its strong interest in Russian twentieth-century poetry: it includes

50 twentieth-century poets. While some of them (such as Akhmatova, Tsvetaeva, Pasternak and Mandelstam, to name just a few) are well known to the anglophone reader, more familiar to a Russian reader would be the Russian absurdist poets of the OBERIU group (Kharms, Oleinikov, and Vvedensky), Russian émigré poets (Georgii Ivanov, Anna Prismanova, Joseph Brodsky) and Soviet bard poets (Okudzhava, Vysotsky and Galich). Their inclusion into Chandler's anthology highlights the co-existence of various canons in post-Soviet Russia that incorporate official and unofficial literature, popular and high culture, and the influx of Russian émigré works into the literary landscape of the 1990s-2000s.

Despite the present anthology's length of over 550 pages, some editorial choices of inclusion and exclusion appear problematic. It is not clear, for example, why one poem penned by Teffi and twenty of Shalamov's poems are featured in the anthology, since both of them are better known as prose writers. It would have been more appropriate to include some of Vladimir Nabokov's poems because his poetry was popular among émigré readers and continues to be popular among post-Soviet readers. It is a pity that Nabokov's exquisite translations of Tjutchev's poetry are omitted. Robert Chandler's translations of Tjutchev's "Last Love" and "Silentium!" downplay many of the nuances embedded in Nabokov's translations of these poems. Here is an example of Chandler's wordy translation of one stanza from "Silentium!" (p.105):

What heart can ever speak its mind?
How can some other understand the hidden pole that turns your life?
A thought, once spoken, is a lie.
Don't cloud the water in your well;
drink from the wellspring – and be still.

In contrast, Nabokov renders Tjutchev's concise and elegant style in a much more thoughtful manner:

How can a heart expression find?
How should another know your mind?
Will he discern what quickens you?
A thought, once uttered, is untrue.
Dimmed is the fountainhead when stirred:
drink at the source and speak no word.

It is also a pity that Nabokov's contribution to the translation of Russian poetry into English was not discussed in the Introduction. His name is not included in the list of admirers of Tjutchev's poetry either (p.104). Certainly, the inclusion of Nabokov's translations of Tjutchev's and Lermontov's poetry into the Penguin anthology would have enriched the stylistic repertoire of the collection.

Sadly, many important Russian émigré poets,

nineteenth-century and contemporary poets are altogether excluded from the anthology. The omission of such significant poets as Anna Bunina, Karolina Pavlova, Mirra Lokhvitskaya, Semien Nadson, Natalia Gorbanevskaya, Georgii Adamovich, Elizaveta Kuzmina-Karavaeva, Elena Guro, Valerii Pereleshin, Konstantin Bal'mont, Igor' Severianin, Nikolai Kliuev, Irina Odoevstseva, Nikolai Otsup, Aleksei Parshchikov, Timur Kibirov, Aleksandr Kushner, Viktor Sosnora and Viktor Krivulin is not rationalised.

The volume contains notes that provide biographical and contextual information that would be helpful to many anglophone readers. Unfortunately, some notes are misleading and idiosyncratic. The note on Tsvetaeva, for example, wrongly states the date of the arrest of her husband and her daughter: they were arrested in 1939, not in 1941. Tsvetaeva's knowledge of languages comes from her mother, her governess and her studies in Germany and further schooling in Moscow, rather than from trips to Europe with her parents as mentioned on pp. 301-2. While the note on Pushkin mentions Khodasevich's speech on Pushkin delivered at the House of Writers in 1921, it fails to provide any references to Blok's speech delivered during the same gathering in which Blok warns about the growing encroachment of Soviet censorship on the poet's creativity and calls upon his fellow writers to embrace the notion of inner freedom. The note on Georgii Ivanov wrongly states that "the Russian émigrés were as cut off from French culture as from the Soviet Union" (p.331). The statement saying that Yevgeny Evtushenko was born to "a family of mixed Russian, Ukrainian and Tartar ancestry" (p.486) is also misleading because his German family name Gangnus was changed during the Second World War: he adopted one of his grandmother's names because it was unsafe to have a German surname at that time.

All the criticism notwithstanding, the anthology provides a wonderful opportunity to the anglophone reader to appreciate many new additions to the Russian poetic canon and to discover many effective translations of Russian poetry. It will be of interest to students, scholars and general readers interested in Russian literature. It is affordable and widely available both as a paper edition and as a Kindle version.

Reviewed by Dr Alexandra Smith (Reader in Russian Studies, University of Edinburgh).



The Invention of Russia: The Journey from Gorbachev's Freedom to Putin's War

By Arkady Ostrovsky

London: Atlantic Books, 2015. £20.00.

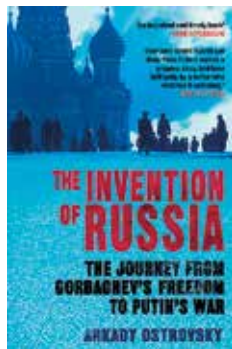
The invention (or, as one of the blurbs suggests, the reinvention) of Russia as a great world power over the last thirty years led first to the concept of a benign Soviet Union putting universal human values above class warfare by cooperating with the West, notably the USA (the Gorbachev period), and later to a reversal of that policy, leading to the present malignant and dangerous atmosphere of tension between the Russian Federation and the economically developed world (the Putin period). Was this almost inevitable, given the traditional power of Russian messianism, and to what extent, if at all, is the West responsible for this turn of events? And is the 'war' that Putin is alleged by some to be conducting, both inside his country and abroad, not only a New Cold War, but likely to set off a horrific Hot War? (The title of another new book from the same publisher, Garry Kasparov's *Winter is Coming: Why Vladimir Putin and the Enemies of the Free World Must Be Stopped*, suggests that a continuing Cold War is the best we can hope for, the so-called 'lesser evil'.)

Arkady Ostrovsky's very readable monograph helps us to see Gorbachev, Putin and also Yeltsin in perspective and then decide whether 'someone like Putin' was or was not as inevitable as Stalin was, or may have been, several years after Lenin's death. Ostrovsky quite rightly begins his account in the 1950s and also quite rightly attributes great importance to the degree of freedom of, and the extent of restrictions on, the media. After the Bolshevik coup in 1917, it was a matter of only a few days before Lenin introduced the 'temporary' Decree on the Press which remained in force, in effect, until 1986. The most important steps Putin took in 2000 were to start to close down the 'real' NTV (the independent TV channel set up by oligarch Gusinsky) and to attack the main 'state' TV channel run by oligarch Berezovsky. (Ostrovsky, understandably, makes no ad hominem remarks about Putin and never even hints that the Russian President himself just might be an oligarch, if of a different type.)

In addition, Ostrovsky reminds his readers of numerous media personalities who have played an important and constructive role by informing and stimulating the minds of Soviet, post-Soviet, neo-Soviet and postmodernist Russians: Yegor and Vladimir Yakovlev, Alexander Bovin, Otto Latsis, Alexander Nevzorov, Maxim Sokolov, Igor Malashenko, Sergei Dorenko and others. Attention is rightly drawn to the role of the periodical *Zhurnalist* in the 1960s and of *Moskovskiyevesti* (Moscow News) in the 1980s. But perhaps the real hero of the book is the old Communist Party functionary Alexander Yakovlev, who probably did more than anyone else to bring down the USSR (probably, like Gorbachev, without wanting to do so). A thorough English-language biography of this particular Yakovlev is badly needed.

Who, in 1991, thought or hoped that ten years later the President of Russia would be a middle-ranking KGB officer who had really wanted to join that evil organisation? This is not a rhetorical question, and it is hardly touched on by Ostrovsky, for very understandable reasons. There were three groups in power in the Soviet Union in 1991: the supporters of Gorbachev, the *siloviki* (state security personnel) who organised the temporarily failed coup, and the budding oligarchs who staged the temporarily successful counter-coup. It took the second group nearly a decade to get back into power, sharing it with those oligarchs, but only those oligarchs, who decided to support them. The combination of money and power has by now consolidated the kleptocratic Putinist regime, and the key mystery is well posed by the title of chapter 2 of this excellent book: 'New Beginning or Dead End'. Ostrovsky wisely doesn't add a question mark or answer his own implied question. Readers have to decide for themselves.

Martin Dewhirst



**Selected spring
reading list from
John Sandoe:
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Party Animals: My Family and other Communists

David Aaronovitch

A memoir of his early life and subsequent unearthings, observed with wit and humour: "One of the peculiarities of party life was that the most hardline, pro-Soviet, and 'proletarian internationalist' members of the party were to be found in places like Oxford, Hampshire and Surrey." **£17.99**

The Romanovs: 1613-1918

Simon Sebag Montefiore

A history of the dynasty. **£25**

The Noise of Time

Julian Barnes

The pleasures and pains of irony, used here as the last bastion of the self in the face of oppression, are picked apart in this clever, ruminative biographical novel about Shostakovich. An elegantly suspended narrative has him observing the "vast catalogue of little farces adding up to an immense tragedy" that was the Soviet experience. **£14.99**

Exposure

Helen Dunmore

Novel set in Cold War London; a file goes missing, a man arrested... betrayal, secrets, loyalties. **£16.99**

Kandinsky: The Elements Of Art

Philippe Sers **£60**

Vigee Le Brun: Woman Artist in Revolutionary France

Katharine Baetjer And an adored painter – and wearer - of hats. Catalogue for the forthcoming exhibition at the Met. **£30**

Russian Lacquer: The Museum of Lacquer Art Collection

Monika Kopplin & Franz Hemmerle

The Museum of Lacquer Art in Münster is the largest of its kind outside the Russian Federation. **£45**

The Invention of Nature: The Adventures of Alexander Von Humboldt, the Lost Hero of Science Andrea Wulf

This superb biography was one of our bestselling books before Christmas. A contemporary of Goethe, von Humboldt's explorations in South America made him a household name across the world. This fascinating book relates not only von Humboldt's astonishing exploits but also his immense, and continuing, importance. He was the first person to articulate the effects of human activity on climate, and is held to be the godfather of ecology and even of Art Nouveau. Tsar Nicolas I commissioned him (successfully) to look for diamonds in the Urals. **£25**

Russia's Cuisine: Tradition and Modernity

Published by Chernov and Co, Moscow www.chernovic.ru.

Hardback in case £79 plus p&p. Leather bound in case £110 plus p&p

There are cookery books that make you long to chop and stir and knead, and cookery books that make you want to travel, and taste and eat. Occasionally there is one that impels you to do both, as this marvellously sumptuous journey through Russian cuisine so very nearly succeeds in doing.

Although it does not set out to be encyclopaedic, it delivers a pretty comprehensive canter through eleven regions of Russia, with their extraordinary range of raw materials, and food traditions, as well as brief nods in the direction of new Russian cuisine and a few Jewish dishes. The result is a huge (rather too unwieldy for practical use) and glorious book that promises hours of greedy browsing for lovers of both food and of Russia.

Recent buzz words among the culinary Haut Ton have included 'Scandinavian' and 'foraging'. This suggests that the food of Russia is well placed to be the Next Big Thing, inspiring new riffs on tradition drawn from the age-old harvest from forest, river and steppe, and the integrity of fresh and robust flavours.

Of course, you could compile a thick volume simply about Russia's sublime bread, and despite the heftiness of this book, it contains only a hundred actual recipes, so there is much missing here. But there are wonderful sections on the old orchard fruits of Russia, the mushrooms to be foraged from damp meadow and woodland, the wild herbs, game and fish, that have been hunted cooked and preserved with ingenuity over centuries, and remain a much-loved part of Russia's connection with the land itself. There are even hints on how to cook bear, should you happen to find yourself with one on your hands.



Visually the book is a delight. The photography is particularly enticing, no mean feat when you consider that a great deal of northern food is beige-brown, the despair of food stylists. But they've pulled it off triumphantly, a feast in every sense of the word. Incidentally, I was thrilled to encounter the picture of Nyanya, a sheep's stomach stuffed with buckwheat, mutton and offal that is surely the separated-at-birth twin of haggis.

So why does the book not quite pull it off? Quite simply, the translation: the tone is colloquial American, grating and sometimes banal. There is also no indication that the translator knows his way round a kitchen, so some of the instructions barely make sense, or are perfunctory. Others I would not attempt, not least because there is no consistency in the measures used. Some use grams, others glasses,

which I imagine is a unit of volume similar to the American cup, or, indeed, Elizabeth David's famous Egyptian Players 50 cigarette tin. A section on Russian kitchen equipment and techniques would have been both interesting and useful. I greatly enjoyed cooking from the old Time-Life classic on Russian food, now more than 40 years old, and I would love a new definitive Russian cookbook. A second edition could put all these things right, and I hope the publisher considers it, because in every other way this book is pure gold.

Janet Wheatcroft

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My Russia

By Major (Ret'd) Catriona Caie

It is hard to say what stands out about my time in Russia, as I have many good memories. When I was told in 2010 that I had been selected for the appointment of Assistant Military Attache to Moscow, I had absolutely no idea what adventure lay ahead. It felt daunting, but it was exciting to think that I would get to live in the country that had been “behind the Iron Curtain” for so much of my life. Initially challenging was the 2 years of head hurting Russian grammar and the fun of Attaché training. This was followed by the frustration of waiting for my Diplomatic Visa and as a result I arrived later than planned on 1 June 2012.

My job as an Army Officer Attache was to learn as much as possible about the Russian Army, its reforms, attitudes, morale and status. In doing this, I, with the other International Attaches, was invited to many parades, celebrations and visits to various Army units. Through my job I got to travel as far as north as Murmansk, east to Lake Baikal, where I ran the International Ice Marathon, south to Rostov on Don and west to St Petersburg. You only realise how big, diverse and beautiful Russia is when you start to travel within her borders.

One thing that struck me, was how well respected the Great Patriotic War veterans were. For every major battle won during the War, there is a celebration to mark the day, which successfully keeps the veterans in the public's mind. Britain simply has Remembrance Day.

I took my old dog Sally with me to Moscow, which resulted in us walking in many parks. Novodevichy Park was the closest and it soon became the counter balance to my hectic Attache life. Parks are very actively used by flat dwelling Moscovites in all seasons and I never became tired of the



'Katy' Caie posing in true Bond style outside the British Embassy in Moscow

view of Novodevichy Convent. Summer or winter it is stunningly beautiful, especially on a Saturday when all the newly weds come to get their Wedding photographs taken in the grounds.

Ismailovo Market was another favourite place, for its hustle and bustle and the smell of lamb shashliks on the BBQ grills. It was full of artisans, sellers of tourist tat, Soviet antiques, furs galore and more. I went regularly and spent hours simply wandering about looking. It showed a more down to earth side of Moscow, far more friendly than the elitist designer malls. It was the focus for all of my

Christmas shopping, and I have many hand carved and painted Russian figurines for my Christmas Tree.

I left Moscow in August 2014 and drove home to Scotland with my dog. My Russian posting was very memorable and my last, so I wanted to leave it in a memorable way.



A veteran sniper (left) from the Battle of Stalingrad with the author

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