



The FORUM

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SRF news

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Teffi: a Must Read

A Russian Reindeer Goes to Sea

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From the Editors

This issue of *The FORUM* has been jointly edited by Jenny Carr and Sheila Sim, both SRF trustees.

I hope you enjoy reading this summer's magazine, and that everyone will find something to interest them in its usual somewhat eclectic range of topics.

Sheila Sim, my co-editor, kicks off with a report packed with interesting insights on her visit last year to the Museum of Kulikovo Field. She also contributed the excellent cover photograph.

We then have two articles on cultural topics from Moscow. Eddie Aronoff writes about his Stage Russia company, now in its second year, which provides the opportunity for Western theatre lovers to see what's happening in the Russian theatre. Invaluable. Audience members who came to the recent screening of *The Black Monk* in Edinburgh wrote to us to say "Would like to say again, the biggest thank you for organising such events! It is like a breath of fresh air. Very much looking forward to coming to the next one." and "I have attended the screening of the Black Monk theatre production yesterday at the Cameo in Edinburgh and fully enjoyed it. I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for organising such a great event."

Natasha Perova, also writing from Moscow, has been opening the world of contemporary Russian literature to English speakers for a lot longer than two years through her constant encouragement of translators, her publishing company Glas, and more recently and closer to home by means of regular blogs on literary topics for the New Russian Writing page of our website. In this issue she writes about the recently rediscovered author Teffi, encouraging us to read the excellent translations by Robert Chandler and others.

Dairmid Gunn, our Vice-President, recently edited of a book of reminiscences by Arctic Convoy veterans sponsored by the Russian Consulate. His article here highlights the unusual mission undertaken one of the convoy cruisers. Having received the gift of "Olga" the reindeer from a grateful Russian naval officer in Murmansk, they safely conveyed the animal back to Scotland and she lived out the rest of her days at Edinburgh Zoo.

And finally the St Gregory's charity, which does wonderful work with Russian and Georgian orphans, highlights a new venture – the use of "Alternative Technologies" to help the disabled.

Our book reviews cover a variety of new publications, many of which have already raised a lot of public interest and some of which have found their way into our library. We are extremely grateful to all our reviewers for their careful reading, perceptive comments and particularly for their acceptance of our ridiculously tight word limits.

And finally, the back page summarises Russia-related events at the Edinburgh Festivals in August—as well as the SRF launch of "Moscow Diary" (reviewed on p.14 by Martin Dewhurst). The late Marjorie Farquharson, who set up Amnesty's first Russian office in 1991, kept a diary of her year in Moscow. We have invited her boss at the time, Ian Martin, to come to Edinburgh to tell us about Marjorie, Amnesty and what it felt like to be working in Moscow in that year. *22 August, 6pm, Amnesty Bookshop in Marchmont. Book through the SRF (space limited).*

Enjoy the magazine, have a great summer and perhaps see you in August!

Jenny Carr, June 2018

The FORUM

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The aim of the Scotland-Russia Forum is to promote interest in Russia and its neighbours in order to improve understanding of those countries in Scotland.

www.scotlandrussiaforum.org



SRF News

More information on the SRF: www.scotlandrussiaforum.org

Events and Activities since January 2018

All year: Our conversation group *Chai n Chat* has met on the first Thursday of every month. Their excellent new meeting place is the Café de la Poste in South Clerk Street.

Jan and Feb: The SRF had a stand at SCILT *Business Brunch* events in Dundee and Edinburgh, talking to school students about learning Russian.

22 February: *Business and other people to people contacts with Russia.* Talk by Ian Proud, FCO. Joint event with Edinburgh University Business School and Cable Magazine.

8 March: *From Monastery to Metropolis: A History of Russian Gardens.* Talk by Sheila Sim. Joint event with Edinburgh University Dashkova Centre.

16 March: AGM (postponed from 28 February due to snow).

28 March: *Uncle Vanya.* Stage Russia screening from the Vakhtangov Theatre.

March, April: two school visits in Glasgow where we delivered Russian tasters to several classes

5 June: *The Black Monk.* Stage Russia screening from Vakhtangov Theatre (performed at MTuZ).

Forthcoming Events and Activities

22 August, 6pm: Edinburgh launch of *Moscow Diary* by Marjorie Farquharson. (See review on page 14 of this magazine). Speaker will be Ian Martin, head of Amnesty International at the time, who visited Marjorie in Moscow.

September: We hope to screen another Russian theatre production in Edinburgh with our partners Stage Russia.

Good news for our schools project

We have received a £2000 grant from *The Future of Russia Foundation* towards our schools project. The basic aim of that project is to interest schools and their students in Russia so that they are inspired to find out more, to study its language and culture – and finally to improve understanding of Russia in Scottish society as a whole.

In the light of current political events and (unfounded in our view) fears of “russophobia” expressed by Russian state and media outlets we would like to use our relatively modest means to encourage “people to people” contact by setting up a partnership between schools in Scotland and Russia with a view to organising joint projects. We are seeking interested schools in both countries and plan to start with a teacher exchange. We hope to have more to report on this in the near future.

If any other funding organisations are reading this and would like to support our plans please get in touch!

Russian classes for adults

Our tutors continue to offer excellent Russian classes for all levels as well as an advanced discussion group. I am sure many readers have been thinking about learning Russian or brushing up language learned at school or university. Or maybe you have advanced Russian but lack practice? September is the time to put all those good intentions into action!

The SRF Library

We are in the throes of a major overhaul of our small but very well-stocked lending library. Recent donations have forced us to think about our stock in order to make room for interesting new items. Items removed, duplicates, unwanted donations etc will be sold— we are planning a mega sale near the beginning of the new academic year, with a list of books for sale available to people unable to get to Edinburgh (Glasgow—we noted your distress when we held our last book sale). Watch for notifications in our e-bulletins.

SRF members

Thanks to readers who are already members (and please don't forget to renew your sub by 1 September). If you are NOT yet a member please think about supporting us.

The SRF is an independent organisation (supported only by members—apart from the schools grant mentioned above), working towards better understanding between Russia and Scotland, in a country (Scotland) where there is no Russian in schools and little interest outside them. We need your support—not just the £25 membership fee but your time, suggestions and active involvement.

Please think about it!

Jenny Carr, SRF chairperson. info@scotlandrussiaforum.org. Tel. +44 1315601486

The Museum of Kulikovo Field

Sheila Sim



Kulikovo Field

The Battle of Kulikovo Field, which took place in September 1380, is regarded in Russia as one of the country's three great, historic battles. Together with the Battle of Borodino in 1812 and the Prokhorovka tank battle in 1943, Kulikovo marked a crucial turning point in Russian history. All three battles have become national symbols of Russia's unwavering tenacity and unity when threatened by external enemies.

The opposing forces at Kulikovo Field were the Mongol Horde, led by Khan Mamai, and a combined army from the Russian principalities led by Grand Prince Dmitry Donskoy. At that time, Russia (or Rus', as it was known then) was not yet a unified state but a collection of principalities, often in conflict with each other. Victory on Kulikovo Field played a conclusive role in uniting the Russian principalities and emancipating them from the Tatar-Mongol yoke.

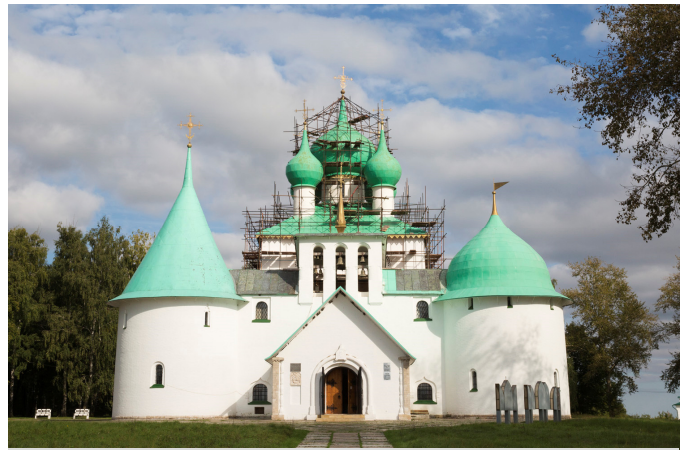
The first time the battle site was marked in any way was at the end of the 17th century, when Peter the Great visited Kulikovo Field and laid the way for the preservation of the site. In 1917 Alexey Shchusev (who would later design Lenin's Mausoleum) designed a memorial church on the nearby Red Hill of Kulikovo. During the 20th century the entire site experienced significant decline, but the 600th anniversary of the battle in 1980 heralded restoration and a new exhibition. Finally, in 2016 an entirely new museum complex was constructed.

I was recently commissioned by the museum to translate its audioguide into English. A translation job such as this doesn't always necessitate a site visit, but since I happened to be visiting Russia at a convenient time the director of the museum invited me to spend some time there.

Kulikovo Field lies in the Tula region, approximately four hours' drive from Moscow. The brand-new museum complex does not announce its presence from a distance but sits unobtrusively within the landscape. The architect, Sergei Gnedovsky, has created an artificial grass mound which conceals much of the building. The parts of the building that are visible are stepped and subtly designed to lie very



View of museum



Shchusev memorial church



Example of display



Portrait of Dmitry Donskoy
by Viktor Matorin



Mongol soldiers

И вечный бой! Покой нам только снится
Сквозь кровь и пыль...
Летит, летит степная кобылица
И мнет ковыль...

*Endless the battle! Blood and dust cover
our dream of peace.
The wild mare of the steppe sweeps on, on, over
the feather-grass...¹*

By chance, not long after my visit to Kulikovo Field I had the opportunity to visit the battlefield site at Culloden in Scotland, where a new visitor centre (designed by the late Gareth Hoskins) opened in 2008. I knew that representatives from Kulikovo had visited Culloden as part of a study tour of the UK a few years ago, while their own museum was at the development stage, and had heard that they were particularly impressed by the Culloden visitor centre. I was curious to see whether the Russians had adopted any ideas from the Scots, and sure enough, I noticed some technical and stylistic resonances. At both museums, for example, interpretation is colour-coded to represent the two opposing forces; hi-tech sound stations allow individual soldiers to tell you their stories; and both museums feature a room where a filmed reconstruction of the battle is projected simultaneously onto all four walls, putting the viewer in the heart of the fighting.

The two battles themselves, however, had little in common. The outcome of Culloden was devastating social division, with clan pitted against clan, family against family. The outcome of Kulikovo Field, by contrast, was to unite the Russian people and prove the value of having a strong leader. The museum overtly celebrates Russia's great military victories of 1380, 1812 and 1943 in a way that might induce slight discomfort in the western visitor. Many of the souvenirs in the Kulikovo gift shop feature Putin's face, and I found it rather sad that T-shirts emblazoned with the phrase ВЕЖЛИВЫЕ ЛЮДИ² were the last thing I saw as I departed for home.

Photographs by Sheila Sim.

¹ translated by Jon Stallworthy and Peter France

² Вежливые Люди ('polite people') refers to the masked soldiers in unmarked green army uniforms and carrying modern Russian military equipment who appeared during the Ukrainian crisis of 2014

Sheila Sim is a translator and photographer. She also leads garden tours of Scotland for Russian visitors, and offers tours of Russian gardens for British enthusiasts. Find out more at www.sheilasim.com

Sheila is a trustee and Secretary of the Scotland-Russia Forum and has co-edited this issue of FORUM magazine.

low across the mound; at the top is an observation deck, whose height corresponds to that of the Red Hill, from which Mamai watched the progress of the battle. From the deck, the rolling steppe extends as far as the eye can see; it is easy to imagine oneself back in the fourteenth century.

Inside is everything you would expect from a modern, world-class museum. Throughout the building, technology abounds - interactive screens, sound stations, and so on - but does not dominate. Interpretation throughout the route is colour-coded: exhibits associated with the Horde are represented by green (the colour of Islam, the state religion of the Horde from the 14th century), while the Russian side is coded orange. Many exhibits are replicas of original artefacts - be they books, weapons or other items - which can be handled by visitors, making it very family-friendly.

The ground floor deals with the historical context, the chronology of events and the two opposing leaders: Khan Mamai and Dmitry Donskoy. A zig-zagging ramp takes the visitor down to the lower level, at the centre of which is a glass pyramid containing a simulation of the battle. Figurines of thousands of soldiers, horses and camels are ranged across the three-dimensional display. Thanks to clever lighting projections, the battle comes to life: the shadows of the trees change, the rivers flow, the sun rises and sets.

The lower level of the museum provides a fascinating insight into fourteenth century life. Much attention is given to weaponry. The Mongols were absolute masters of the bow and arrow, and you can try your hand at drawing a bow (using replicas made by British craftsmen, no less).

The huge amount of research activity at Kulikovo Field is not confined solely to the museum. There is also a large-scale environmental project that aims to restore the landscape of the battlefield to the way it would have looked in 1380. Ecological and botanical research into the surrounding landscape shows that it used to be characterised by rolling meadows of feather-grass (*ковыль*, or Stipa). Intensive agricultural activity from the 19th century onwards had almost eradicated this beautiful sight, but teams of scientists and volunteers have been working for several years to restore it. The grass is noteworthy enough to have been mentioned by Alexander Blok in his patriotic poem "On the Field of Kulikovo":

A Cultural Thaw: Russian theatre goes global

Eddie Aronoff

My timing in life has always been suspect, and the launch of Stage Russia at the outset of a new Cold War doesn't exactly break that trend, but all the same it's kind of perfect; we're providing, in essence, a cultural thaw.

We're just now wrapping up our 2nd season, having delivered nine filmed performances from Russia's most renowned theatre companies in HD into cinemas across the U.S., U.K., Ireland, the E.U. and Asia.

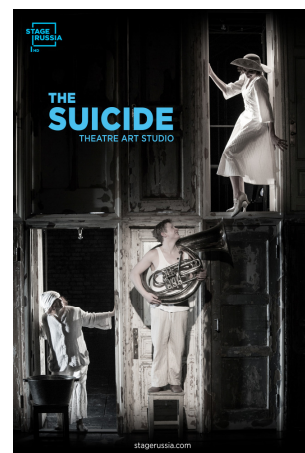
Obviously, our core audience at this point are Russian expats around the world, but these plays are so universal in their themes and so highly skilled, that they transcend and even, in a way, mend perceptions of Russia.

I moved to Moscow ten years ago as an English teacher. I began Stage Russia with this intercultural aspect in mind. The result is a project that has spread from a handful of cinemas in the U.S. to dozens there as well dozens more across the globe. There are also recently launched collaborations with Kanopy Streaming and Digital Theatre Plus, which provide hundreds of thousands of university students free access to Stage Russia's titles.

At this point, we've become an outlet for any Russian theatre looking to get their work out into the mainstream. Touring, particularly to the U.S., is expensive and limited just to the select few who have the resources to do it. Filming and distributing these works is a simple, relatively inexpensive solution. I know it sounds hyperbolic, but the world really needs to experience Tuminas and Ginkas and Zhenovach and Butusov.

The question still remains whether filmed performances can match the thrill of an evening at the theatre. Despite successful HD presentations from the Met Opera and London's National Theatre programs, it's clear that there is something lost in the stage to screen transfer. The goal, I think, isn't to match the emotional connection one has watching a live performance, which admittedly isn't possible, but to utilise the assets that filming offers; the close up, for example, and the ability to retell the story in the editing room. Some of the theatre directors we work with love the idea of being able to create this new version of the performance.

Our curated titles feature productions from Moscow's legendary Vakhtangov Theatre, the equally renowned Moscow Art Theatre, Kama Ginkas' Moscow Young Generation Theatre, Konstantin Raikin's Satirikon Theatre and even works from Novosibirsk's Red Torch Theatre. Screenings continue through the summer, both in first run events and encore presentations. For a listing of all titles, participating venues and cities along with information on the performances, including screening dates and showtimes, visit www.stagerussia.com.



Eddie Aronoff is the founder and producer of Stage Russia.

Screenings are all subtitled for non-Russian speakers. Edinburgh' University's Dashkova Centre showed "The Seagull" and "Eugene Onegin" and the SRF has recently hosted "Uncle Vanya" and "The Black Monk" at the Edinburgh Cameo Cinema. We had very enthusiastic audience feedback for both our events and hope to build on this with more screenings and larger audiences.

Have a look at www.stagerussia.com and let us know which performances you'd like to see next.

Teffi: a must read

Natasha Perova



We know many instances when great names in the arts, music, and literature remained forgotten for centuries and then were brought from oblivion by some remarkable individuals, who happened to come across such works, who were able to recognise their incredible artistic

merit at first glance and felt compelled to resurrect forgotten classics and make them available to contemporaries. I take my hat off to people who are willing and able to devote their time and energy to do that, who voluntarily assume responsibility for the posthumous life of great works. One such person is Robert Chandler, a successful translator, who might not have bothered about lost talents, but he did, and as a result the English reader received great works of literature in great translation reading like the original: among them such writers of genius as Andrei Platonov, Vassily Grossman, and Nadezhda Teffi. The latter is Robert's latest cultural feat and another precious gift for the English reader. It won him yet another translation prize: "Read Russia". Teffi is certainly a must read for all those who love good literature and don't want to have gaps in their education.

Thanks to her extraordinary powers of observation Nadezhda Teffi (1872-1952) won a reputation of the best chronicler of Russian émigré life in Paris where she settled after fleeing from revolutionary Russia in 1919. Her first humorous stories appeared in print in 1901. By the start of the First World War Teffi was Russia's most famous female author - Czar Nicholas II was a fan, and so was Lenin. Brands of perfume and candy were named for her.

A talented writer Teffi was sensitive to the current moods and trends in Russian society and was obviously aware of the imminent changes. On the eve of the 1917 Revolution her humour was getting increasingly sarcastic. For all her biting criticism of the tsarist Russia she could not accept the Bolshevik Russia either.

Teffi had a hard time making ends meet in emigration, especially towards the end of her life, but she still believed that "to make a person laugh is no less important than to give alms to a beggar... When you laugh you seem to forget about your hunger." Mark Aldanov, another major émigré author in Paris, called her stories "important evidence of the epoch" and "vivid material for future historians." However, Teffi's stories are more than historical evidence. She dissected human nature showing a person's true essence and worth which basically remained unchanged. In this sense she could be compared to Chekhov.

Satire and humour date quickly as a rule, but in Teffi's case the rule does not apply: her vibrant and witty stories enjoy renewed popularity today, and they are even more relevant than ever, as if they have been written about our

own times. Teffi was commonly quoted during her lifetime, but even more so in the 1990s, when she was widely published again: phrases from her stories instantly became popular memes. Arguably, Teffi's stories (the same as the comedies of Shakespeare and Moliere) may lose their relevance only if the world reaches mental and material wellbeing, which is not likely to happen any time soon.

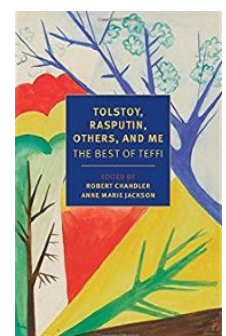
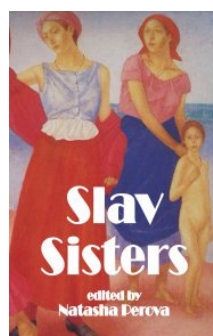
In emigration Teffi's talent sparkled even brighter. Critics agree that the Paris period in her writing career was more powerful and profound. She continued to spotlight stupidity, ignorance, and meanness in people, but she also sympathised with her unfortunate characters and tried to find some justification for their actions of cruelty, injustice and indifference. Her heart bleeds for lonely old people, dying children, abandoned animals, disillusioned men and women, and she depicts their misery with kindly humour and wisdom.

As many other Russian émigré writers Teffi was not noticed by foreign publishers at the time and remained unavailable for the English reader despite her considerable popularity in the émigré circles both in Paris and in Berlin. She was "rediscovered" fairly recently thanks to Robert Chandler: he not only translated Teffi on his own initiative and then convinced Pushkin Press to publish her, but he also promoted her work actively in every way he could. His efforts were crowned with success. Three books by Teffi have now been published to great critical acclaim. I just wanted to join this chorus of general admiration in case any SRF readers haven't read her stories yet. Teffi is certainly not to be missed. Enjoy.

Natasha Perova, publisher and long-time champion of Russian literature in translation, writes a monthly blog for the SRF, co-hosting our "New Russian Writing" webpage (www.scotlandrussiaforum.org/writers.html). Check it out if you haven't done so already! This article is also published on the blog.

"Slav Sisters (The Dedalus Book of Russian Women's Literature)", edited and introduced by Natasha Perova, is to be published in late June 2018 and will be reviewed in the next issue of FORUM. Details on www.dedalusbooks.com.

"Tolstoy, Rasputin, Others and Me. The best of Teffi", edited by Robert Chandler and Anne-Marie Jackson, is available on loan from the Scotland-Russia Forum library.



A Russian Reindeer Goes to Sea

Dairmid Gunn



An Arctic winter at sea. HMS Kent.

From 1941 to 1945 convoys of merchant ships of all shapes, sizes and tonnages sailed from Iceland and Scotland to deliver essential military supplies to the Soviet Union. They represented a response by the United Kingdom and the USA to an appeal from the Soviet Union, which in the summer of 1941 had been invaded by Nazi Germany. The convoys sailing from Scotland took the merchant ships from the anchorages of Scapa Flow and Loch Ewe on a course parallel to the coast of Norway and round North Cape to the Russian ports of Murmansk and Archangel. The voyage to these Russian ports took about 10 days. During this comparatively short time the ships had to endure appalling weather conditions and were exposed to attacks from enemy aircraft, surface ships and submarines. For tactical reasons the convoys sailed during the winter months when the long northern nights hampered enemy air reconnaissance and subsequent attacks by enemy surface ships and submarines. The constant threat by enemy forces demanded the protective presence of a variety of warships, ranging from aircraft carriers, cruisers (and occasionally battleships) to destroyers and corvettes. These ships were almost entirely provided by the Royal Navy.

For those who sailed in the warships there was little opportunity of going ashore at the Russian ports and getting to know their allies there. The reason was simple. After having shepherded their convoys to the Russian ports, the warships had to escort those merchant ships that had unloaded their cargoes back to the Scotland. Only damaged warships and those experiencing engine trouble had enough time to give limited shore leave to their crews.

In December 1943 a heavy cruiser, HMS Kent, was anchored near the military port of Polyarny on the Kola Inlet, the inlet that led to the port of Murmansk. The cruiser was on the point of departing when she received on board an unexpected Russian visitor and gift from the Russian Navy, a female reindeer. Her presence on board was the

main topic of conversation among the crew in the hours that followed. She was given the name Olga and became an honorary shipmate of the cruiser. Although accommodated in a potato locker, a humble abode, she was treated like royalty by the animal lovers on board. At that time animals on board ships was an accepted practice, with cats being the most favoured species. Olga was different; her name, her country and the association of reindeer with Christmas were in her favour. But, there were those on board who viewed her in a different light; they saw her in culinary terms as an improvement to the unimaginative daily diet offered by the ship's galley. The choice facing the crew was simply whether Olga was wanted as a mascot or an ingredient in the cooking pot. The animal lovers won the day, and Olga was assured of a safe passage from her homeland to Scotland. She was cared for by a working party controlled by the ship's bosun, which addressed its task most seriously and chivalrously. After all, Olga was the only lady in a ship manned exclusively by men. Like the men, however, she had to endure the rigours of an Arctic winter at sea in a ship that was often covered in ice. Despite the change in environment Olga seemed to thrive on the vegetable diet selected by the Bosun's small team.



Olga comes on board HMS Kent.
Photo from Russian Arctic Convoy Museum.

The cruiser's destination was Scapa Flow, an anchorage in the Orkney Islands, but this windy northern anchorage was not journey's end for Olga. The restricted accommodation on board had been uncomfortable for her and the ship's next port of call was unknown, as was so often the case in the War. These factors militated against her becoming the ship's mascot, a possibility that was eventually firmly dismissed. Where could she go? A return to Russia could not be guaranteed, and such a move would be considered undiplomatic. The final destination was closer to hand in the form of a more comfortable residence in Scotland's capital, Edinburgh. The director of the Edinburgh zoo was more than delighted to accept Olga as a gift from the Royal Navy. The War years had made the acquisition



of animals from abroad a very difficult and hazardous process. Olga arrived at the zoo on a most appropriate day for a reindeer and children, Christmas Eve. As in many fairy tales, Olga lived happily ever after. She had been a welcome incomer to the zoo and lived contentedly there until her peaceful death in 1953.

Dairmid Gunn is co-editor of a recent book on the Arctic convoys, 'Cold Seas and Warm Friendships'. He is Hon. Vice-President of the Scotland-Russia Forum.

'Olga', Admiral Sir Lionel Wells, his wife Lady Aline and Petty Officer A E Dowdswell shortly after the animal's arrival at Scapa Flow. Image © IWM reference A 20919. <https://iwmvolunteerlondon.wordpress.com> Dec 2017.

The Alternative Technologies: a new resource for the disabled

Julia Ashmore, St Gregory's Foundation



Disabled young people in Russia face enormous challenges. Only 15% of disabled adults in Russia are in employment. There are multiple reasons behind this: the physical environment is not accessible for disabled people and education is usually inadequate or non-existent. The majority of Russian disabled people are largely left out of new technologies and the internet which can give them opportunities to integrate into community life as never before.

St Gregory's Foundation, a UK charity, together with our Russian colleagues have launched a totally new project to help disabled children communicate. This is new not only for St Gregory's Foundation but also for Russia. It is called Alternative Technologies.

Alternative Technologies help the children communicate, learn and socialise. Those with the most limited motor control can use blow-suck, chin or other switches to stop and start a cursor that chooses letters, words or pictures. Those who can't use a mouse can move a pointer with tracking hardware that knows where they're looking. Even

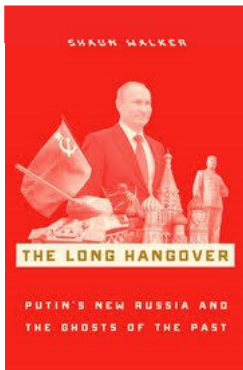
simple things, like big buttons or picture boards that speak when touched can give a child independent communication for the first time.

We now have three groups in St Petersburg and Moscow, helping 30 children, their parents and carers. Each child's ability to communicate has been thoroughly assessed and they are being given intensive support at sessions with a communications specialist and physiotherapist and the whole family attends a family support group each week. One of the boys we are helping is 13 years old. He is on the autistic spectrum and has learning difficulties. He doesn't communicate verbally, but can point to pictures to ask for simple things. Unable to express himself before he now learns to communicate by a simple, portable speech generator. Already, his behaviour is better because he is less overwhelmed by his surroundings and gets less frustrated.

*High tech alone can't do the job. Lack of technology and software in Russian, means a lack of local expertise. St Gregory's needs resources to train Russian practitioners, parents and carers – **we would greatly appreciate your support.** Technology is just half the story: it's the people who'll make it work. <http://stgregorysfoundation.org.uk/what-we-do/who-we-help/disabled-children/>*

For more information on St Gregory's Foundation see <http://stgregorysfoundation.org.uk>.





***The Long Hangover: Putin's New Russia and the Ghosts of the Past* by Shaun Walker**

Reviewed by Jen Stout

Two years ago a visit to Moscow inadvertently coincided with Den' Pobedy - Victory Day. After a long spell away from Russia, three things stood out during the hours I spent waiting for a night train in Kursky station. One was hard to ignore: the two looping adverts blaring from giant screens which hung over the heads of weary travellers, one of which managed to insert the themes of Russian greatness and trumping the west into something as simple as carbonated water. Another was the sea of young conscripts, fuzz on their faces, army boots too big. They milled about in uncertain little groups, waiting to be sent home to their provinces after the great parade.

But perhaps even more jarring were the ribbons. No jacket was complete, it seemed, without this orange-and-black insignia, nor any car bumper. A symbol of the Soviet victory in the Second World War, the St George's ribbon had taken on enormous significance by 2016, signalling a belief in the 'resurgent Russia' narrative that celebrates present-day military might as a rightful continuation of the 1945 victory.

This little ribbon crops up everywhere in Shaun Walker's *The Long Hangover*. On the lapel of a war-weary Russian justifying the public executions in rebel-held eastern Ukraine; adorning the chest of brutal Chechen ruler Kadyrov as he struts through the reconstructed streets of Grozny on horseback. It appears on a flag jabbed into the soil of a Kolyma memorial to those killed in the terror, crassly appropriating the stories of victims who were so long forgotten into a victory narrative; most chillingly, it is tied to the ends of the Kalashnikovs toted by 'defenders' of the fledgling Donetsk People's Republic, who gathered in the city's square as it teetered on the brink of war.

The sheer geographical spread of these examples indicates that this is a book based on a massive amount of meticulous, on-the-ground reporting. In his decade as Moscow correspondent for the *Guardian*, Walker did not limit himself to the capital, and the range of voices in the book is impressive, as are the vivid pictures he paints encounters with fascinating, and frustrating, characters.

Nuanced accounts of what is happening in Russia are sorely needed, so *The Long Hangover* should be read far and wide. At one point Walker is reprimanded by Vasil Budik, who himself is a perfect illustration of how complex this whole story is. Journalist, prisoner, Georgian refugee and suspected Ukrainian radical, Budik is later at pains to excuse the appalling behaviour of his captor, the loathsome 'Demon', who subjected Budik to a mock execution. The pair are still in regular contact, to Walker's amazement, via Skype. But Budik insists that "you shouldn't break people

down into such simplistic categories," and Walker never does, taking pains to untangle the competing versions of the truth with which people lecture and threaten him. He also avoids the crass 'not ready for democracy' explanation of Russia's post-Soviet turmoil, noting how the fear and hardship of those years fed the desire for stability and national pride now, though the role of the west in the fledgling country's economic meltdown is oddly absent.

Chapters on Ukraine are essential reading. With no hat in the ring, Walker reports evenly, dispelling much myth and propaganda: yes, a dark side to the largely pro-democracy Maidan protests emerged; the Azov battalion was, indeed, neo-Nazi in its ideology; however, the initial stages of protest in Donetsk were based on genuine social discontent and demands for change in what was even then a very poor part of the country.

In a lesson that bears repeating over and over again, Walker writes of the bewilderment of the city's small middle class, who had been "creaming off financial profits", when faced with the anger of the poor who looked to Russia for help. Though here it took the form of geopolitics and flags, this "classic process of social disenfranchisement" would echo in Brexit and Trump just a couple of years later.

A stark reminder of how quickly things descend is also provided by his Donetsk stories: the kindly, plump middle-aged women are suddenly screaming their intention to burn to death the Ukrainian soldiers they are hunting; journalists are labelled "foreign scum"; people start dying.

But throughout, Walker's only scorn is reserved for the journalists and celebrities who gladly swallow and promote the misinformation which muddies everything so much. The damage done by, for instance, John Pilger's erroneous article on the Odessa fire is immeasurable; so too the Russian television reports in 2014 of the impending deportation of eastern Ukrainians to make way for shale gas. Igor, a man who toiled hard in Donbass mines and loved the doves he collected, decided right after the broadcast to go and fight. He was quickly killed; his wife, inconsolable, still believes the news report. This is what 'fake news' can achieve.

Walker's writing is powerful. We are unfortunately used to descriptions of cruelly levelled villages and numb, shell-shocked children - but try to forget the image of Nikolai's sky-blue Volga car, his pride and joy, reduced to a "gnarled tangle of metal, small fragments of the beautiful azure still visible".

The modest lives they had worked hard to build, these decent people just trying to get by, had been destroyed by two groups of men who "lobbed explosives at each other", with no thought to the villagers in their path, and Walker's anger is tangible.

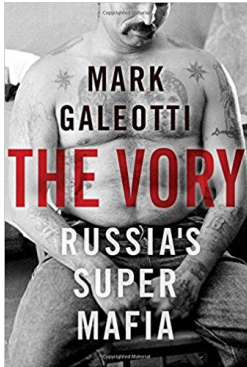
Having traced the origins and symptoms of war nostalgia

in the 'new Russia', Walker's description of this one village, where all hope was destroyed by "one [group] fighting under the red-black flag of the wartime Ukrainian nationalist army, and the other fighting under the orange-black St George's ribbon," neatly summarises the conflict which spiralled from this long hangover: complicated, fratricidal, and utterly futile.

Jen Stout studied Russian in the early part of her Sociology degree at Edinburgh University. She is now a journalist.

The Long Hangover: Putin's New Russia and the Ghosts of the Past by Shaun Walker.

Published by Oxford University Press 2018, Oxford. Hardcover £20, 288 pages. ISBN 9780190659240. Also published as an ebook.



The Vory: Russia's Super Mafia by Mark Galeotti

Reviewed by Martin Dewhurst

Yevgeny Yevtushenko believed, correctly, that in Russia a [genuine] poet is more than [just] a poet. Similarly, a vor in Russia is often more than merely a thief, so Galeotti is completely justified in using the Russian term in his fascinating new book. In many contexts this key word is better translated as 'crook', as, e.g., in the 2011 designation of the main political party in Russia as the *Partiya zhulikov i vorov* (The Party of Conmen and Crooks). Nearly all serious vory are male, but there is a female form (as in *soroka-vorovka*, a thieving magpie). Leskov's and, in the 1930s, Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, is more than an ordinary vorovka, of course.

Russians have traditionally had a soft spot for criminals, as indicated by the fame of the 18th-century Ivan Osipov, familiarly known as Van'ka-Kain (Kain is the Russian form of Cain, and you probably remember what Cain is reputed to have done to his brother, Abel). Van'ka worked both as a crook and as a police informer, sometimes simultaneously, so in modern terminology he was both a vor and, without undergoing a sex-change operation, a *suka* (bitch), or at least the son of a bitch. Pushkin was fascinated by a slightly later criminal, Yemel'yan Pugachev, an illiterate who had the temerity to claim that he, not a female minor German aristocrat, was the rightful heir to the Russian throne.

Not only Ukrainian and Russian readers of Gogol' may find the confidence tricksters Khlestakov and Chichikov no more crooked than most of the people they hoodwink – very few of the latter are completely straight. Shortly before he was arrested and sentenced to hard labour in Siberia as a political criminal, Dostoevsky published a short story entitled *Chestnyi vor* (An Honest Thief) – a phrase that occurs several times in Galeotti's book – and this is not a contradiction in terms, at least for those who thought and think that a good 'end' justifies the questionable, but sometimes unavoidable, means to get there. Even as a 'reformed' character, Dostoevsky understood not only the banality, but also the attractiveness, of evil, as represented by Stavrogin in *The Demons*. Later Russian writers were also attracted to vory. Babel' depicted some very personable wheeler-dealers in Odessa, and Leonid Leonov (1899-1994) published a novel entitled *Vor* in 1925-27, found he could not let the subject go, published a rewritten version in 1959 and then a re-written version in

1994!

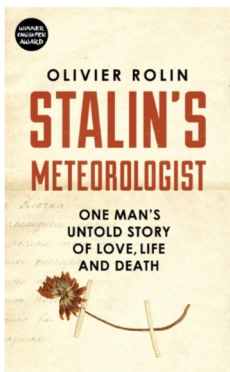
A new type of vor appeared in the USSR when Stalin (who himself had a very impressive criminal record both before and after the October Revolution) began to implement his plans for the forced industrialisation and forced collectivisation of agriculture towards the end of the 1920s: the vor v zakone, who, whether in the quickly growing Gulag or in the wider Soviet community, flatly refused to collaborate with anyone in authority. (The term has no adequate translation into English. Literally, it means 'a thief within the law', but in reality it denotes a professional criminal who acts in accordance with the code(x) of a kingpin after being 'crowned' in a special ceremony.) The leading vory v zakone regard(ed) themselves as avtoritety, and they may have more power in their territory than the official authorities or 'powers that be' (some of whom may also not have a particularly clean record). This suggests to me that Russia is still, in some important respects, in a neo-Soviet or semi-Soviet, rather than post-Soviet, stage of development, given that its President is an unrepentant KGB officer whose links with the criminal underworld, especially but not only in St. Petersburg in the 1990s, have been convincingly documented. This, of course, may only add to Putin's popularity as 'one of us', as it is almost impossible to thrive in today's Russia without occasionally doing something that is against the letter or the spirit of the law. Russia is still, of course, not a law-based state.

Galeotti and his publishers have made only minimal compromises in producing this fascinating monograph, which sketches out criminality in Russia before 1917, during the Soviet period and after the inglorious collapse of the communist experiment. This latter was, i.a., also a failed attempt to create an atheist society, which sheds light on one of Dostoevsky's characters' queries whether that would mean that anything and everything was permissible. The current demonstrative religiosity, whether genuine or fake, of some prominent Russian vory, quite a few of whom are politicians, active both in Russia and elsewhere (crime is also becoming more and more globalised), deserves further research. For all those interested in the future, as well as in the past and present, of Russia, this is a 'must-read' volume.

Martin Dewhurst was a Lecturer in Russian at the University of Glasgow.

The Vory: Russia's Super Mafia by Mark Galeotti.

Published by Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2018. Hardcover £20, xiv + 344 pages. ISBN 9780300186826. Also published as an ebook.



Stalin's Meteorologist by Olivier Rolin. Translated by Ros Schwartz.

Reviewed by Andrea Gullotta

Between 27 October and 4 November 1937 more than a thousand prisoners of the Solovki prison camp were executed in the forests of Karelia in one of the bloodiest massacres of Gulag prisoners ever recorded. To tell this story of horror is one of the hardest tasks for an author: facing the silent flatness of numbers, authors often try their best to convey the personal tragedies on the background of collective tragedies – Anna Akhmatova's desire to 'call all the victims by name' in the epilogue of *Requiem* sums this feeling. Historians, sociologists, novelists, poets, journalists have tried along the years to find a way to solve this terrifying knot, but few have succeeded as Olivier Rolin has in his book *Le météorologue* (Paris: Seuil, 2014), published in English by Harvill Secker in the excellent translation provided by Ros Schwartz.

Touched by the letters and drawings sent to his wife and daughter by Aleksei Wangenheim – the meteorologist of the title – Rolin has decided to dig deep into the biography and biographical material of Wangenheim with the intention to tell the story of a life, a family, a community devastated by state violence under Stalin. Rolin's first close encounter with the Gulag dates back to 2013 when he traced down the library of the Solovki prison camp, which had been lost for more than 70 years, in the remote village of Ertsevo, where one of the many 'Northern camps' (the one in which the Polish writer Gustaw Herling-Grudziński spent most of his detention) was situated. The library of the Solovki prison camp was unique: it featured almost 30,000 books, some of which were prohibited in the Soviet Union. This because the collection was comprised of the books sent to the prisoners by their loved ones, by donations and even by the books confiscated to people arrested. The library of the Solovki camp was one of many cultural wonders (together with thriving theatres, outstanding publications, respectable research centres etc.) produced in the archipelago in the Northern Sea during most of the years in which it was used by the Soviet state as a prison camp (1923-1939). Such a lively cultural scene was parallel to horror: the Solovki prison camp was one of the most horrific Soviet camps, the 'laboratory' of the Gulag (i.e. the place entrusted to the political police with the specific aim of creating a profitable system for the use of the prisoners' forced labour) where most of the techniques that were going to be implemented in the Gulag system were tested and sometimes created (such as Naftalii Frenkel's use of forced labour outside of the camps as a mean to industrialise the country).

Wangenheim's life epitomises the horrors and paradoxes of the Solovki prison camp and, more generally, those of a consistent number of Soviet people, and of the Soviet experience overall. A respected scientist, Wangenheim was arrested on false accusations and sent to the camp in the Northern Sea, where he would work mainly in the library before being taken to the mainland and executed. During

his whole period of detention, Wangenheim kept on sending letters to his wife Varvara and his daughter Eleonora, letters which chronicle the anguish of a father (they often included drawings, riddles and small lectures for his daughter), a husband, a disgraced professional, a loyal communist, an individual devoured by Stalinism. Rolin initially proposes a 'tentative biography' of the early years of Wangenheim based on the scarce information at his disposal on the scientist's life before arrest. He then expertly chronicles the detention period lived by Wangenheim by fusing together the scientist's words and his own, in an interplay, or rather a dialogue, which is of great significance – it is indeed a duet sung along the lines, where the reader constantly loses the perception of who is writing between the victim and the mediator. Rolin devotes the third part of his book to the detailed – and crude – description of the martyrdom of Wangenheim and of many other prisoners, as well as the aftermath, starting from the ignominious lies of the Soviet state to his widow, and arriving at the long battle fought by some researchers (mainly Iurii Dmitriev, Irina Flige and Veniamin Iofe) to find the mass graves in Sandarmokh, where Wangenheim and thousands of other victims are buried. After a series of reflections on the significance of his book on the backdrop of the memory of the victims of the Gulag, as well as of the relationship that Western intellectuals have had with the Soviet dream, Rolin closes *Stalin's Meteorologist* with the sad tale of Wangenheim's daughter's suicide in 2012, 78 years after her father's arrest, a way to underline how the trauma of the Gulag can remain alive in the people involved for all their lives.

Inspired, touching, shocking and profound, Rolin's book is a milestone in the memory of the victims of the Gulag. By telling one story in depth – the story of what he calls an 'ordinary man' – Rolin adopts the same device as Solzhenitsyn, who wrote *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* after reaching the conclusion that the best way to describe life in the camps was to describe one day of an ordinary prisoner. And it is only deplorable that more than 30 years after the closure of the Gulag system and some 80 years after the Great Terror we still need books like Rolin's to cherish the innumerable victims of the Gulag, while some of the people and NGOs who are actively involved in the preservation of their memory in Russia are put under pressure.

Dr. Andrea Gullotta is author of 'Intellectual Life and Literature at Solovki 1923-1930: The Paris of the Northern Concentration Camps' (Legenda 2018). To be reviewed in the next issue of this magazine.

He is Lecturer in Russian at the University of Glasgow.

Stalin's Meteorologist by Olivier Rolin
Published by Harvill Secker 2017.
Hardcover £16.99. 192 pages. ISBN 9781910701003. Also published in paperback and as an ebook.
Shortlisted for the Pushkin House Russian Book Prize 2018



Russian Émigré Short Stories from Bunin to Yanovsky Edited by Bryan Karetnyk

Reviewed by Anne Gutt.

In 1918 as the Red Army relentlessly destroyed the White Army's opposition, there was a refugee crisis in Europe. Thousands of Russians escaping the Bolshevik Revolution found their way to Berlin, Paris and China. There were the usual refugee accounts of struggles with a new language, the forging of bonds between displaced individuals, poverty, hunger, disillusion and humiliation. And as the possibility of returning to Russia receded, the refugees became émigrés. Displaced writers found their language inaccessible to the majority in their new homelands and Soviet Russia was not interested in their work. Many émigré publishing houses were set up and the short story became the most accessible form. It was also an essential source of income for émigré writers.

Russian Émigré Short Stories from Bunin to Yanovsky contains 35 stories originally published between 1920 and 1961, selected, introduced and edited by Bryan Karetnyk. All the authors are from the first wave of emigration from Russia. About three fifths of the stories are translated by Karetnyk, the others by another ten translators. Many of the works are translated here for the first time.

So why a collection of stories from émigré Russian writers?

One reason is the record they form of the experience of emigration: the struggle to find work, to support oneself, to adjust to one's new status – or lack of it.

‘Europe fusses over us like a child with a new toy and just doesn't know where to put us.

Thus, from an *international* perspective, we've landed on our feet.

But in our private lives – our common, day-to-day, humdrum lives – there's still some way to go before we'll see our bread buttered on both sides.

One cannot suppose that all two million of us can sing in gypsy choruses, dance the *kazachok* and munch on pressed caviar in the intervals.

There are those who don't eat at all.’

(Don Aminado in his satirical, bitter story ‘Auto-Suggestion’.)

There are stories of café life, gambling, reduced circumstances, poverty, suicide, dignity, love, death and the émigré writing life. Bunin's story ‘In Paris’ opens the collection in Robert Chandler's very fine translation. It is a beautifully wrought, succinct, humane story, both uplifting and devastating. And there is also humour: Teffi's stories in this collection are examples of her light, amusing *feuilletons*, which were extremely popular in Russia before 1918. Whilst entertaining they lack the emotional range and poetic depth of the more developed of her stories, which have appeared in translation recently.

Mark Aldanov was a writer of historical and political novels. His career flourished in emigration, and he was the only writer of the first generation Russian diaspora to make his

living entirely from his literary output. In ‘The Astrologist’ events unfold through the particular sensibility of the main character, history is shaped by chance rather than Marxist historical determinism. His work was unpublishable in Russia in the Soviet era. Bunin nominated him for the Nobel Prize six times.

And there is the question of how the Russian short story changed in emigration, subjected to different currents and influences. In ‘A Literary Studio’ Georgy Adamovich satirizes the situation of young émigré writers, setting themselves against the new Soviet literature, choosing between the classical Chekovian tradition practised by Bunin, Proust's modernism and the legacy of the Silver Age's symbolism, embodied by the older generation of émigré writers. ‘The Recurrence of Things Past’ by Yury Felsen is a direct imitation of Proust. Georgy Ivanov's ‘The Atom Explodes’ published the same year as Sartre's *Nausea*, takes an existentialist stance. It is perhaps influenced also by Celine's *Endless Night*, in its pessimism and explicit descriptions of the low and the base. These attempts at engaging with new styles are not always successful.

The ultimate example of the effect of emigration is Nabokov. This collection contains two of his stories, ‘The Visit to the Museum’ and ‘The Assistant Producer’. The luscious baroque of Nabokov's ironic aestheticism in the latter was so perfectly judged that I immediately went to the notes to see who had translated it. It was written in English, after he emigrated from the Russian language.

For me the outstanding stories were Gaito Gazdanov's ‘Princess Mary’ and ‘Black Swans’. Karetnyk includes four stories by Gazdanov, and has also translated several of his novels. Gazdanov combines a style of clarity and purity influenced by French writing, with existentialist themes. Pavlov in the compelling ‘Black Swans’ is according to the narrator ‘Of all the men I knew...the most remarkable in many respects’. His logical, rational assessment of his life leads him to suicide.

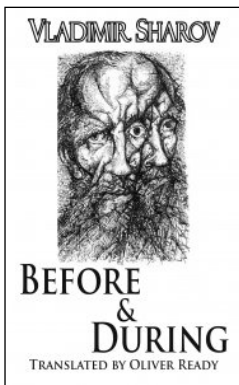
In some ways this is a frustratingly mixed collection. Whilst some stories are outstanding, others are of passing interest only, lacking enduring literary quality. But particular stories will get under your skin.

The book was short-listed for the Read Russia Prize 2018, and highly commended, with particular praise given to Karetnyk's translations of Gaito Gazdanov.

The excellent detailed biographical notes and notes on the individual stories provide a specific context for each piece. The combination of biography and story creates something especially resonant. As a record of this confluence of historical events, geographical displacement and literature, *Russian Émigré Short Stories* is a very valuable resource.

Anne Gutt is a poet and translator currently translating the work of Russian poet Nina Iskrenko (1951-1995).

Russian Émigré Short Stories edited by Bryan Karetnyk. Published by Penguin Classics 2017. Paperback £12.99 464 pages. ISBN 9780241310908. Also published as an ebook.



Before and During and The Rehearsals by Vladimir Sharov. Translated by Oliver Ready.

Reviewed by Elena Malysheva.

When you put down Vladimir Sharov's books you feel as if you have woken up from a strange but captivating dream. As in all dreams, you visit a reality that has been turned upside down. Oliver Ready's thoughtful translation of *Before and During* and *The Rehearsals* guides us through the Russian past which at times is comically absurd, at times dark and poignant - but always personal.

Before and During opens in Moscow, in 1965. The narrator admits himself into a psychiatric hospital in an attempt to manage his blackouts, which he developed as a result of a head injury. There, amongst brutally vivid and often grotesque descriptions of life in a psychiatric ward, emerges a quiet yet

clear voice of an anxious soul. 'Insane' in Russian is 'душевнобольной' or, literally, someone whose 'soul is unwell'. Oliver Ready beautifully captures the voice of that aching soul.

The soul is trying to find peace in the midst of chaos by observing, analysing and explaining what is going on around him. The narrator is devoted to what is becoming increasingly precious: his memory. In an attempt to capture the past he starts writing a lament for people he loved. He believes that thinking about them and remembering them is what gets them nearer to resurrection. He chooses people who weren't particularly happy, those who felt bitter and disgraced, those who 'departed in sorrow'. There, in a Soviet mental hospital he finds and opens a door to the past, where the destinies of historical figures and ordinary people intertwine in a mystical and serendipitous way.

One of the people he includes in his lament is Leo Tolstoy who, as we find out, eats his twin brother in his mother's womb. (The brother is later reborn as the great writer's son Lev Lvovich). The narrator feels as closely connected with Tolstoy, Ivan the Terrible and Christ as he would with someone he knew personally. He sees the same tortured souls in all of them: 'I felt ... that He, too, was lost and unsure what to do next, unsure whether people were even needed in the world He had created. If an ordinary man ... really can show love for his neighbours ... then we really are worthy of life.'

His musings about Christ end with what feels like a splash of cold water: 'My love for Him did not remotely interfere with my love for Lenin'.

The Rehearsals is also set in Moscow in 1965 and takes us even further back in time. The narrator studies the diaries of a seventeenth century French theatre director Jacques de Sertan who found himself in Russia in 1654. A local priest, patriarch Nikon, wants Sertan to stage a miracle-play in anticipation of the Apocalypse predicted for 1666. He wants to recreate Jerusalem in Russia so he builds a temple which is an exact copy of the one in Jerusalem. The play is to be performed at Christmas of 1666 and all the actors are simple Russian peasants. The only missing character is Christ, because He will turn up in person. He will have to. The Apocalypse doesn't happen but the actors are hired, the script is written and Sertan continues to rehearse.

The unimaginable challenge for a translator - once you've understood the plot - is to operate in several layers of the Russian language. We are taken from the Soviet reality to the seventeenth-century Russian village where we are invited to participate in the rehearsals of a Biblical text. Oliver Ready 'transcreates' the dark fantasy in the text, which as well as reading beautifully in English, inexplicably sounds very Russian: 'The journey proved extremely lengthy; the carts inched along, the highway crammed with soldiers was all muddy from the autumn rains, and it was October before they reached Smolensk.'

Vladimir Sharov and Oliver Ready introduce us to a captivating and unsettling prose where the characters share an ability to see something hidden from the rest of us. They are devoted to memory and passionate about historiography in their endless effort to *understand*. To understand power, to capture the image of the epoch, to explain the changes in national character and identity, to understand history. After all history is theatrical and what is life but a rehearsal of an eternal play?

Elena Malysheva was born in Leningrad in 1979 and has lived in the UK since 2003. Having worked as a teacher of both Russian and English for many years, she moved into translation in 2010 and has worked in the fields of media, education, art and literature. This includes published work (mostly for 'Inostrannaya Literatura' magazine in Russia).

Elena currently teaches Russian at a school and is involved in several translation projects (literature and film).

Before and During and The Rehearsals by Vladimir Sharov. Translated by Oliver Ready. Published by Dedalus Books 2014. Paperback £12.99. 348 pages. ISBN 9781907650710 . Also published as an ebook. Shortlisted for the Pushkin House Russian Book Prize 2018

MOSCOW DIARY



MARJORIE FARQUHARSON

Moscow Diary by Marjorie Farquharson.

Reviewed by Martin Dewhirst.

Marjorie Farquharson was born in Glasgow, gained a First Class degree at St. Andrews University (political science, Russian) and from 2001 to 2016 lived and worked as an independent human rights consultant in Edinburgh. She always kept a low profile, so readers

of this short review may well not realise what a remarkable person she was. When I last saw her, at a 'Forum' meeting in 2015, I had no idea that she had been suffering for many years from multiple sclerosis and would die the following year, in her early sixties, from cancer and pneumonia.

In 1978 Marjorie started working at Amnesty International (AI) in London as an expert on the USSR. Cooperation with 'the Kremlin', then as now, was very difficult, but over the years more and more Soviet citizens 'came out' as supporters of AI, and in 1990 it was decided to try to open an office in Moscow. Who better than Marjorie could do this? (A rhetorical question.) So she spent most of 1991 and the first three months of 1992 in Russia, experiencing the coup and counter-coup at first hand, the displacement of Gorbachev by Yel'tsin and the partial replacement of the USSR by the Russian Federation. Moreover, somehow she found the time and energy to keep an almost daily diary all that exhausting time.

Marjorie's less official activities included helping the Quakers to shore up their tiny base in Russia and pushing as hard as she could for the abolition of the death penalty,

but her top priority was, of course, having received official Soviet and then Russian approval, to find, equip and then open AI's modest premises in Moscow. I hesitate to use yet again the banal phrase 'something out of Kafka', but I can't think of any better way of describing the content of much of this book. Moreover, the endless buck passing was accompanied by dreadful economic conditions even in the capital: 'Today [a colleague] met a woman who had a ticket to prove she is No. 503 in the queue for sugar. There have been no eggs around for about a month' (p. 197). In addition, living alone in a tiny flat, 'In the last few months I've had my phone tapped, my mail read, received a threatening letter [wishing her dead], lived through a coup, been robbed...' (p. 220). 'A funny thing today: I popped back into the flat at midday, picked up the phone, and the mouthpiece reeked of vodka... When I picked up Amnesty's letters from the PO box, several were torn open and one arrived closed, but empty' (p. 289).

What conclusions did Marjorie come to? On the last page of her diary, on 31 March, 1992, she writes that some Russians thought that the recent coup 'was not significant – simply a baronial fight in Moscow, which has really changed nothing. ... But perhaps the significant things in history are precisely the things that stay the same, and that does not discount the coup.'

Moscow Diary by Marjorie Farquharson.
Published by Matador, Leicester 2018.
Papercover £10.99, Kindle £4.99, 306 pages.
ISBN 9781788038676.



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Will you be in Edinburgh this August?

Some suggestions of events from Russia and neighbouring countries to see before the fireworks bring the Festivals to an end.

All details on <https://www.scotlandrussiaforum.org/festivals.html>

EDINBURGH
INTERNATIONAL
FESTIVAL

Russian musicians **Victoria Mullova** (violin) and **Alexander Melnikov** (piano) will be performing at the Queen's Hall on 8 and 14 August respectively.



Music for children from **Misha's Gang**

Comedian **Oleg Denisov**

An ironic take on Shakespeare from pantomime artists **Mikhail Kukota** and **Igor Chekhov** in "The Whole of Shakespeare"

A variety of theatrical shows:

- "Otosotr", based on the true story of Koreans deported to Kazakhstan in 1937
- "A Hero of Our Time" by a Belarus/Russia/UK company
- "The Contract" by the **AA Bryantsev Youth Theatre** from St. Petersburg
- **Misha Glenn**y talking about the mafia

Dance and physical theatre from the **Alyona Ageeva Physical Theatre PosleSlov** (two shows—"Sky Labyrinths" and "(Some)Body")

And finally cabaret (18+ only) from **Shantisha and Ivan**



Edinburgh
International
Book Festival

Visiting authors include **Anne Applebaum** on Stalin's treatment of Ukraine, and **Rodric Braithwaite** on the Cuban missile crisis. More recent political topics are covered by **Oliver Bullough** (the super-rich and moneylaundering) and **Luke Harding** (Russian support for Trump). It's not all politics and history though. **Viv Groskop** reminds us of the joys of Russian culture in *The Anna Karenina Fix*, and recent Uzbek and Russian novels are presented by authors **Hamid Izmailov** and **Eugene Vodolazkin**. And finally a thriller from **Gerald Seymour** on cyberhackers and other aspects of the dark side. There are lots more too!



22 August: Launch of *Moscow Diary* by **Marjorie Farquharson**. Moscow in 1991 and the establishment of Amnesty's first office there.