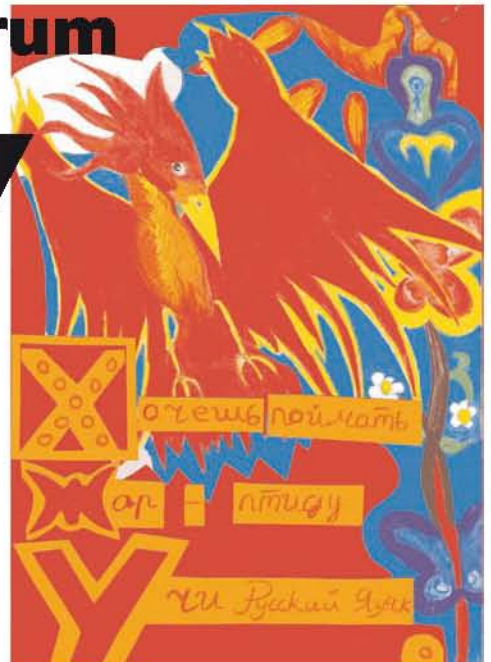


The Scotland-Russia Forum Review



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To mark the close of Russian Language Year 2007 the SRF *Review* has gathered some opinions on why people do and should learn Russian. Our contributors range from native speakers to those who have just begun to study the language.

The question of why people should learn Russian was also posed to competitors in the SRF's poster competition, the winning entries of which we are delighted to display on our first colour front page. From the top: Philippa Yates in the 12-18 category, Natasha Eggett in the 18 and over category and Andrew Suffield, of the 6-11s. Well done to them and to all other entrants, some of whom can be seen inside. The number of entries to the competition certainly does not reflect what seems to be a low point in the uptake of Russian at the moment.

Enthusiasm for the language is plentiful in our review of books section, which includes articles on the colourful parts of Russian and also the country's architecture; as well as two books from Britons who have travelled extensively in Russia.

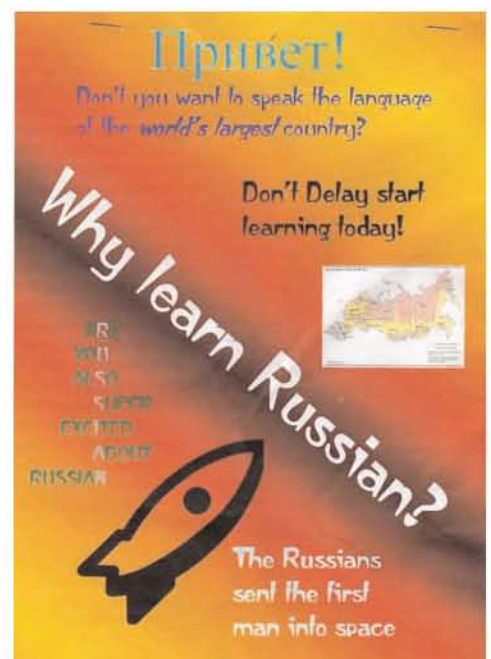
Our articles focus on ties between Scotland and Russia: a monument erected in Ayrshire to a Russian cruiser; the work of a Scot living in the Caucasus and the work of a Russian living in the Highlands; as well as a Russian choir in Scotland.

Inside are also further details from our chair, Jenny Carr, of the big changes that have happened at the SRF. Firstly, the SRF is now a registered charity. Secondly, there are plans to set up a Russian cultural centre.

This new-look edition of the *Review* has been put together by a new editorial team. We would like to thank those who took the time to contribute and invite anyone who has ideas or comments for this or our June 2008 edition to get in touch.

With best wishes for Christmas and New Year.

Chris Delaney
Editor



The SRF Review has gathered some thoughts and opinions on the Russian language. Our series begins with an interview with Vladimir Malygin, Consul General of the Russian Federation in Scotland.

Форум Шотландия-Россия:

Какие мероприятия шотландское консульство организует в честь года русского языка?

Мальгин: Решение о проведении в 2007 году Года русского языка принято на основании Указа Президента РФ от 29.12.2006 г.

Организация и проведение мероприятий в рамках Года русского языка в соответствии с Указом возложены на Посольства России в странах пребывания совместно с Российским центром международного и культурного сотрудничества при МИД России, в задачу которого входит содействие развитию всесторонних связей соотечественников с исторической родиной, взаимодействие с русскоязычными диаспорами за рубежом и укрепление позиций русского языка в мире.

В Великобритании, частью которой является Шотландия, все мероприятия в рамках Года русского языка организуются Посольством России в Лондоне, в штате которого работает представитель Росзарубежцентра, который и отвечает за работу в рамках Года русского языка.

5 сентября с.г. в зале одной из общественных библиотек Эдинбурга открылась подготовленная Российско-шотландским форумом при поддержке Посольства России в Великобритании и Генерального консульства России в Эдинбурге выставка любительского плаката на тему: «Зачем изучать русский язык?». Выставка наглядно продемонстрировала что, несмотря на существующие проблемы в области популяризации изучения русского

языка в Великобритании, связанные как с сокращением числа языковых факультетов в учебных заведениях, так и с высокой конкуренцией со стороны, прежде всего, французского и китайского языков, сохраняется высокий интерес к изучению русского языка и культуры, в том числе, в среде молодежи.

В уходящем году Генконсульство передало шотландским университетам печатные издания и видеоматериалы по российской тематике для практического использования в учебном процессе преподавателями-русистами. Ряд материалов также, при посредничестве Генконсульства, был получен из Администрации Санкт-Петербурга.

В конце ноября текущего года Генконсульство планирует проведение приема, приуроченного к Году русского языка.

ФШР: Почему бы Вы рекомендовали не русскоязычным изучение русского языка?

М: Русский язык является родным для 170 млн. человек и 350 млн. человек его понимают. Таким образом, русский язык является четвертым самым распространенным языком в мире. Русский язык является языком общения более 160 народов и национальностей России. Русский язык – это язык великой литературы, и уже поэтому он так популярен в мире. Не говоря уже о том, что первые слова в космосе были произнесены на русском языке. Русский язык является также одним из официальных языков ООН.

Сейчас за рубежом проживает около 30 млн. человек, для которых русский язык является родным. Кроме того, 18 млн. человек в мире изучают русский язык. Например, французы считают изучение русского языка хорошей «гимнастикой для ума», там он и популярен. В Великобритании и в Шотландии

2007

Год русского языка

растет число русских, которые учатся, работают и живут в этой стране. По некоторым оценкам, в Соединенном Королевстве в настоящее время проживает до 0,5 млн русских. В этой связи весьма актуальным, на наш взгляд, является изучение русского языка.

ФШР: Видите ли Вы какие-либо препятствия в распространении русского языка – имеется в виду сложность языка, отношение других стран к России, статус России на мировой арене и т.д.?

М: Препятствий для распространения русского языка не вижу. Русский язык выучить не сложно, требуется лишь желание. Многих отпугивает легенда о «трудности» русского языка, но он – не сложнее и не проще других языков. В ряде университетов Великобритании русский язык входит в программу обучения, и никто не собирается его преподавание прекращать.

Отношение других стран к России сказывается и на языке. Дальше всех пошли страны Балтии, с недавних пор члены НАТО и Евросоюза. Некоторые западные политические деятели, в том числе и в Великобритании, ставят эти страны нам в пример как страны с развитой демократией. Задумайтесь - о какой демократии можно говорить, если во главу угла государственной политики в этих странах поставлена цель лишить русскоязычных граждан, а это треть населения этих стран, права говорить на родном языке. Русский там называется не иначе как «язык оккупантов». Несмотря на протесты русскоязычного населения, принимаются решения о закрытии русских школ или переводе их на национальные языки даже если они не готовы

такому переходу. Если следовать логике тамошних политиков, то следует и английский в США или Австралии называть «языком оккупантов».

В постсоветский период аудитория иностранцев, изучающих русский язык, сократилась примерно в три раза, зато изменилось качество аудитории: отпала идеологизация преподавания языка, а политическая мотивация заменилась практической.

ФШР: Как Вы относитесь к тому, что преподавание русского языка в школах и университетах Шотландии резко снизилось? И как Вы относитесь к общей тенденции уменьшения в Шотландии интереса к русскому языку? Я приведу пример закрытия кафедры русского языка в университете Стратклайд и во многих средних школах.

М: Конечно, неприятно, что в каком-то университете закрывается кафедра русского языка. Сожалею и о том, что таким образом часть студентов лишается доступа к многовековой и богатой российской культуре. Однако такое закрытие, как правило, диктуется экономической необходимостью и понижением спроса на русистов и не несет политического подтекста. Во всяком случае, речь о повсеместном закрытии русских кафедр речи не идет.

Как говорил великий российский ученый М.Ломоносов – «если где-то убывает, то в другом месте прибывает». В данном случае, что касается отношений с Россией, граждане России активно учат английский язык и получают высокооплачиваемую работу в британских компаниях как в самой России, так и Великобритании. А ведь на их месте могли бы быть, например, шотландцы, если бы знали русский язык. Известно, что в настоящее время в России работают многие шотландские нефтяные и другие компании, где знание русского языка необходимо.

Timothy Phillips, author of *Beslan: The Tragedy of School No.1.*

“ I have been learning Russian since 1991. Aged 12, I was asked to choose another foreign language (to supplement French and Latin) at my school in Belfast. I chose German, but was made to learn Russian because the German class was oversubscribed.

It was another five years before I visited a country where they actually spoke Russian. My teacher was out of sympathy with the post-Soviet world and, as a personal protest, refused to take school trips any more, as he had done before 1990.

When I finally went to visit the Ukrainian city of Zhitomir, I was already hooked on the Russian language (though my version of it was very far from perfect).

After that, I spent a year living in Tbilisi, in Georgia, where Russian was my lingua franca. Although there was some hostility towards resident Russians who spoke their language and refused to learn Georgian,

there was nothing but kindness towards an Irishman who was only doing his best to communicate. In fact, I have found this wherever I have gone in the Caucasus, and it is only in Estonia that I felt people were unhappy to speak Russian to anyone, whether they were Russian or not.

It was not until 2001 that I finally visited Russia, on the first of many long trips to St Petersburg, where I researched my doctoral thesis at the Public Library (now officially called the Russian National Library).

At each point when I have faced a choice about whether or not to continue learning Russian and studying Russia, I have felt that I didn't really have a choice at all. I am so fascinated by the place and the people, and have always felt that I want to know more and understand more. Perhaps it is inevitable, but as a foreigner you only ever really see another place through a lens that distorts. My continuing commitment to studying Russia is an attempt to correct the distortion.

Turn to page 9 for an interview with Timothy Phillips.

Lynda Rossman teaches Tai Chi and has been learning Russian since February.

“ Why learn Russian? For me personally, simply because it sounds so beautiful – it sings to me. I started learning Russian in February this year, having put it off for decades because it looked so difficult. Let's face it – even the first look at the alphabet is frightening!

I am not attending a class. A friend of mine who had attempted to learn Russian a long time ago gave me his old study book and I started with this. It's called “Russian made simple”. This is a very helpful book which is sadly no longer in print.

I also, naturally, needed to hear the language so I then went on to buy some audio cds which I listen to when I am driving – I am that woman who talks to herself in the car!

Then I made contact with a Russian lady, Natasha, who lives in Dundee with her husband and she agreed to help me in my quest.

We meet up every week – she helps me with my pronunciation and we go over grammar points in my book. Then we switch to English and we talk about various topics related to life and culture in Russia and in Britain while I occasionally help with her pronunciation.

I also made contact with my son's friend who had studied Russian while he was at university and had then worked and lived there for a while. The grammar can be very difficult – 6 cases! Although the grammar can have me groaning out loud – I still love the language and am determined to be speaking it soon.

I dearly want to visit Russia some day and be able to converse with Russians in their own language when I get there.

Denis McCartney, part-time assistant inspector of further education colleges for HM Inspectorate of Education and member of the Edinburgh Russian Language Group.

“ I've found the Russian conversation groups invaluable in helping me rediscover the Russian language. I studied Russian at school and university in the '60s, theoretically to quite a high level, as part of a degree in modern languages. However at that time it was very difficult to spend more than a few weeks in the Soviet Union, so I never had the level of confidence and fluency I would have liked.

In any case, language learning is very much a 'use it or lose it' activity and gradually my Russian was slipping away through lack of practice, despite sporadic attempts to revive it.

The conversation groups are ideal for me, as I now get a bit of regular practice in Russian every week, and try to do a bit of reading and thinking in Russian between meetings. Our main resources are of course the generous help and support of our native-speakers Irina Voloshinova and Anastasia Melnik for the Saturday group, and Yana Zykova for the Wednesday group. We agree topics for discussion and then contribute according to our ability (very Marxian!). The native speakers have the unenviable task of keeping us on the straight and narrow linguistically, and also produce lists of new words and expressions which have come up in our discussions.

For me, and I'm sure for the other members, it works better than a formal class - small numbers, friendly atmosphere, and no exams! Spasibo bol'shoye, Irina, Yana i Nastya!

The Saturday Conversation Group meets in the Meadow Bar, 42-44 Buccleuch Street, Edinburgh, from 12.00 to 2.00.

Natasha Kucherava lives in Murmansk and is in her final year of training to become a Russian teacher.

“ Сейчас в русском языке становится всё больше слов заимствованных из английского. Это, по моему мнению не “плохо” или “хорошо”. Я считаю, что это естественный процесс,

связанный с всё большим и большим проникновением западной культуры в Россию. Например, в 19 веке в Русской речи использовалось огромное количество слов из французского языка - сейчас некоторые из этих слов остались и прочно закрепились в языке, некоторые используются как стилистически окрашенные (в художественной литературе например). Нечто похожее происходит и сейчас - изучение английского языка в русских школах стало намного профессиональней. Сегодняшний выпускник средней школы

владеет английским на гораздо большем уровне, чем скажем, выпускник средней школы 10-15 лет назад. Также немалую роль в смешении и взаимовлиянии культур играет интернет. В русском языке появилась особенная лексика, используемая в интернет блогах. Таким образом - появились такие слова как “френд” “юзер” и тд.

Вот ещё примеры лексики, заимствованной из английского языка “мейкап, диджей, шоппинг, киллер, дивиди и т.д. Вообще, заимствования из других языков есть везде, во всех языках, и это совершенно нормально, но я думаю что мы, носители русского языка должны стараться не переусердствовать в использовании иностранных слов и сохранить свой язык.

Говорите по-русски правильно! Вот к чему мне хочется призвать моих соотечественников сегодня. Давайте не будем забывать, что русский язык “великий и могучий”!

Tim Jackson, trainee PR consultant

“ I picked Russian at university as an extra class in 2000. Having not had much experience of learning languages, it was the routine required to absorb words and grammar that I found difficult at first. But later this was to be one of the major motivating factors in continuing: progress is there to be seen and heard.

I had studied Russian for two years before my first visit to the country, knowing that my level was rudimentary but believing it good enough to get by. That was blown out of the water at the airport when I couldn't make it clear to a cashier at a bureau de change that I wanted to change money.

It was spending time in the country that got me hooked. It would be impossible to say that then and during subsequent visits I always had

fun. Sometimes I really didn't. But even in those moments Russia was always interesting, always making me either love or hate it.

I'm not sure if I would recommend that people begin studying Russian. Despite my continuing attempts to learn the language, I'm astounded when I look back at how I managed to get to the moderate level of understanding I'm at now. Why would anyone be a mute guest at a Russian dinner party or put themselves through the humiliation of ordering food in a restaurant only to be asked the dreaded follow-up question about a side dish?

One strong benefit of learning Russian, true of any language, is what it teaches you about your own language; never was I sure what grammatical labels to use for parts of sentences.

It also gives you the chance to look at your own culture from an outsider's perspective, something which I think everyone would benefit from doing.



Members of the Perth Russian and English Conversation Group (left to right around table) Mirja, Jim, Natasha, Sandy, Lora, Wendy and Susan.

Wendy Paterson, co-ordinator of the Perth Russian and English Conversation Group.

“ I was lucky enough to grow up with Solzhenitsyn, Tolstoy and Tchaikovsky! As a child, I heard wondrous music issuing forth from my father’s old and very large “music centre”. I learned that this heavenly sound was called, “The Sugar Plum Fairy” and had something to do with someone called Tchaikovsky. I loved the sound of his name...

On my father’s bedside table lay the biggest book I had ever seen and my father spoke to my mother about war, peace and someone called Natasha. I was intrigued...

Somehow, whilst still in primary school, I got hold of a copy of Solzhenitsyn’s “The Cancer Ward” and was totally absorbed by his writing, which took me to a different world...

Fast forward thirty years and as an adult, the only Russian words I understood were “nyet”,

“da”, “glasnost” and “vodka”!

This was before I met the man who is now my fiancé. He is Russian and I decided instantly that I would learn his language. For a few months, I taught myself using the excellent book, “Teach Yourself Beginner’s Russian” and listened obsessively to the accompanying CDs. Kandinsky covered my walls, I devoured Tarkovsky films and was touched by the most beautiful poetry of Pushkin. I read, “Master and Margarita” by Bulgakov — in English, I must admit! One day I will be able to read it in Russian...

Through the Scotland-Russia Forum, I found out about the Russian Conversation Group in Edinburgh. Nowadays, there is one in Perth too! I am privileged to be a part of it and to have met so many interesting and clever people, all learning or improving their Russian or English. We are attracting new members all the time and apart from our conversational activities, we swap Russian DVDs and books and enjoyed a

night out at the Meg Luckins “Treasures of Russia” event in Perth.

I recently returned from my first trip to Moscow. I was delighted to be able to converse and understand what was said to me while

I was there and I picked up far more slang than I should have! I brought back the inevitable “matryoshki” as little gifts for the women in our group and there is some talk now about organising a tour...

In the immediate future, however, I am eagerly awaiting the arrival of my Christmas present to myself. My first ever Vladimir Vysotsky CD...

So, why learn Russian? Quite simply, because of the country and its people. It isn’t called “The BIG Russian Soul” for nothing, you know...!

■ The Russian and English Conversation Group meets every Saturday in the Perth Concert Hall cafe at 11am. Russian for English speakers and English for Russian speakers! Let’s help each other to learn, in a fun, friendly and informal way. We chat, we learn, we make new friends — and all you pay for is your coffee! For more information, please call us on 01738 560258.



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Russian Language Year 2007 Poster Competition

As part of Russian Language Year 2007 the SRF organised a poster competition. Competitors were asked to design a poster telling people why they should learn Russian.

Over 100 entries were received from across the UK. The judges were: Svetlana Adjoubei, Director, Academia Rossica; Prof. Christina Lodder, Professor of Art History, University of St Andrews; Meg Luckins, founder and former chair of the Scotland-Russia Forum, Hon. Consul for Kyrgyzstan, former teacher of Russian; Dr Lara Ryazanova-Clarke, Head of Russian, University of Edinburgh; Dr Natalia Tronenko, Russian lecturer; member of the Russian Language Committee of the Assn. for Language Learning.

Winners were announced on 5 September by a representative of the Russian Consulate General in Scotland at our first exhibition: Morningside Library, Edinburgh.

All winners have received a certificate and prize. Designers of 37 other posters chosen for exhibition also received certificates. All prizewinners are listed in the exhibition guide at www.scotlandrussiaforum.org/PosterLeaflet.pdf.

The SRF and the judges would like to congratulate all entrants for the enthusiasm, thoughtfulness and imagination shown in their posters.



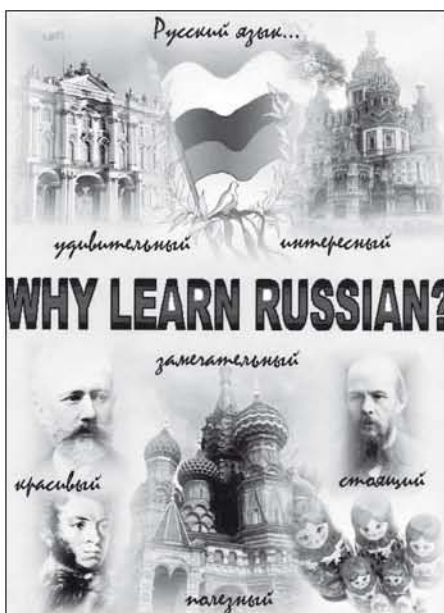
Charlotte Kasner — 3rd



18+ age group

Margaret Martin — 2nd

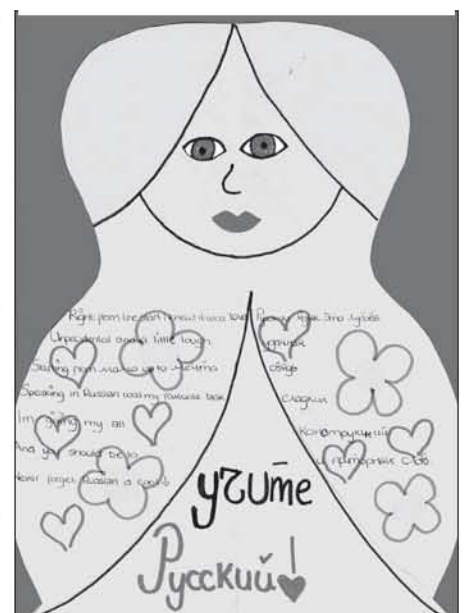
12-18 age group



Laura Leung-How — joint 2nd



Olivia Beecham — joint 2nd

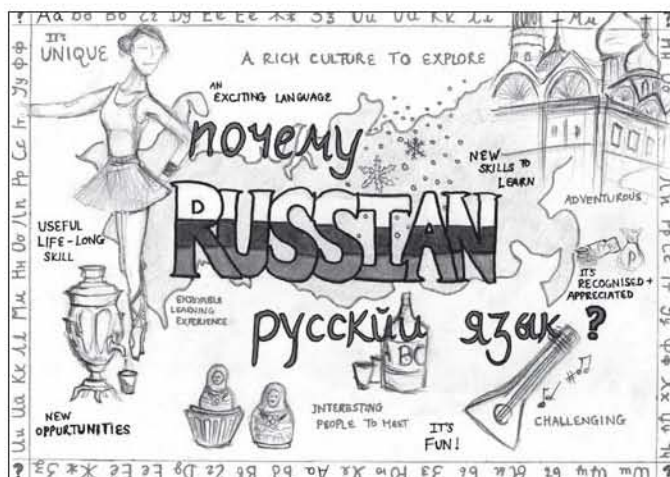


Marie McCabe — joint 3rd

12-18 continued



Helen Fletcher — joint 3rd



Shivaangee Agrawal — joint 3rd



Melanie Gornall — joint 3rd



Laura McCabe — joint 3rd

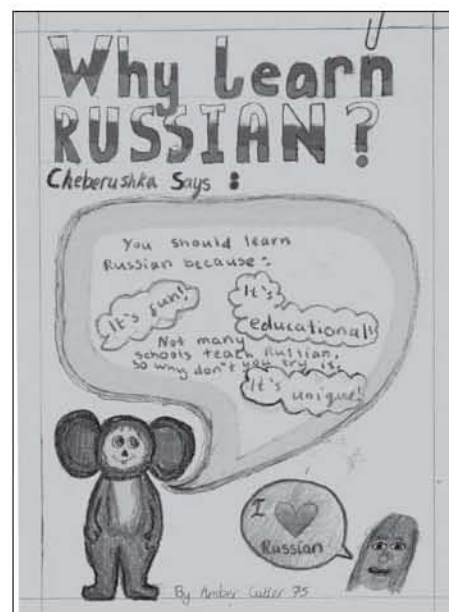


Louise Clare — joint 3rd

6-11 age group



Larisa Lewis — 2nd



Amber Cutler — 3rd

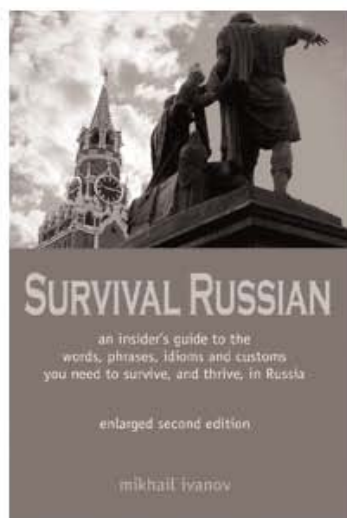
Salted Peanuts* for the Russophile Soul

Survival Russian

(Enlarged Second Edition)

by Mikhail Ivanov and guest authors
Russian Information Services, 2007

Reviewed by
Lydia Stone



**"Salted peanuts" is used here as an example of a food that, although theoretically available in very small portions, is very difficult to stop eating once you have started.*

SURVIVAL RUSSIAN contains 95 columns of the same name published in the bi-monthly Russian Life between 1995 and 2006. Eighty-one were written by Mikhail Ivanov and the remainder were "guest-written" by others, including former United Nations staff interpreter Lynn Visson. Publisher and editor Paul Richardson writes in the preface:

"This book's title may give the wrong impression. The Russian you can learn from this book is not about survival in the sense of getting by. It is about surviving in the sense of successfully blending: achieving a superior level of cultural awareness and distinction with your Russian. A run of the mill Russian text might teach you how to ask, 'Which way to the bathroom?' Culturally savvy Survival Russian instead teaches you more colorful phrases for referring to this destination such as

Each of the columns in this book is devoted to Russian idiomatic expressions dealing with a particular theme. They bear intriguing titles such as, "No Longer a Comrade, Not Yet a Mister," "Dueling Capitals," or "To Tula, Samovar Optional," and are clustered by themes such as, "Euphemisms and Expletives," "Men and Women," and, "Russlish and Beyond." Each column is well and wittily written in English (if you delight in the Moscow Times columnist Michelle A. Berdy, I would emphatically advise you to read Ivanov as well). Each contains upwards of 25 Russian phrases discussed and grounded in their cultural and linguistic contexts. Since they were written over a 12-year period, as Richardson points out, these columns present a "culturo-linguistic history of Russia in transformation".

I read Survival Russian from cover to cover, willingly putting it down only for vitally and/or professionally necessary distractions (hence the first part

of this review's title). Every column I read provided me with valuable and/or amusing new phrases or insights. For those of us who are (or at least admit to) still being students of Russian, the back of the book contains a study guide, as well as an excellent index of words and phrases allowing it to be used as a Russian-English idiom dictionary. There is also an English subject index, to allow us to find once again a Russian phrase we determined but failed to remember.

Available from: www.russianlife.net, \$18 plus shipping, 251pp

Emily Justice, SRF Review Editor — This review is reproduced with kind permission of Lydia Stone, Editor of SlavFile, which is published four times a year by the Slavic Languages Division of the American Translators Association. I bought a copy of Survival Russian on the basis of Lydia's review and I am delighted with my purchase! I would recommend this book to intermediate and advanced students of Russian, as well as professional linguists.

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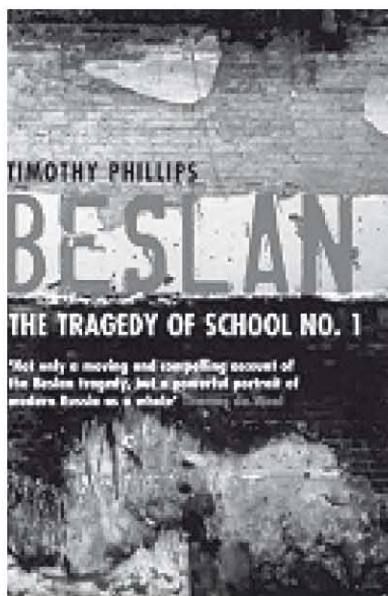
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Beslan: The Tragedy of School No. 1

by Timothy Phillips,
Granta, 2007

Reviewed by
Chris Delaney



ON 1 September 2004, parents, children and teachers gathered outside School No. 1 in Beslan to celebrate the start of the new term. While music played and balloons escaped into the sky, masked men with guns stormed the yard. Within minutes 1300 people had been herded into the school building, where they were to remain hostage, without food or water, for the next 72 hours.

Exactly what happened inside the school to this day remains unclear, something which Timothy Phillips concedes in his new book on the siege. “Even a full account of the attack,” he says, “would not lessen the

impact of the destruction it caused.” And so he tells us what happened as accurately as possible, using first-hand interviews with survivors and witness statements. The events inside the school are set between illuminating chapters on education in Russia, regional history and mythology, ethnic conflict and Stalinist repressions. And among these are peppered his own personal encounters, observations, thoughts and experiences.

The success of Phillips’ story lies in the humility with which he tells it. At times, despite his knowledge of Russian and expertise on the region, he comes across as uncouth foreigner, like when he is fleeced by a Moscow taxi driver and scalded by a fellow train passenger for apologising too much. Phillips’ presence as narrator in an event surrounded by so much uncertainty is essential: it is *his* version. And, perhaps more importantly, his presence in the book connects us to the people he spoke to, be they suffering survivors of the siege or those too busy coping with modern Russian life to care.

Telling the unspeakable

Interview with author Timothy Phillips

SCOTLAND RUSSIA FORUM:
What motivated you to write the book?

TIMOTHY PHILLIPS: The scale of the attack and the selection of a school as the target are, of course, the main things that make the Beslan School Siege a necessary subject to study. When I first thought about writing a book about the siege, I asked myself what I specifically could bring to the subject, what I could add to people’s understanding of the event. I felt my own background in Northern Ireland gave me useful insights into divided communities. Over at least forty years (and in some ways over more than four hundred) otherwise hospitable and educated people on the island of Ireland have felt great hatred towards one another because of intangible factors like religion and language, despite sharing many common values and even a sense of humour. Though I and my family were fortunate not to suffer in The

Troubles, there is a part of me that still finds it easy to feel — rather than simply to understand — prejudices, even if I can then dismiss them as irrational.

The other aim I had in writing the book was to tell the story of the siege from the point of view of the parents and teachers. Understandably, most of the television documentaries and newspaper reports focussed on the perspective of the children. I wanted to look at how the adults in the school felt as they sat alongside their beloved pupils, sons and daughters. What events in their own past and in that of their country did they look back on to try to make sense of what was going on around them? What preconceptions did the siege confirm and what notions did it blow apart?

SRF: *How important is your presence as narrator?*

TP: Right from when the book was in its planning stage, my editor and I agreed that I should be present in the book as a narrator. After all, I travelled to Russia and Beslan and had many meetings and experiences of my own as I tried to understand and contextualise what had happened in the school. However, I felt — when I started actually to write the book — that my voice didn’t really belong amongst all of these tragic stories; I found it very difficult to insert myself into the book. In the end, I decided that I would only use the first person when writing about the events and history that surrounded the siege and not when describing the siege itself. I knew, for instance, that I would include a chapter on Stalin’s brutality towards the Caucasus in the 1930s and 1940s. After meeting someone who had lived through these events, ►►

I decided to tell the story of the Chechen deportations as he told it to me during our two meetings because it made for a richer account. Conversely, I decided that all of the chapters describing the three-day siege were to be told only in the words of survivors. It was their reality, still fresh and raw, and my presence as a first-person narrator would only have been an intrusion.

SRF: In light of the Beslan siege, what do you now think of Russia?

I think Russia is in a very dangerous state currently, when viewed from the perspective of someone who would wish it to become a functioning and prosperous democratic country. I won't go into detail now about the reasons why it finds itself in that position but briefly they include the overly strong presidency, the suppression of real opposition political parties and the creation of

benign opposition, the concentration of wealth in the hands of a very small number of people, the deteriorating health of the general population and the crumbling Soviet-era infrastructure in which they must live and work. With the exception of a notable minority within the country, it seems that most Russians currently believe that a strong president and an unassailably powerful political party are desirable. Reputable polling organisations show that Putin would win by a large majority if he were to stand in next year's presidential elections. Although some of his lead is a distortion caused by the suppression of freedom of speech, much of it — in my own view — is not. After a decade when their reputation on the world stage decreased exponentially, Russians are only too happy to have a leader who is actively making his voice heard internationally and making life difficult for the country's old enemies.

Far from having had enough of

Russia, I remain as fascinated by it and concerned for it as ever. However, the concern of outsiders is not welcomed by the majority of Russians currently. There is reason to believe that our campaigning and our attempts to expose wrongs only irritate most people, who see these acts as our way of keeping Russia weak. Alongside its depiction of the Beslan siege, my book tried to describe the situation in present-day Russia to an English-language audience. It was never my intention to preach my analysis back to Russians themselves and I have no ambitions to have the book published in Russian, not least because I believe it would, most likely, be met with counter-productive hostility. In this context, it is difficult to know what one can usefully do.

Timothy Phillips' next project will be about the thousands of Russians who fled to the UK after the 1917 Revolution.



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Lost Cosmonaut

by Daniel Kalder,
Faber & Faber, 2006

Reviewed by
John Bowles



LOST COSMONAUT is the first book by Daniel Kalder, a young writer from Fife. It contains accounts of his visits to four of the Russian Federation's ethnic republics: Kalmykia, Mari El, Tatarstan and Udmurtia.

Declaring that in an era of mass tourism the exotic has become commonplace, he proclaims himself an "anti-tourist", whose duty is to seek out those wastelands and urban blackspots most likely to be avoided or ignored by tourists and travellers. So although the reader is taken on a tour of rarely-visited corners of Russia, he should not expect an orthodox travelogue. Indeed the narrative is frequently fractured by potted biographies of famous local figures unknown outside their homelands, lists of towns the author never managed to visit and mock-serious film scenarios inspired by Kalder's own experiences. The anti-tourist, he affirms, is partial to lies, especially his own, and the book does contain a number of tongue-in-cheek passages.

His first trip is to Tatarstan, or more particularly to its capital Kazan, (he seldom ventures outside the capital cities) where he finds little to enthuse about. Its architectural and cultural charms are long gone after centuries of Russian rule though a giant mosque destroyed by Ivan IV is being expensively recreated. However Kalder sheds no tears for old Kazan: "If it existed today it would be a dilapidated heap or a sterile heritage centre."

The empty urban wastelands of Elista, capital of remote Kalmykia, marooned in the steppes, excite him more. The strangest of his Elista experiences is his visit to the deserted buildings of Chess City, built by Kalmykia's autocratic president Ilumzhinov for the 1998 Chess Olympiad. Ilumzhinov takes his place among a clutch of bizarre political figures who have emerged in the aftermath of the

break-up of the Soviet Union though, as far as I know, he is the only one who claims to have been abducted by a UFO.

In Mari El's capital Yoshkar-Ola most of Kalder's energy is devoted to seeking surviving remnants of the pagan past of the Mari. He is introduced to Alexei, the High Priest of the Mari, and participates in a ritual in a sacred grove. He comes to realise that Alexei's beliefs and knowledge of Mari paganism have only a tenuous connection with its real past but is indulgent towards his all-too-human weaknesses.

In the Udmurt capital Izhevsk he finds it difficult to identify, let alone talk with any genuine Udmurts. Any sense of ethnic separateness appears to be ebbing away unlamented by anyone. He is also unsuccessful in arranging a meeting with Izhevsk's most famous citizen, Mikhail Kalashnikov, the inventor of the eponymous rifle. However, he is interviewed on Udmurt TV and briefly becomes a minor local celebrity.

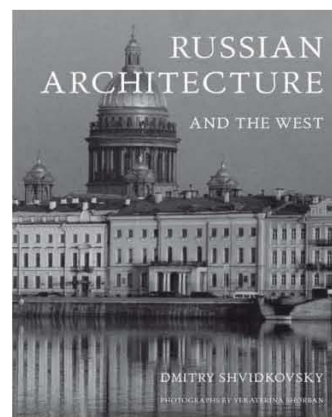
The mannerisms and wilful quirkiness of this book will not be to everyone's taste — his use of language led one reviewer to describe him as "Bill Bryson with Tourette's syndrome" — so I cannot recommend it unreservedly. However, those who venture into its pages will glean information on some hitherto obscure corners of a Russia they are most unlikely to visit (or want to visit) and an unromantic but not unsympathetic view of the peoples who live there.

This review should have appeared in the Summer 2007 edition. We apologise to the contributor for this omission.

Russian Architecture and the West

by Dmitry Shvidkovsky,
Yale University Press,
2007

Translated by Antony
Wood, Photographs by
Yekaterina Shorban



Reviewed by
Kathy Murrell

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WITH this fascinating and ground-breaking book, Professor Shvidkovsky, Head of Fine Arts at the Institute of Architecture in Moscow, has tackled the age-old problem of the origins of Russia's wonderful architecture which he finds, not, as some do, in Persia or the East but from western Europe. He has unparalleled knowledge of Russian architecture from the twelfth century to the twentieth and is familiar with the archives and major buildings of Italy, France, Britain, and Germany. He lucidly expounds his premise, that Russian stone and masonry architecture, (wooden buildings followed a separate path) is very much part of the European tradition.

Finely translated by Antony Wood, handsomely printed by Yale and with numerous ground-plans, the book has exceptional photographs by the author's wife which illustrate the text on or near the correct page in a most satisfying manner.

Shvidkovsky explains that only now can such a thesis be investigated for in Soviet times it was official policy to emphasise the uniqueness and singularity of Russian culture. Even in architecture, ideology played a role (thus the Art Nouveau period was disparaged for its associations with the merchant class).

Western (Byzantine) influence began with the adoption of Christianity in 988 in Kievan Rus and continued in the 12th century in the wooded north-east when simple churches of the Byzantine domed cross-in-square type were built. Intriguingly, Shvidkovsky also suggests they bear features of the Romanesque emanating from Lombardy. In particular, the beautiful Intercession on the Nerl' built in 1165 which is covered with fine external sculpture and bears classical capitals seems to have been built by craftsmen from northern Italy sent by Frederick 1 (Barbarossa) attested to by similar sculpture on churches in Modena and Pavia.

The trials of Russian history are effectively woven into

this tale of its architecture. After the long Mongol occupation reconstruction of the Kremlin was undertaken by Italian masters. Even exuberant St Basil's shows by its intrinsic harmony the lingering influence of the Renaissance.

Interestingly, Shvidkovsky traces the colourful Moscow (Naryshkin) Baroque to the Scot, Christopher Galloway, and Englishman, John Tallar. The reign of Peter the Great brought many more foreign builders and architects — Dutch, French, German, Italian — and Russia moved forward to take its place on the European stage. The classical period is followed by a nostalgic return to earlier forms and even a flirtation with the Gothic, influenced by the then fashion in Britain. The British Arts and Crafts movement also played a part in evolution of Art Nouveau at the turn of the 19th/20th century. In the 1920s, in a reversal of roles, the brilliant short-lived Russian avant-garde thrilled western lovers of architecture.

Shvidkovsky believes that the present trend to neo-classicism means the future is bright. One hopes that he is right and that new sometimes insensitive building, much of it by foreigners, will not spoil Russia's great cities.

ON September 8 a monument was unveiled in Ayrshire to the Russian cruiser Varyag, famed for refusing to surrender to a Japanese fleet in the Korean port of Chemulpo in 1904.

Not with such grace did it come to rest off the Scottish coast. Having been resurrected by the Japanese and returned to the Russians, it was sent to Britain for repairs, where it hit rocks and eventually sank in 1925.

Its demise makes no difference to its glory, once immortalised in song in the Soviet Union, and now in bronze in the Scottish village of Lendalfoot. The monument is impressive: a 3m high, 3-tonne cross with the four-funnelled Varyag ripping through its stem; a stark contrast to the West's smooth obelisks.

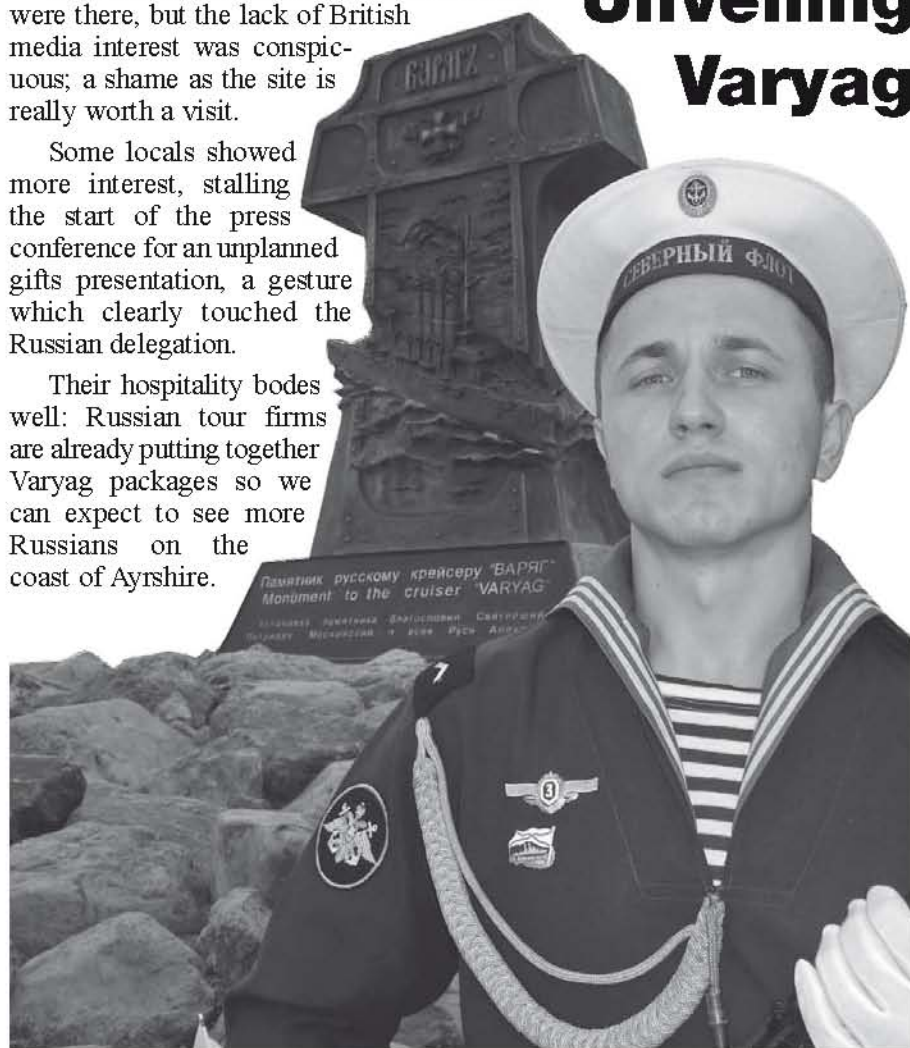
But its unveiling was probably even more impressive: access to the site was by invitation-only and men in dark 'executive tartan' guarded the entries against local dog-walkers. The carpeted hospitality tent was filled with platters of sandwiches and tiers of cakes. The outside toilet would have graced any four-star hotel. And there were doggy bags for all, stuffed with Varyag goodies including sailor outfit.

All the major Russian press organisations were there, but the lack of British media interest was conspicuous; a shame as the site is really worth a visit.

Some locals showed more interest, stalling the start of the press conference for an unplanned gifts presentation, a gesture which clearly touched the Russian delegation.

Their hospitality bodes well: Russian tour firms are already putting together Varyag packages so we can expect to see more Russians on the coast of Ayrshire.

Unveiling Varyag



Little Scotland in North Caucasus

by Anton Grizenko, Fellow RGS

DURING the hot summer of 2007, I continue research on location into the 19th century Edinburgh Missionary Society station and Scottish colony in Karass (now Inozemtsevo), North Caucasus, South Russia (my first article — SRF Newsletter, June 2006). It was a very rewarding trip.

Slowly, but surely aspects of the lives of the missionaries and colonists are reappearing. More information — at times sketchy — is coming to light on the descendants of Alexander Paterson (1779-1844) and James Galloway. Sadly, various documents, libraries that belonged to Alexander Paterson and his family are lost forever, some as a result of Nazi occupation in WWII. Yet, other findings warm the heart, for example the house Alexander Paterson lived in still stands in nearby Pyatigorsk. Presenting all the findings here would be a feat in itself. So, I have to restrict myself to mentioning one major event.

Obviously, the most amazing thing to happen to me this year was access to recently resurfaced notes written by Alexander Paterson. They reveal a person of numerous activities. Entries cover weather, astrological observations, his honey-producing activities from over 200 hives, daily life routines, and extensive geographical and ethnographical notes. One wonders how he managed to cope with all these activities in addition to duties as a missionary and running the colony's administration for 25 years. Oh, I nearly forgot to mention that he was also appointed librarian of the Library of Karass.

Impressive is the fact that he ran a meteorological station from May 1811. Paterson's commitment is clearly visible from the data — some in the form of symbols yet to be understood. Atmospheric pressure, temperature, wind and general weather events were meticulously registered three times a day — at 8am, 2pm and 8pm. The diary also reveals his comments on weather extremes and astrological events, such as the appearance and behaviour of a comet from August to December 1811.

Paterson truthfully notes down sad events such as outbreaks of plague, fires destroying houses, deaths of people one way or another connected to the mission and colony — an entry in November 1811 reads: "20th Last night Mrs Davidson died."

Equally, happy days and events were registered such as the births and baptizing of children in the colony, harvests, trips to places nearby and as far afield as Sarepta (near present day Volgograd) and the Crimea in his missionary work.

Of special interest are visits to the mission and colony from, for example, Dr Hass, Dr Crichton, Dr Liebich, Davlet Gery and other — unfortunately unnamed — visitors. General Davidoff several times visited the

Scottish colony with his family. The Governor had also visited Karass.

An amazing accomplishment is his geographical, historical and ethnographical notes. He details the lives of many of the ethnic groups that lived between the shores of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. He is so modest in commenting on his own travels throughout North Caucasus. Paterson mentions his attempt to cross the highest Caucasus mountains to visit the Sonnes (Svans in present day Georgia). These notes are supplemented by a map of the North Caucasus that points out most of the rivers, towns and the locations of numerous ethnic groups.

Exciting work continues on analyzing this unique document as well as understanding some of his handwriting, personal names and those of the ethnic groups he mentions in his notes.

On my flight back from the North Caucasus was another pleasant reminder of Karass. My seat was next to a professor, head of a Pushkin Society group from Germany, returning from a tour of places connected with the great Russian poet including Karass, which Pushkin visited at least several times.

The story of discovery or rather re-discovery continues.

Russian Choir

The Russian Choir was founded in 2004 to provide music for services at Eastwood Parish Church in Glasgow. The choir sings unaccompanied and has performed, among others, works by Rachmaninov, Vinogradov, Bortnyansky and Tchaikovsky.

More recently, Russian folksongs have been added to the repertoire, and performed in concert.

The choir is always looking for new singers, especially tenors. They number around 22 at present and would like to increase to 30 in order to extend their repertoire. They rehearse on Thursday evenings at Eastwood Parish Church, Mansewood Road, Glasgow. For more information see www.therussianchoir.org.uk.

Appeal for music

The Moscow Musical College has made an appeal for CDs, DVDs or LPs. The college teaches music to children aged 5-14 and says it has a severe lack of funding. If you can help, please post to: Nickolay Carmanow, Director, Moscow Musical College, 39-5-25, 3-Barkovaya street, 105037, Moscow, Russian Federation. For more information, follow the link on the SRF website.



Above — Elena Reid is pictured with her daughters, Elizabeth (8) and Anna (4), Russian cosmonaut Pavel Vinogradov (left) and American astronaut Jim Voss.
Right — with Alexei Lionov

SRF member Elena Reid **S**couldn't miss the chance to meet Alexei Leonov. Not only was Leonov the first man to do a space walk, but he is also from the same region as Elena: Kemerovskaya Oblast in the Kuzbass Region. In her home city of Kemerovo, in Siberia, Elena could walk down Ulitsa Leonova and visit statues of him.

Dressed in traditional *sarafan* and *kokoshnik*, Elena and her daughters, Anna and Elizabeth, met Leonov and other astronauts at the Association of Space Explorers XX Planetary Congress in Edinburgh, where they greeted them with bread and salt.

Also present at the Congress were German astronaut Reinhold Ewald, Bulgarian cosmonaut Alexander Alexandrov, American astronaut Jim Voss, Czech cosmonaut and M.E.P. Vladimir Remek, all of whom Elena said spoke excellent Russian. Elena and her daughters also met Pavel Vinogradov, who has spent over a year in space.

Russian Dolls Project

As some SRF readers may have seen on our website, Elena Reid has organised the Russian Dolls Project, which invites Highland artists to paint matryoshki. Among the 18 artists taking part, some professional some amateur, is acclaimed artist Evgenia Vronskaya, who is currently exhibiting 75 portraits at Eden Court Theatre in Inverness. Visit www.vronskaya.co.uk to see more of Evgenia's work.

The Russian Dolls Project is in Edinburgh at the Highland Craft Showcase Exhibition at the Scottish Parliament from the 6th of December until Christmas.



Some of the dolls on display at the Tore Art Gallery near Inverness.

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SRF Cultural Centre

Q&A with chairperson
Jenny Carr

■ Who/what/where?

Members have all had a copy (two actually) of our plans for the cultural centre. For other readers:

We plan to open a small Russian cultural centre in Edinburgh — as an office, information centre, venue for meetings, lending library, teaching materials resource, venue for activities run by others (language classes, social groups,...) etc. The main aims are: (1) provision of services to Russian-speakers and those interested the culture of Russia and its neighbours; (2) to make the rest of the Scots population more aware of what Russia has to offer.

A year ago we were offered finance from S&N plc which would cover rent and basic running costs for three years. We therefore sought

agreement from members and applied for charity status. Both were forthcoming and we were about to start property-hunting when we hit an unexpected problem: S&N were threatened by takeover and we were not sure if we could continue to expect funding. Fortunately we have received the go ahead from the company. The committee has convened a planning group of SRF members to discuss the best way forward.

■ Who do you expect to use the centre?

Members of the local Russian-speaking community; people taking part in various activities; interested passers-by; Russian-speakers new to Scotland; teachers looking for ideas on materials, etc. It depends on the activities that develop.

■ Ideally, how much involvement would you like from members? Not only in terms of man hours, but in terms of providing books, furniture, proposals for use etc?

The more involvement the the

better. We are hoping different people will be inspired to offer different things — anything from help setting up, manning the centre to offers of books and equipment.

■ Now that the SRF has charity status: Who is looking for property?

S&N's Property Dept will start looking now. We are also looking of course — and suggestions of suitable properties from readers would be most welcome too.

■ As a charity, can we profit from the centre, i.e. by renting it out, hosting events, etc?

Yes! We certainly hope to cover costs in this way.

■ Who can use the centre? Will there be a fee?

The centre will be available to all. Whether there will be a fee depends what they are using it for.

■ Will SRF members have a say on the location, i.e. from a short-list of buildings?

Yes. I hope so.

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SRF Report

Since my report in the June Issue of *SRF Review* the SRF has become a registered charity (SC038728). Our charitable purposes are the advancement of education and the advancement of the arts, heritage, culture or science. One immediate advantage of this is that if we rent premises we will qualify for 80% rates relief — potentially a large saving. Other advantages are less tangible but no less real.

As a charity our activities and accounts are open to scrutiny so we become more respectable and therefore (we hope) more likely to attract support and funding should we seek that.

We ended 2006-7 with 181 full members and have gained 15 new members since then. However some existing members have not yet got round to sending their subscription since the beginning of our year on

1 September — and we would encourage them to do so as soon as possible.

The new SRF website (www.scotlandrussiaforum.org) is up and running — and the HTML skills of its webmaster are improving after a few early mishaps (though thanks to the designer updating it is relatively foolproof). According to Google Analytics visitors to the website — though predominantly British as would be expected — have come from 29 countries incl. Russia, the USA, Germany, Canada, Lithuania, China and France. We have attracted a small but encouraging number of new enquiries (and new members) from the website and hope to build on this.

SRF events so far this year began with our AGM in September which was addressed by Aleksei Kulakov, senior consul at the Russian Consulate-General in Edinburgh. Members were delighted and interested to meet him. The

main business of the AGM was discussion of the culture centre proposals (see the interview on page 15) and elections to the committee (Jenny Carr, Anastasia Melnikov and Ian McGowan elected). The new committee met soon after the AGM, as the constitution requires, and elected officers for the year: chairperson: Jenny Carr; treasurer: Ian McGowan; secretary: Margot Alexander.

In October our scheduled speaker, Andrew Wilson, was forced to cancel at the last minute but the Consul-General for Ukraine nobly and excellently filled in on the same topic, "Ukrainian Update".

As I write we have two more events scheduled before Christmas: Fr. Stephen Platt on "The Meaning of Icons" on 26 November, and a Christmas party at the Scottish Arts Club on 19 December.

With very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year,

Jenny Carr, Chairperson



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