



The Scotland - Russia Forum

Review

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Editor (Acting): Jenny Carr

Reviews ed. : Emily Justice

Russian ed.: Oxana Morgunova

The Scotland-Russia Forum

50 Marchmont Crescent, Edinburgh

EH9 1HE

tel. +44 (0)131 662 9149

scotrussforum@blueyonder.co.uk

www.scotlandrussiaforum.org

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

In our first Russian Language Year issue we have a fascinating article by Prof. James Muckle of Nottingham University on the history of Russian language learning in Britain. A mere glimpse of his research—but a tantalising one. We look forward to reading the final report. Since Russian in schools is obviously at something of a low point at the moment maybe we should take heart on learning of previous troughs. After all, things can only get better.

We celebrate success in the education field too—with the publication of essays by young Edinburgh pupils which received commendation in the “heritage speaker” category of the recent ALL essay competition. They are not the only young contributors to this issue: see our reviews of Swan Lake on ice and of Edinburgh’s new Russian café.

Other topics include reviews of books, the cinema and the theatre, an interview with the Edinburgh Russian school (in Russian), an interview with Hearts’ new Russian coach, and information on Banff’s connection with the Russian victory in 1812.

We hope you like the new-look newsletter—now called the **SRF Review**. We have a new design and plan to include more feature articles, more reviews and more Russian language material. And less news, hence the change of title. In future the **SRF Review** will be published only twice a year, in early June and early December. This edition has been put together by a new editorial team—Jenny Carr (acting ed.), Emily Justice (reviews ed.) and Oxana Morgunova (Russian ed.) with administrative assistance from Margot Alexander. Many thanks to them, to all our writers, and to our previous editors, Helen Williams and Ann Caldwell, for getting the newsletter off the blocks in the first place. We are delighted to tell you that after much searching a new editor with real newspaper experience has come forward and will no doubt bring many improvements—watch this space in December. We welcome your comments, and invite contributions, advertisements and ideas on how to expand the **Review**’s circulation.

The **SRF Review** is not the only change on the SRF horizon. The website redesign is almost complete; we have a new logo; and as I write members are considering constitutional changes that will allow the Forum to seek charitable status. And, with membership approval, to use a generous offer of funding from S&N plc to set up premises in Edinburgh.

Jenny Carr

The Russian Language in Britain: an historical study of learners and teachers

James Muckle

This article reports work in progress on research supported by the British Academy. The informal comments of enthusiasts at SALT's *День русского языка* in Glasgow in May were most helpful, and the assistance of all teachers and former teachers of Russian is requested in response to this short communication.

It will be hard to summarise my interim findings (80,000 words so far!). Study of Russian by Britons began seriously in 1553 when Richard Chancellor's aborted expedition to Cathay by an imagined North-East passage finished up in Moscow, and the Muscovy Company received its charter from Ivan IV. Several of the merchants became fluent, and the Tsar admitted they spoke Russian far better than the Russians spoke English. After Charles I was executed, the Tsar of the time took fright, and England lost all her trading privileges; the English then squandered the considerable expertise they had acquired on Russia and her language, and it took centuries to retrieve.

Until the late nineteenth century Russian language was for far-sighted enthusiasts only. The first grammars by British people appeared in 1822 and 1827, the latter work by the remarkable 27-year-old English educator, James Heard. Dictionaries there were, but everyone complained of their insufficiency. However, from the 1880s the British army and navy encouraged officers to qualify as interpreters. They would acquire a smattering, then live in Russia with a family for up to eighteen months; if they passed the civil service interpretership exam they were rewarded with money and promotion. By 1910 there were nearly 200 serving officers with the qualification. The first recorded example of this system of study at home followed by residence abroad was a young man in the 1770s who learned Russian in order (successfully) to break the Russians' diplomatic codes.

One of the men who coached these officers was Ivan Nestor-Schnurmann, a Russian Jewish immigrant who ran a Jewish boarding house at Cheltenham College from the 1890s. The College offered Russian as an 'extra', but it is not known if any pupil took up the offer. If they did, then Cheltenham is the only school which taught Russian before 1914. Readers, if you know of any other, please tell me!

Mr Schnurmann bridges the military-school gap; he was also the first teacher of Russian at

Cambridge University, from 1897. What a journey it must have been for him for two days weekly from Cheltenham in order to train diplomatic translators, and to be available in Christ's College to help any member of the University who wanted to learn Russian! Oxford had been interested in Slavonics for a while; the first Oxbridge honours degrees in Russian were awarded in the early twentieth century. But it was Liverpool University, guided by the outstanding pioneer Bernard Pares, with a department of four staff from 1906, which made the most impressive contribution to the subject in the early years.

War in 1914 brought a 'boom' in Russian (Pares's word), and it came in the technical-commercial sector, strongly supported by the universities: often the teachers were the same. Russian was studied in order to steal the Germans' markets while Germany was otherwise engaged; admiration for a 'glorious ally' played a strong part. Hundreds flocked to classes: 281 in Bradford, for example, but the class in Hawick had 57 students, which surely, for a town of less than 20,000 at the time, must carry off the first prize. More universities joined in: Nottingham, London, Sheffield, Birmingham, Glasgow, Leeds, to mention only a few, started Russian departments, cashing in on the new enthusiasm - which died equally suddenly in 1918, when Russia left the War and political conditions changed radically.

My space is running out, so the remainder must be in telegram-style. Russian in further education did not die out; it declined markedly in the 1920s and 1930s, but picked up and survives to this day. Russian remained strong in the universities, where it had been started for cultural and educational reasons; some departments closed in the 1920s, but most survived. After the Second World War university provision grew (despite severe early warnings about potential overprovision) to a peak of 41 departments in the 1970s. In 1979 the infamous Atkinson Report resulted in severe curtailment of provision; now there are fewer than 20 institutions offering the subject. However, expertise on Russian affairs of all sorts—culture, politics, literature, history, and economics—is strong in higher education; the establishment of such expertise was the main aim of the Scarbrough Report of 1947.

And schools? In 1914-17 a few dozen schools in both Scotland and England introduced Russian. The English Board of Education supported this 'experiment' in the state sector, even though the supply of effective teachers was lacking. A few independent schools continued with the subject after 1918; in most state institutions it died

out. Not until the mid-1950s was there a rapid growth in Russian in secondary education, fuelled by some of the 5,000 young men who had trained as linguists on their National Service - and without whom there would have been no such development. By 1971 over 800 schools provided Russian, but the situation was unstable, with many schools dropping or starting the subject every year. After 1971 there was a steady decline, but not a disastrous one in England; Scotland on the other hand eventually went into meltdown. In 1985 10.26% of the schools teaching Russian were in Scotland; in 1992 only 7.5%. Modern data protection laws make it much more difficult than before to estimate such figures accurately, but SCE entries in recent years have been down to single figures, while GCSE entries show a less marked decline.

All the arguments for Russian in education which people have been using for a century are still valid. We need to understand Russian affairs more than ever, trade is as vital as ever, the cultural scene is as vibrant as ever, there are still as many native speakers as there ever were, the language is as challenging as it ever was and no more difficult than before! Why has the word 'Russian' disappeared from official discussion of the curriculum, why is it absent from the ALL conference programme, why does it scarcely appear in the much-vaunted (in England) Dearing Review? The only slight comfort is that we have had troughs of decline before, and can therefore allow ourselves some optimism. Your views and ideas would be very welcome to me at: jymuckle@ilk81rr.orangehome.co.uk



PROUD SON OF BANFF HONORED

*Adapted version of an article published in the **Banffshire Journal**, 18 April 2007*

George Boardman

A descendant of Banff who became an 18th century Prince of the Russian Empire was commemorated with a life-size statue worth £200,000 last month. The monument that was worked on for a year by a team of four, is in the city of Chernyakhovsk, Kaliningrad oblast, and celebrates Michael Barclay de Tolly, a descendant of Sir Patrick Barclay of Towie, who lived 400 years ago in Banffshire.

In 1621, Peter Barclay de Tolly, a merchant and kinsman of Sir Patrick Barclay of Towie, left Banff for Rostock. In 1664 his son, John Stephen, a lawyer, settled in Riga and was still alive when the Russians conquered Livonia in 1710.

The name was immortalised in Russian his-

tory by Michael Barclay de Tolly (1757-1818). Son of an army lieutenant, he started his military career as a cuirassier N.C.O. He excelled in almost every campaign after the Russo-Turkish war of 1787-91, and became the first Russian Governor-General of Finland. As Minister of War, he went on to reform the Russian Army. Barclay de Tolly took part in the invasion of France in 1814 and commanded the taking of Paris, receiving the baton of Field Marshal in reward. In 1815 he served as commander-in-chief of the Russian army which invaded France, and was created a Prince at the close of the war. He died at Insterburg (the modern Chernyakhovsk) in Prussia on May 26, 1818, on his way back to Russia.

A grand statue of de Tolly was erected in front of the Kazan Cathedral in St Petersburg at the behest of Emperor Nicholas I. Another monument to him was later built in Riga.

The Mayor of Chernyakhovsk, where de Tolly died, invited both Aberdeenshire Council and the Scottish Parliament to send representatives to participate in the unveiling of the new statue on the last day of March this year. Banff and Buchan MSP Stewart Stevenson attended the unveiling ceremony and gave this description of events in Chernyakhovsk:

"The Chernyakhovsk 'soviet', their council, had laid on a typically Russian celebration to ensure that the whole of Russia knew that they were honouring a man who spent his last days in their community and who is to this day a legend in his adopted country. The military paraded before the guests, including myself, and about half a dozen TV crews recorded the day.

Speeches were focused on how much a Scot had meant to their community. When we pulled the silk cover off the statue a fusillade of fireworks temporarily deafened me. A crowd many thousands strong cheered.

I know that the Council still want to arrange for one of their members to go the Chernyakhovsk at a later date. They will be very welcome and encouraged to create permanent links between our communities. I was presented with a large bronze medal which I accepted with the intention that it should be given to Banff museum. Chernyakhovsk officials are very keen that a plaque commemorating Michael Barclay de Tolly be put on a suitable building in Banff. They would like to visit our community and participate in its unveiling.”



Stewart Stevenson MSP was presented with a large bronze medal by sculptor Vladimir Surovstsev (right) from Moscow

A short Russian TV video of the ceremony can be seen at <http://kaliningrad.rfn.ru/rnews.html?id=24>



INTERVIEW

Anatolii Vasilievich Korobochka

Mike Falchikov and Jenny Carr

The Edinburgh Evening News (14 March 2007) described Hearts Football Club’s new head coach as “reserved” – which did not prepare the **SRF Review**’s sports reporting team for the extremely warm, friendly, chatty man who bounced into the room for our interview with his young interpreter Konstantin. He talked so fast that a real reporter’s knowledge of shorthand would have been useful. However this is some of what we gleaned:

Born in Simferopol, Korobochka gets his surname from a Belarussian grandfather he never knew. His mother was Russian from the Kursk area. Keen on all sorts of sports as a boy he took full advantage of all the *seksii* on offer to Soviet children but was particularly keen on football. His father failed to see the charm (putting it mildly) of the mud the young Tolya brought into the flat with him – until a workmate pointed out his son’s name in the local paper one day (Korobochka was 17) and he said “The number of times that boy wanted to give up football – he only kept it up because I told him to!”.

After five years with his local team, Tavriya Simferopol, Korobochka was drafted into the army and served as a footballer with CSKA in Moscow and Germany, continuing as a trainer and team director when his army service ended. In his time with the team he worked alongside a number of Russia's best footballers. A brief period in the late 90s was spent with a team sponsored by Abramovich's predecessor as governor of Chukotka—the Moscow-based Spartak Chukotka—which did well but closed when its benefactor retired and withdrew his finance.

Why did Korobochka come to Scotland? By chance it seems. Vladimir Romanov unexpectedly phoned him in Moscow one evening and he thought it sounded interesting—Britain after all is the home of football. He is busy learning English and likes working at Hearts, particularly appreciating the passionate support of the fans,

the interest in football of society at large, and the general atmosphere surrounding the game. Footballers here are of course a lot better paid than in Russia so have to be handled differently. He also spoke interestingly about his meetings with great Russian footballers of the past, including the incomparable Lev Yashin (“a wonderful goalkeeper and a wonderful person as well”).

Mike asked about Craig Gordon (“it would be a loss if he was offered a move – but we’d be proud to have had him at Hearts”) and Jenny asked for his impressions of Edinburgh: beautiful, historic, cosy (*uyutnyi*) but rather quiet after 6 in the evening. And of the Scots: hardworking and proud of their nationality to the point of touchiness was his impression.

We finished with a photograph and an invitation (accepted) to Anatolii and his wife to join us at SRF functions.

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Nostalgia, Gorgie Road, Edinburgh

Some of the small S6 Russian class at George Heriot's School have become great fans of Nostalgia – going there to buy Russian sweets and to meet friends before going to the match at Tynecastle. The SRF Review commissioned a member of the class to review the café for us.

Miranda Heggie

Another new addition to the ever growing band of Eastern European delicatessens and cafes has made its way to Edinburgh in the form of *Nostalgia*, a Russian café and shop on Gorgie road. The small shop offers a selection of traditional Russian foodstuffs, including home-made loaves of traditional Russian black leavened bread. Bread has always been one of Russia's staple foods – during the seventeenth century Russian bakers were so skilled that Russian bread was sent all around the European courts as a delicacy. Bread features so much in the Russian diet that one of their most popular soft beverages is in fact made from it in the form of *kvas*, a sweet, fizzy, rye bread-based drink.

Authentic Russian goods are on offer in the store, such as blinis and pickled vegetables, not to mention a rather large selection of different vodkas! Some slightly more unusual items are also on sale, for example raspberry flavoured crisps.

As well as selling these items, the small cafeteria section of *Nostalgia* offers a cornucopia of traditional Russian dishes, such as borsch,

a soup made from beetroot and other vegetables, pelmeni and vareniki, which are both types of dumplings. The prices are rather modest, and at £2.00 for a plate of borsch it really is good value. The borsch tasted delicious – wholesome and nourishing, yet still with a lightness about it which contradicted the stereotype of Russian food being thick and stodgy. The dumplings, however, did not match up to this high standard. They were heavy and bland tasting, with a texture which suggested they were only half cooked.

Despite saying this, *Nostalgia* is well worth a visit. It is by no means *haute cuisine*, nor does it pretend to be. It provides Edinburgh with a flavour of Russia, and satisfies Eastern Europeans living here who are nostalgic for the taste of home.

RUSSIAN CAFES IN EDINBURGH AND GLASGOW

We are happy to invite our friends and anyone interested in Russian culture to the new Russian Cafe "Europe". It was opened just one month ago in the Russian shop "Nostalgia", 368 Gorgie Road, Edinburgh. EH11 2RQ. You can enjoy a wide range of Russian traditional food, drinks and desserts. We are open 7 days from 9am to 8pm. Also, in few days we are going to open another cafe "Europe" in Glasgow. It is just next door to Glasgow's Russian shop "Nostalgia" at 85 High Street, Glasgow, G1 1NB.

Nostalgia Management

Русские Страницы

Как написать Нобелевскую лекцию по-русски

Надежда Фос, преподаватель русской школы в Эдинбурге, отвечает на вопросы Шотландско-Русского Форума.

Беседовала Оксана Моргунова

О. - Сегодня русская школа – это неотъемлемая часть жизни многонационального Эдинбурга: здесь учатся наши дети; школа организует вечера и праздники, участвует в благотворительных мероприятиях. Кажется, что так было всегда, а ведь еще не так давно единственным способом напомнить ребенку о русском языке и родной литературе были домашние занятия.

Н. - Ассоциация Русский Эдинбург была создана в мае 2003. Нашей основной целью является поддержание русского языка у детей, живущих вне России.

Всего в школе регулярно занимаются 30 детей. Примерно половину составляют дети из смешанных семей. 5-6 человек ходят время от времени. Мы рекомендуем не пропускать занятия, но многие приезжают издалека и не могут посещать школу регулярно.

О. - Насколько я знаю, дети, которые посещают школу, различаются не только по уровню владения языком, но и по возрасту. Я думаю, разделить их по классам – не просто.

Н.- Мы выработали следующий вариант: у нас есть «детский сад» (2-4 года), подготовительная группа (4-5 лет), первый, второй и третий классы (соответственно 5-6, 7-9, 9-11 лет). Дети, которым уровень языка не позволяет заниматься в классе, подходящем им по возрасту, занимаются в подготовительной группе. Мы также создали класс подготовки к языковому экзамену Шотландской школы (13-16 лет).

О. – Я слышала, что сейчас в русской школе учатся несколько детей, у которых нет ни семейной, ни «наследственной» связи с русским языком...

Н. – Действительно, есть несколько таких

учеников. Кто-то пришел с другом, у кого-то профессиональные интересы родителей связаны с Россией, поэтому у детей есть интерес к языку и культуре страны. Конечно, новый язык – это много труда и желания. Но то, что есть интерес к русскому языку у эдинбуржцев – это очень радостно.

О.- А как проходят занятия в школе?

Н.- Занятия проходят раз в неделю, по два часа. У второго и третьего классов первый час отводится занятию собственно русским языком, второй час занят развитием речи – чтение, обсуждение книг, страноведение.

Подготовительная группа и первый класс занимаются развитием речи, составлением рассказов по картинкам. В первом классе есть также чтение и письмо, в подготовительной группе дети знакомятся с русским алфавитом, учат буквы, играют.

О. – Наверное, детский сад – это скорее игровая группа. Можно ли говорить о том, что такие маленькие дети изучают язык?

Н. – У многих маленьких детей первое знакомство с русским языком происходит в группе детского сада. Там занимаются рисованием, бумажными аппликациями, дети разучивают стихи и песенки. Очень любят кукольный театр. Для постановок выбираются знакомые сказки, которые дети потом обсуждают с мамой.

О. - Есть ли какая-то единая методика, по которой занимаются дети?

Н.- Такое количество семей, которые живут за пределами своей страны, но не теряют с ней связи – это новое явление. Над методиками преподавания языка в таких условиях работают специалисты во многих странах. На семинарах преподавателей в разных странах Европы идет обмен новыми разработками. Мне было очень интересно с ними познакомиться. Но единой методики преподавания в школах, подобных нашей, не существует.

О.- А что еще делается под эгидой школы?

Н.- Раз в месяц в школе проходят поэтические фестивали. Тема задается заранее. Это может быть время года,

любимая игрушка. Стихотворение для выступления можно выбрать самостоятельно или вместе с родителями, можно попросить преподавателя подобрать что-нибудь. Выступать – не обязательно: кто не хочет, сможет выступить в следующий раз. После конкурса все артисты получают призы и конфеты.

В школе есть кружок русского танца, там с увлечением занимаются девочки. К сожалению, мальчики не используют этот веселый способ общения.

Дважды в год школа проводит праздники и ярмарки. Это традиционная новогодняя елка и Масленица с блинами, угощениями, играми. Обычно собираются дети и взрослые.

О.- Насколько я помню из своего опыта, многие родители используют школу как своеобразный клуб для общения. Пока дети учатся, они с удовольствием общаются и знакомятся с другими родителями.

Н.- Да, это так. Во время занятий родители могут остаться в школе и обсудить друг с другом какие-то проблемы. Это существенно для школы, так как многие чувствуют себя одиноко в стране, куда недавно приехали. Для того, чтобы у детей не терялось желание говорить по-русски, необходимо, чтобы на этом языке с удовольствием общались их родители - друг с другом или со своими друзьями. Так что для нас важны хорошие отношения между родителями учеников.

Не так давно я прочитала статью о Нобелевских лауреатах. Их анализировали с точки зрения дней рождения, знаков зодиака, национальности, профессии родителей.... Но ничего из этого не помогло вывести закономерность, кто имеет больше шансов стать знаменитым ученым. Однако было замечено, что среди лауреатов было непропорционально много «детей эмигрантов», эмигрантов во втором поколении. И нам бы хотелось чтобы наши ученики могли бы написать свою Нобелевскую лекцию на родном языке.

SUCCESS FOR RUSSIAN EDINBURGH

*Three pupils from the Russian-Edinburgh Saturday school gained distinction in the recent UK-wide **Russian Essay competition** organised by the Association for Language Learning. Their essays are reproduced below — with our congratulations to pupils, teachers and parents.*



Winner, category for heritage learners Charlotte Gunn

Моя жизнь изменилась, когда...

Привет, меня зовут Шарлотта. Моя жизнь изменилась, когда я начала играть на скрипке в 3 классе. На моем первом уроке я даже не смогла ни одну ноту выдать. А потом стала играть все лучше и лучше. И, как вы можете узнать, теперь я очень хорошо играю. Я разучила многие мелодии из фильмов, из классики и АВВА. Лучше всего у меня получается шотландская музыка: Drowsy Maggie, Deil Among The Tailors и другие. Я могу играть очень быстро или очень медленно. Но больше я люблю играть быстрые мелодии.

Мне нравится, когда меня слушают. Особенно пожилые люди. Я чувствую, что моя музыка приносит им немного счастья, добра и делает их веселыми. Я люблю участвовать в концертах в моей школе или в летнем лагере.

Мой дедушка хорошо играл на скрипке, пианино и банджо. Он передал мне свою любовь к музыке! К сожалению, я никогда не видела моего дедушку, но я думаю, он бы гордился мной теперь. Я также хотела бы научиться играть на арфе и банджо.

Я придумала небольшое стихотворение про мою скрипку:

*Каждый день, открывая футляр,
Я вижу мою скрипку, как она блестит.
Она ждет терпеливо, пока приду я.
Она увидит меня и станет играть.
Играть, словно бабочка, которая порхает,
Порхает, пока не увидит, не найдет цветок,
Который подойдет.
Подойдет к музыке крылышек.
Я пытаюсь поймать ее, но она быстро летает.
Как музыка летает в голове.*

Runner up, category for heritage learners Georgii Gorobets

Моё любимое место в России

Моё любимое место в России - это дача мамино двоюродного брата. Дачный поселок находится недалеко от Петербурга и туда можно поехать на машине или на поезде. Мне там нравится больше, чем в городе. За городом деревья везде, кусты на каждом углу, дорога из камней и нет асфальта и огромных домов, как в городе.

Сама дача - большой каменный дом с двумя этажами. У дома очень большой сад. Там растут разные ягоды, кабачки, огурцы и яблоки. В самом конце сада в перегородке живут курицы. Среди куриц один петух. За перегородкой есть курятник. Каждый день можно взять у куриц свежие яйца.

Недалеко от дачи озеро. Я там каждый день купался. Перед озером есть пляж, и там в песке играют маленькие дети. Около озера большой лес. Там растёт черника, и я иногда её собираю. В двухстах метрах от дачи, в кустах, растёт малина. Там её очень много - можно набрать ведро.

Раньше была дача, на которой жила женщина с козой. Можно было приходиться и покупать свежее козьё молоко, которое доили прямо у тебя на глазах.

Когда приезжают мои троюродные братья, на даче очень хорошо. Я больше всего играю с Сашей, потому что он моего возраста. Я с Сашей плаваю по озеру на надувной лодке и залезаю в камыши.

Иногда мы бегаем вниз по "бешеной горке". Это мы так называем крутой спуск, который близко к даче.

Ещё я с Сашей ловил руками рыбу в ручье, но мы поймали только две жабы. Этих рыб очень трудно ловить. Они маленькие и скользкие.

Но я не всегда мог играть с Сашей. Он уезжал в город и я оставался со своим младшим братом Федей. Он маленький и с ним скучно играть, но я придумал интересную игру. Федя кидает в меня яблоко, а я ударяю яблоко теннисной ракеткой.

Вот какое моё любимое место в России!

Runner up, category for heritage learners Daniil Minev

Моя жизнь изменилась, когда...

Я учился в школе, которая называлась Джеймс Гилеспис, но потом я поступил в новую школу, эта школа изменила мою жизнь навсегда.

Чтобы поступить в эту школу, мне надо было сдать экзамен по английскому языку и по математике. Когда я его сдавал, я был очень взволнован, что я не сдам его. Он был довольно трудным. Через несколько дней мои родители сказали, что я сдал экзамен. Когда я это услышал, я очень обрадовался и у меня было чувство, как будто я в раю.

Мой первый день в новой школе был 8 января. Когда я пошёл в школу, я очень волновался, потому что я никого не знал и все на меня смотрели. Но я удивился тому, что школа такая большая.

Моя новая школа изменила мою жизнь, потому что, во-первых, у меня стало больше друзей. Во-вторых, в новой школе мне гораздо интереснее учиться. Это потому, что некоторые учителя смешные и очень интересно рассказывают. В-третьих, я сейчас чувствую, как будто я Гарри Поттер или какой-то другой волшебник.

Школа называется Джордж Хериотс, Само здание построено в 1628 году. Джордж Хериот создал её для мальчиков, у которых нет отца, но потом она стала частной и девочки в ней тоже учатся. Школа выглядит как замок из фильмов про Гарри Поттера.

Каждое утро, когда я вхожу в школу, я думаю, что меня ждут чудеса и сказки. Надеюсь, что они волшебные и добрые.

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DOSTOEVSKY ON THE THRESHOLD OF OTHER WORLDS. Essays in Honour of Malcolm V Jones, edited by Sarah Young and Lesley Milne

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ISBN 1 900405 13 X Published 2006. 296 pp., hardback, offer price £25.00

FROM MOSCOW. Living and teaching among the Russians in the 1990s, by Dora O'Brien

The author (a leading member of GB-Russia Society) taught English in a Russian school in 1996. The book is a vivid account of a school when the system is in transition. *From Moscow* is also a series of encounters with Russians, an attempt to explain their warmth, their resourcefulness, their great sense of fun and ability to enjoy themselves.

ISBN 978 1 900405 07 2 128 pp., 2000, paperback, illustrated Offer price: £7.00

ARZAMAS-16 Soviet Scientists in the Nuclear Age: a Memoir by Veniamin Tsukerman and Zinaida Azarkh, translated by Timothy Sergay and edited by Michael Pursglove

This book first appeared in Russia in 1994 and covers a lifetime of experience in the research which led to the Russian nuclear bomb. It describes growing up in the early Soviet era, and the vicissitudes of life for a scientist under Stalin and his successors. It is unique as being the memoirs of insiders. It gives spine-chilling glimpses of the interference of security chiefs in scientific work and of ways in which it was sometimes possible to outflank these people.

ISBN 978 1 900405 04 1 1999. 224 pp, illustrated, paperback, offer price: £8.00

MEMORIES OF THE DISPOSSESSED Descendants of Kulak Families Tell Their Stories by Olga Litvinenko, edited and introduced by James Riordan

This unique book tells the story of the fate of those branded as 'kulak' and rounded up in 1929-30 in the Kurgan region of Russia. The words are those of the children and grandchildren of those who suffered dispossession. 'Kulaks' faced formidable conditions and banded together to survive. Where parents succumbed, their children battled on to tell the tale. Recorded by Olga Litvinenko, herself a granddaughter of 'kulaks' and a Kurgan sociologist, this is the first book to present the story in the words of its victims and their families.

ISBN 978 1 900405 06 5 1998. 118 pages, paperback, offer price £7.00

THE PRIEST WHO WAS NEVER BAPTIZED. Stories factual and fictional of Russian Life in the Nineteenth Century by Nikolai Leskov, translated by James Muckle

Seven immensely entertaining tales never before translated into English. Leskov's portrait of life in Russian villages, St Petersburg and abroad is vivid, amusing and occasionally disturbing. The village clergy consist of great saints and disreputable sinners. The villagers are often warm, shrewd - but also superstitious, credulous and even cruel. The gentry and civil authorities can be wrong-headed. Leskov the moralist and Christian thinker has a field day. The volume also contains: 'Rebellion among the gentry in the parish of Dobryn', 'Selivan the bogeyman', 'A Pygmy', 'Wrong done at Christmas', 'Vexation of spirit', 'A response to "The Kreutzer Sonata"'

216 pages, hardback, 2004. Offer price £10.00 ISBN 978 900405 12 6

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Reviews

Yury Tynyanov, *Young Pushkin*
A novel translated from the Russian by
Anna Kurkina Rush and Christopher
Rush

491pp, Angel Books, London. £19.95,
978-0-946162-75-8

Dairmid Gunn

This is a book for the specialist and non specialist alike – a fascinating and informative account of one of the most exciting periods of Russian history and Russia's greatest poet, Alexander Pushkin.

The literary output of the author, Yury Tynyanov (1894-1843), although highly rated in Russia, has not been widely translated into English, a fact that explains why this author is not as well known as such writers as Bulgakov, Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn. Thus, this excellent translation of Tynyanov's greatest work is overdue and greatly welcome. Alas, it is only part of the epic on Pushkin's life that the author had in mind. Tynyanov's early death in 1943 meant the biography's restriction to the subject's childhood and youth.

Tynyanov had a profound knowledge of Pushkin and his time; the essential facts are there, embellished and expanded by the author's remarkable intuitive abilities and rich historical imagination. Within the author himself there are both the respected researcher and the talented artist. In his own words, 'I begin where the documents leave off.' He does not separate the life of the poet from his creativity and his creativity from the history of his country, and describes the 'living Pushkin' rather than Pushkin in the life of his time.

The difficulties experienced by Pushkin, his early achievements and the way he entered the history of Russia, its culture and literature, are the principal themes used by Tynyanov to unveil the truth about the poet. Pushkin and the remarkable time in which he lived are inseparable. The Enlightenment in Western Europe, a new tsar (Alexander I) and the promise of more liberal ideas of government, the invasion by Napoleon, and, ultimately, the State's repressive attitude to politics and the arts, are the ingredients in the make-up of a restless Russia trying to find itself. The country's sense of identity, strengthened by the defeat of Napoleon, was

being furthered by the development of Russian as a literary language by the poets Derzhavin and Zhukovsky, and the historian Karamzin. Tynyanov peoples his biographical novel with the main political and cultural protagonists of the period, and, of course, with Pushkins' closest relatives.

The colourful and eccentric relatives on his maternal side (descendants of the Ethiopian courtier of Peter the Great) and the more imaginative representatives of his father's long established aristocratic family provide a mix of genes that explains the unusual behavioural traits of the young Pushkin. Starved of maternal love and living in a home where French was the language spoken, the boy found solace in the love and friendship of his nanny, Arina Rodionovna, who fired his imagination with fairy tails and folklore – all in Russian. 'He spoke, read and thought in French.....but his dreams were Russian.'

At the age of 12 Pushkin entered the newly created Lyceé at Tsarskoye Selo – a unique school for boys earmarked for senior governmental posts, run on liberal lines and in which the tuition was conducted in Russian. In the part of the book entitled 'Lyceé' Pushkin moves to the foreground in the story. In it are covered his behaviour, his relationship to other students and his early efforts at self-expression through poetry and epigrams. The famous recitation in front of the ageing poet Derzhavin is vividly described. Perhaps more enlightening are the observations made on him by others. Described by one as being cold, aloof and arrogant and by another as being interested only in poetry and women, Pushkin showed himself to be capable of forging deep and meaningful friendships with fellow students. By comparison his liaisons with women were frivolous apart from a sincere attachment to the historian Karamzin's wife, a lady 17 years his senior.

The final part of the book, 'Youth', was completed when Tynyanov was seriously ill, a sad fact that had one particular blessing. It brought to the fore the 'artist' within the author and a light and attractive style of writing reminiscent of the young Pushkin, who had been exiled to the South for the satirical and inflammatory content of his poetry and epigrams. It also brought into prominence Tynyanov's talent

as a film script writer in his effective use of montage to capture the essential Pushkin.

Pavel Lungin: *The Island* (Ostrov, 2006)

Alla Sharandina, Culture Critic, St. Petersburg Vedomosti (translation abridged)

A Whole Lot of Faith

For the first time in the Venice Film Festival's 63-year history the honour of closing the event went to a Russian film and *The Island* is now on general release in Russia. It is a complex, minimalist film, shot almost entirely in monochrome and full of bleak landscapes, and would not usually enjoy such a sensational premiere. A few years ago, Zvagintsev's *The Return* was met with even greater acclaim in Venice (taking the festival's top award, the Golden Lion), but not many people were able to see this film in its country of origin. *The Island* has fared better for two reasons: firstly, the film was commissioned and financed by the TV channel 'Russia', and secondly, it was made with the support of the National Agency for Culture and Cinematography.

The reason the film has enjoyed such favour is that certain officials believe it represents an element of the much discussed 'national idea', that concept which politicians and bureaucrats have been struggling to patch together for over a decade. The element is Orthodoxy. Autocracy is a thing of the past, the national character is gradually withering, and the window to a prosperous future has shrunk to no more than a keyhole. It is against this background that the Church has somehow, unnoticed, taken responsibility for morale-boosting in today's cinema. In almost all the films released in the last few months a wise and upstanding man of the cloth makes an appearance, even if only briefly.

The Church's representatives in *The Island* are not cardboard cut-out monks, but portrayed as entirely realistic characters with human failings. For example, besides God, Father Filaret (played by Victor Sukhorukov) loves his satin bedcover and his soft boots. And throughout the whole film, Father Job (Dmitry Dyuzhev) fumes and flaps his hands for no apparent reason. But by the end they are feeling so enlightened and at peace they are practically glowing. Thanks to the strange, mad Father Anatoly, who lives at the same small monastery (Pyotr Mamonov, who is ideally suited to the role).

Thirty years ago, during the war, Father

Anatoly killed a comrade to save his own skin. This is the prologue and is exaggerated and overplayed. The traitor snivels, shakes like a leaf and bawls, 'Spare me, please, dear Nazis!' As for the hero: slowly, and to great cinematic effect, he lights his last cigarette with his pistol, spits at the baddies, and smiles enigmatically. Even the Germans are good! Although they only have seconds in which to destroy their targets they still manage to calculate the Russian soldiers' psychological responses.

The Russians' jauntily angled caps and grubby faces are in stark contrast to the ironed shirts of the Nazis. (Ironed shirts, on a ship in the White Sea?!) These scenes are far-fetched in the extreme. Thank goodness when the hero-traitor ages he takes on the credible appearance of Mamonov, who manages to look like a serious actor even when his character is behaving foolishly.

For many years, sheltered in the remote monastery, Anatoly is haunted by his past sin. Remorse leads him to behave like a saint, as he heals all the pilgrims who come seeking his help. But on the other hand, he is extremely intolerant of others' wrongdoings. While he clearly sees the beam in his own eye, he is sure to find a mighty log in the eyes of those around him. Anatoly is an ascetic: he sleeps on a bed of coals.

Lungin has taken the lives of saints, mixed them with an edifying tale, added elements from an entertaining *Exorcist*, and topped off his creation with an eccentric performance by a rock star. Is the film about Orthodoxy, Christianity or faith? Clearly the protagonist is not a 'correct' Christian, raising his face to accept the blows of fate; nor is he an enthusiastic missionary, busily creating his own personal religion. When he receives the long awaited absolution, Father Anatoly joyfully removes his cross, abandons all those yet to be cured, and, with light heart, climbs into his grave. More like mortal egotism than good Christian behaviour.

Despite its religious trappings, *The Island* is only superficially concerned with the ideas of Christianity in general, and Orthodoxy in particular.

Lungin says, 'I just made a film about the fact that God exists.' Half of all films are about this; they do not always call the higher forces 'God' - sometimes 'fate', 'love', 'world justice' or 'His Majesty 'Chance''. *The Island* sits very comfortably among such films.

David Jackson, *The Wanderers and critical realism in nineteenth-century Russian painting*, Manchester University Press, £55

The Russian vision: the art of Ilya Repin, BAI, Belgium, £40

Averil King

These two studies by Dr David Jackson (University of Leeds), the fruit of much scholarship, are hugely enlightening on the subject of nineteenth-century Russian art, an area until recently little appreciated in the west. *The Wanderers* forms the first art-historical study in English of the important group, the *Peredvizhniki*, Itinerants or Wanderers, who in 1871 began exhibiting in venues throughout Russia. Many of the Wanderers were highly accomplished, successful not only in portraying the Russian land and its most celebrated figures, but in drawing attention through the subject matter of their paintings to the inequality, corruption and excessive bureaucracy lingering in society long after the formal abolition of serfdom. Having described the circumstances leading to the group's formation, the author discusses a number of paintings in detail, opening them up for us in a way that is both informative and fascinating.

The Russian Vision is the first western monograph devoted to Russia's great master of genre, Ilya Repin (1844-1930), the significance of whose oeuvre remains largely unacknowledged outside his homeland. Repin rose from serfdom to become an artist of international stature, first winning acclaim with his *Barge-haulers on the Volga* (1870-3). His consummate technical ability was to save him from censure as he went on to paint the magnificent *Religious procession in the province of Kursk* and a number of scenes sympathetic to the populists and revolutionaries of the 1870s and 1880s. Perhaps best remembered for his magnificent portraits, including many commissioned by Pavel Tretyakov, Repin was revered in Russia throughout his life. As her major museums and galleries begin to lend to international exhibitions, this clearly written and beautifully illustrated study should do much to familiarise us with Repin's varied and remarkable output.

Akhe, *Plug n Play*, The Arches, Glasgow, 19 April 2007

Alice Campbell

With their *Plug n Play* show, Akhe thrilled their audience at Glasgow's Arches with a stunning and utterly bizarre blend of comedy, live music and art.

The jovial and surreal mood was set right at the start when we were greeted by a man in an open waistcoat, his skin painted bright red, grinning and exclaiming, "It's very good to see you again! I love my job!" The 'red man' was joined by two other men, both of whom looked like futuristic embodiments of Dickens's Fagin, in their 1970s-style football shorts, billowing shirts, waistcoats and goggles.

While the 'red man' acted as DJ and occasional narrator, yelling in German, English and Russian, offering us a musical journey that moved seamlessly through house, disco, soul and funk, the other two performers took turns to entertain us from the front of the stage. (While one man addressed the audience, the other got on with painting a huge mural at the back of the stage.)

Standing in front of an old wooden workbench with an odd assortment of tools and other paraphernalia, the men made 'cocktails' from lemons, bread, vodka, and, it would appear, crushed light bulbs. Much was made of the production of these cocktails: for example, the performers cut loaves of bread with saws as though they were playing violins, and lit bulbs dangling from cables were dunked in glasses of water. Meanwhile, a complex contraption of strings and metal poles suspended saws and other implements above the men's heads. The men set the vodka alight, and then, to gasps from the audience, they set fire to a small string holding the saws. With all these pyrotechnics I suddenly understood the usher's warning, "I wouldn't sit in the front row if you value your eyebrows!"

Audience participation was encouraged, if not mandatory. Huge bamboo rods equipped with pincers were used to distribute the finished cocktails among the crowd (presumably without the crushed light bulbs...). As the rods swayed and sagged, each time a drink reached its target audience member huge applause rang out.

And what about the mural? Well, at the very end the performers auctioned it off to the highest bidder. (On this occasion, the top bid was £40.)

The performance was inspired and had the audience both gaping in awe and squirming in their seats. Without a storyline or character development, much of the show's success came from the clever use of suspense. I really did enjoy the show, but I would recommend that you only go and see *Plug n Play* if you like very alternative performances.

Founded in St. Petersburg in 1989 by Maxim Isaev and Pavel Semchenko, former members of Boris Ponzovski's Yes-No theatre group, Akhe (The Russian Engineering Theatre) is one of Russia's leading experimental and multi-disciplinary ensembles.

Imperial Ice Stars: Swan Lake on Ice at the Edinburgh Playhouse

Eleanor Williams (aged 13)

My sister and I and two of our friends all went to see *Swan Lake on Ice* at the Edinburgh Playhouse just after Easter. We sat there open-mouthed through the whole show! The Imperial Ice Stars can perform moves that look utterly impossible, but pull them off without any signs of wavering. Skating on stilts was just one of the amazing things they did. They take figure skating to a completely new level, and we had never seen anything like this before. We came out of the show completely exhilarated!

The costumes were exquisitely made, so that the swans looked just like swans, and the fine court dresses were perfect. The scenery was so perfect that you could really believe you were beside a lake in the woods and that the lake really was enchanted.

Totally worthwhile.

SRF Report

Jenny Carr

EGM: new constitution, charity status

The Scotland-Russia Forum will hold an EGM on 8 June to enable members to debate changes in its constitution which will enable it to apply for charitable status.

A Scottish-Russian Cultural Centre?

The Forum has had a most generous offer of finance from S&N plc to enable it to rent premises for a small Cultural Centre and the committee has provided members with its proposals for the form this Centre might take.

Website

We are having the website professionally redesigned, and adding "Events" and "Notices" pages to keep you abreast of all the news some of you currently receive by email. The URL will be unchanged:

www.scotlandrussiaforum.org

Meetings Jan-May 2007

We began the new year with a well attended talk by SRF's founder chairman Meg Luckins on **life in Tadjikistan**. The audience was fascinated by Meg's insights into the country where she has spent a good part of the last 2 years and enjoyed her stunning slides of the Tadjik landscape.

We celebrated **Maslenitsa** jointly with the Edinburgh University Russian Society who baked pancakes and provided various entertainments. All accompanied by the Consulate's resident accordion player, Mr Mishnersky.

In March a large audience heard Craig Murray discuss his experiences in **Uzbekistan**, where he fell foul of US and UK support for President Karimov's corrupt regime. This talk was filmed by a German TV crew and formed a small part of a German TV news programme screened in April. We have this on DVD, available on loan to interested members.

Svetlana Stevenson's talk in April on **homelessness in Russian cities** was attended by a smaller but very appreciative audience, including an interested representative of Edinburgh Council's Homelessness Team, and followed by a lively discussion.

The SRF programme was rounded off in May with Simon Roberts's excellent **photographs of Russia and Russians** from his "Motherland" project.

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Scotland-Russia Forum Autumn Programme 2007

All welcome. Entrance to talks incl. light refreshments is £2 members/students, £4 others.

Wednesday 26 September – AGM and talk by Vladimir Malygin, Russian Consul-General

SRF members will receive details of the AGM agenda. Non-members are also very welcome to attend the AGM and talk, but will not be able to vote. After the business of the AGM we are delighted to welcome the Consul-General to talk about Russian-Scottish relations past and present.

7.30pm German Speaking Church, 1 Chalmers Crescent, Edinburgh EH9 1TW

Friday 26 October – Andrew Wilson “Ukrainian Update”

Dr Wilson is Senior Lecturer in Ukrainian Studies at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies. His research interests are politics in the post-Soviet states, particularly Ukraine on which he has published several books – most recently *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation* (2000) and *Ukraine’s Orange Revolution* (2005) which was the Winner of the BASEES Alec Nove Prize for 2005 and CHOICE Outstanding Academic Title for 2007. He will update us on current events in Ukraine. We hope to hold this meeting jointly with the recently established **Friends of Ukraine (Scottish Foundation)**.

7.30pm venue tba

Wednesday 21 November – Father Stephen Platt “The Meaning of Icons”

In the Eastern Christian tradition, icons are not merely a piece of religious art but hold a central place in defining the identity of the Orthodox Church. Fr Stephen Platt will consider the history of icons, the theology which underlines their role in the life and teaching of the Orthodox Church, and their place in the spiritual life of the believer. Fr. Stephen is a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church and serves as rector of the Russian Orthodox Parish of St Nicholas in Oxford. He is General Secretary of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, which exists to promote contact and friendship between eastern and western Christians.

7.30pm German Speaking Church, 1 Chalmers Crescent, Edinburgh EH9 1TW

December – SRF Christmas Party. Details to follow. Ideas / assistance welcome!

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