

The Scotland-Russia Forum *Review*

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Dear Readers,

This year has clearly been one of industry and creativity for members and friends of the SRF. Our June edition is graced with original works from Scottish artists and writers and we return to projects first published in December 2007.

Personally, I am delighted at the variety of contributions to the *Review*. Not only are they skilfully produced, but each offers an individual interpretation of Russia and the CIS. Our cover picture we see literally through the eyes of photographer Simon Crofts. We publish essays by students of Russian as well as a piece written for the Pushkin Prize. Among these works we read two interpretations of the writings of Pushkin. Our new reviews editor, Wendy Muzlanova, contributes excerpts from her new book, *The Night You Come The Day We Kiss*.

Our reviews section this year touches on music, art, food, literature, politics, history and folklore. Michael Fulda, the grandson of the last captain of the Varyag, gives us an update on plans to return his grandfather's remains to Scotland. And Anton Grizenko describes the progress of his research into a Scottish colony that lived in the Caucasus.

SRF chairperson Jenny Carr has put together the latest details of the new SRF cultural centre. It is exciting to see pictures and plans of something that only six months ago the SRF was still dreaming about.

Thank you to all our contributors. The *Review* is what it is because of your efforts.

With best wishes for the summer,

Chris Delaney
Editor

Editor: Chris Delaney
Reviews editor: Wendy Muzlanova

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The SRF *Review* is published by the Scotland-Russia Forum. The opinions expressed are those of the contributors, and not necessarily those of the committee or the editor.

Our cover photo was taken by Simon Crofts. The SRF Review invited him to tell us a little bit about it.

There is something about this picture that I find attractive, despite its glum subject matter.

I was in Ukraine to take photographs for the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development of a bank in Kiev and of a steel factory in Donetsk. Wandering around central Kiev I saw a surreal scene. I must have walked past it dozens of times before, but never paid it attention. I like this about photography, that there is the extraordinary hidden in the ordinary, if only you are prepared to look for it.

In the scene is a UkrEnergo power station with the gaudy facade of a market. What attracted me was a feeling that the crowds think they are entering some kind of utopia – bright on the outside, but inside is an industrial hell. So in a way it is not a very optimistic image.

Despite that, I have a very positive attitude towards Ukraine, Russia, and other countries of the former Soviet Union. I see a vibrancy and dynamism and a warmth of human relations, and many of my images are very positive.

The technicalities of the image were straightforward. I don't like to manipulate an image afterwards – we are too used to Photoshop and exaggeration in magazines and advertising. Manipulation isn't necessary if you choose an interesting subject and viewpoint in the first place.

There is a kind of visual trick in this image: it seems to be in two halves and there is a sense of compression which makes it feel two dimensional, like a painting. The eye gets confused about what is real and what is not.

I travel back to Ukraine and Russia quite often. I plan to go to Kiev again to take portraits of orphan children and their new families, working with a charity. It is the continuation of a personal project. Before that I was

taking portraits of people involved in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Ukraine

Being able to speak Russian is a huge advantage. I think people feel more comfortable and open when I can chat with them and explain why I am taking the photos. It makes taking the pictures a collaborative and friendly process, rather than feeling that an alien with a camera has been beamed down to gather information.

Nowadays I divide my time between Edinburgh and Krakow, where I have a flat. From Krakow I can jump on a train and be in Kiev the next day – luckily visas are not needed any more.

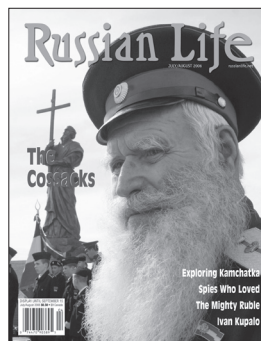
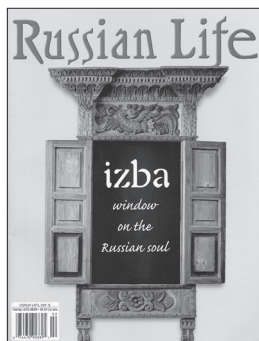
I am fascinated in everything connected with Russia, Ukraine, Poland, etc ... so if anyone has a proposal for an interesting project, I would love to make contact.

**Simon Crofts can be contacted at simoncrofts@croftsphoto.com
His website is www.croftsphoto.com**



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Essay writing competition

The ALL (Association for Language Learning) Russian Essay competition, sponsored by the SRF and others, was held for the second year. There were 179 entrants from schools, colleges and universities across the UK at different levels. Scotland was well represented and the SRF Review is delighted to print the winning entries of Emma Bentley, Charlotte Gunn and Georgii Gorobets. Congratulations to them!

Charlotte Gunn (11), from the Russian Edinburgh School, took joint first place in the category 3, level 1 group. This group was for 11 and unders who have not attended school in Russia or the former Soviet Union and have learnt reading and writing skills after emigration. Charlotte was a winner in last year's competition and this year wrote an essay on the theme: *Letter to my favourite character from a Russian fairy-tale or story.*

Письмо Татьяне Лариной, героине романа А.С. Пушкина “Евгений Онегин”

Дорогая Татьяна,

Я тебе пишу это письмо, потому что ты одна из моих любимых героинь. Я узнала о твоей судьбе из книги, которую мне прочитала мама. Еще тогда я поняла, что у нас много общего: я тоже люблю мечтать и уединяться с книгой.

Мне было очень жаль, когда Онегин не разделил твоего чувства любви к нему. Я думаю, что ты поступила очень смело, открыв свои чувства мужчине первая. Мне нравится то, что ты не забыла его, что этот человек всегда оставался твоим идеалом.

Возможно, это была ошибка отказаться от Онегина, потому что ты еще его любила.

Любовь – это жизнь.

Любовь – это страсть.

Любовь – это, что бог дал мне и тебе.

Это половинки наших сердец, Летающих в небе, и ищущих другую половину.

Когда она найдется, надо скорее ее поймать.

А если ты не протянешь руку, они не встретятся никогда.

С лучшими пожеланиями и мыслями о тебе,

Шарлотта

Georgii Gorobets (12) is at the Russian Edinburgh School. He was joint winner in the category 3, level 2 group for 12s and over.

He wrote an essay on the theme: *If I went to Russia I'd like to meet . . .*

Если бы я поехал в Россию я бы хотел встретиться с . . .

Если бы я поехал в Россию, я хотел бы встретить Толю Клюквина из рассказа Николая Носова “приключения Толи Клюквина”.

В этом рассказе Толя идет в гости к другу, но из-за черной кошки, которая переходит ему дорогу, он опаздывает, и оказывается, что его друг уже ушел. Толя пытается его найти и попадает в неприятные истории.

Толя – ученик четвертого класса школы № 36. Он любит гулять по улицам и играть с друзьями. Толя особенно любит шахматы, он может играть в них весь день!

Толя часто попадает во всякие неприятности. Один раз он даже попал в милицию. Он, конечно, старается быть честным и говорить только правду, но ложь все равно иногда сама вылезает. Толя никогда не хочет делать ничего плохого, но все не так понимают его действия.

Я хотел бы встретить Толю Клюквина, потому что он похож на меня характером. Например, пытается выглядеть взрослым перед младшими и учит других как играть в разные спортивные игры, зато сам эти правила не соблюдает!

Если бы я его встретил, я думаю, что мы бы подружились. Мы бы играли в шахматы (не весь день!), гуляли по улицам и играли во дворах в разные игры. Попадать в разные неприятности не очень хочется, но и без них скучно!

Emma Bentley (20) is in second year at St Andrews University. She took first place in the category for non-heritage learners at universities and adult colleges who have between 100 and 200 contact hours of instruction in Russian. This is mostly students at post-beginners' Level.

Emma's essay was on the theme: What I like about today's Russia.

Что мне нравится в современной России

Мне нравится в современной России, что Россия более самоуверенная в глобальных делах.

Несколько лет назад Россия конкурировала с Америкой в гонке вооружений. Хотя она проиграла, сейчас увеличивающийся уровень благосостояния и возникновение русского среднего класса значат, что Россия становится сверхдержавой еще раз.

К тому же, из-за ценности нефти в наше время есть немного самых богатых олигархов, общее население воспитано лучше, зарабатывает больше и при этом люди имеют лучшее здравоохранение и жизненный уровень.

Вдобавок, сейчас Белый Дом становится влиятельным в глобальных делах и отстаивает свои интересы. По-моему, это очень хорошо, что Россия возвратилась.



Every year The Pushkin Prizes in Scotland holds a creative writing competition for Scots and Russian children. Although the competition is inspired by Pushkin and was founded by Lady Myra Butter, a descendant of the poet, the content of the writing ranges widely in subject matter and style. To view the complete folios, please visit the Pushkin Prizes website, www.pushkinprizes.net.

This year 13-year-old Julia Bowie from Hawick High School was highly commended for her short story, *The Queen of Spades*, based on Pushkin's work of the same name. Here is an extract from the story especially for the SRF *Review*, published by kind permission of the author and Pushkin Prizes.

ON New Year's Eve, a few others joined us in my room for an exquisite supper, thanks to Emile, of champagne and oysters. The room was dark, lighted as usual only by candles. We were all stylishly dressed in black and the music of Satie complimented the scene. After the meal, Emile and I settled down at a small table under the pier glasses to play cards. Suddenly, he handed me a little package done up in tissue paper. "Un petit present pour le nouvel an," he explained. "I found them in a little shop in the Rue de la Fortune by the vieux asile," he went on lapsing in and out of English, as was his habit. I undid the packaging to reveal a silver card case engraved with the name Hermann. Inside was a set of the prettiest playing cards I had ever seen. "Late eighteenth, early nineteenth century I suppose," he added. I remember thanking him, leaning over the table to kiss his cheeks. His eyes shone and his soft mouth quivered.

It was nearly midnight as we began to play faro – placing bets on the order the cards would appear. The others started dancing but Emile and I played on. Although intent on the game, I gradually became aware of someone else reflected in the ancient mirror hanging beside us. Shifting my gaze, I saw it was an old woman. She was dressed for what I assume was a fancy-dress party, her costume was an antique "Queen of Spades". Surprised, I looked around, expecting to see her standing at my shoulder. No-one was there. As I turned back to the mirror, I heard Emile say to me, "Alas, you have taken all that I have – if you win the next hand, I have nothing else to give you now but my soul," and I was aware that he began writing out a note to that effect. The eyes of the woman in the mirror blazed with triumph and I heard a harsh yet quavering voice whisper, "Gagnez! Jouez – trois, sept, as!" To my amazement, and lasting horror, I watched my hands play the three, seven and ace of spades. I won the game. Emile pressed the note into my hand and I knew in that moment something dreadful and unspeakable had taken place. The chimes of midnight began to strike. Glancing up at the mirror, I saw only Emile and I and the others in the distance, raising their glasses to toast the New Year.

After that evening, things were never the same between us. Whereas before I had felt affection for Emile, now I felt only revulsion. He stalked me all the time, purposely waited for me and shadowed my every move. He became alternately needy and demanding of me until at last I complained to the university authorities. They investigated and eventually he was sent

home. You may dismiss all this as fancy. Believe me in the intervening years I tried to do so. Earlier this year I received a letter from Sebastian – we kept in touch sporadically – it told me that Emile had passed away at his family's estate in the late summer. He had lived there all these years as a recluse, a disappointment to his parents, never reaching his full potential.

Now it is New Year's Eve and looking out of the window, across the frosty street, I can see someone standing under the trees by the park entrance. The silhouette is familiar and takes me back to Paris and winter walks in the Bois de Boulogne when Emile would wait for me just as he is doing now. I know what he has come for, I have the paper still. I will take it to him now and offer him the torn up pieces – I only hope that he will accept them.

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Elena Cooper. Atlas Language Centre, Paignton, Devon.

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Karass – Little Scotland in North Caucasus

Anton Grizenko continues his account of the 19th Century Scottish colony in the Caucasus (see December 2008)

SOURCES in Russia, UK, France and Germany are producing information on the 19th Century Scottish colony and missionary station at Karass (now Inozemtsevo), South Russia. It's striking to note that the sparsely populated colony received more than the odd visitor. Clearly, the Scots at Karass were hospitable and social people.

Alexander Paterson, the head of the colony's administration, detailed some of the visitors in his notes. On June 1, 1811, "one of the Birlelik Armenians called on me," he writes. In the same month "Karass Ismael" and "a Russian lady and her three daughters visited us. Her daughter spoke very good English. An English woman was with them as governess." In August, he notes that "several Kabardians visited me with whom I conversed with on various subjects" and "the Governor of Astrakhan called on us on his way to Moscow".

It seems that the lodgings at Karass were quite well known. Paterson writes on June 20, 1811: "In the evening the Governor and General Pouskin came to our place and lodged in Mr B. They are going on business to the Tatars."

And the Scots themselves go on social visits, for example: "Mr Brunton took dinner with General Davidoff at Constantinogorsk [a fortress a few miles from Karass]."

They make many routine official visits: "Mr B. and I went to Georhevsk [regional centre]. We called on the Governor twice."

Alexander Paterson's notes also contain at least two different types of handwriting between September and December 1811, when Paterson was away visiting a German colony at Sarepta, now part of Volgograd.

One wonders whose handwriting it was. Drawings or paintings of the colony are pretty scarce. However, it's possible to glean a picture of the place from the descriptions of Robert Lyall, a scientist, and the drawings of the Russian poet Lermontov (see picture below).

Lyall writes: "This Scotch colony is agreeably situated on a gentle declivity, about two miles distant from the foot of the Beshtau, or the Five-Mountains, and at the eastern extremity of a fine forest. It consists of two wide streets, which intersect each other at right angles. Through the middle of the principal one of the two flows a clear rivulet, which furnishes an abundant supply of water, at all seasons of the year. The gardens, orchards, and cultivated fields, by which they and the whole

component parts of our party. A Scotch priest, mounted as among his native hills, and Circassian noble and whip-maker, on his beautiful steed, rode side-by-side, or tried the speed of their horses against one another, as we were whirled along by the Russian *isvostchiks*, who sung with great animation."

Sources also reveal crafts and practical skills that the Scots had introduced. Thomas Alcock, visiting Karass in 1828, notes: "They introduced an improved system of husbandry." Sir Robert Ken Porter, appointed historical painter to the court of the Czar in 1804, considered the Scotch colony "may be regarded as an agricultural society, rather than a theological college". William Glen remarked that until the Scotch missionaries



Mikhail Lermontov's drawing of Karass at Mount Beshtau

village were surrounded, produced a cheerful effect, and argued that this establishment was one of the abodes of industry."

Rev. William Glen, a fellow Scottish missionary, uses the word "beautiful" instead of "agreeably", adding to the appeal of the place.

Lyall says of Paterson: "Him we found in a well laid out and thriving garden, amid bee hives; and I could have fancied myself in Scotland, from the appearance of industry, and the Scotch pronunciation of my countryman." Robert Lyall also illustrates a typical scene from the multi-ethnic life of the region: "As we proceeded to Karass, we could not help being amused at the

came to Karass, potatoes were scarcely known in the region. All this information helps to build up a picture of the Scots' varied activities in the region.

Madame Freygan, travelling with her husband, a diplomat, wrote sympathetically about Karass in a letter on August 10, 1812, in Constantinogorsk: "This settlement, which is not far from hence, is worthy all admiration ... One cannot help respecting these generous islanders, who have left their native lands, and become adventurers, in a country little known, and still uncivilized, that they may devote themselves to such an undertaking, as hazardous as it is laborious."

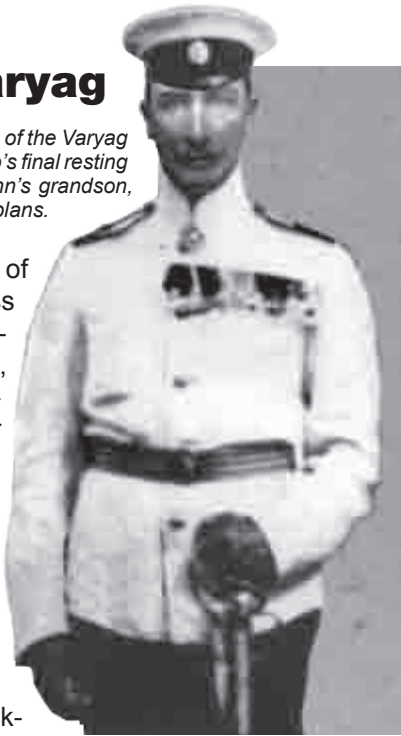
Return to Varyag

The remains of the last captain of the Varyag are to be transferred to the ship's final resting place in Ayr. Captain von Dehn's grandson, Michael Fulda, describes the plans.

THE descendants of Captain 1st class Karl von Dehn, last commander of the Varyag, plan to transfer this summer the remains of their grandfather from his family estate in Bielsk-Podlaski, Poland, to his ship's last resting place in Lendalfoot, Ayr.

On-site planning for the transfer was performed last year with the authorities in Bielsk-Podlaski, South Ayrshire and Moscow. Exporting remains out of Poland is routine, the placing of my grandfather's remains was deemed a private concern by the Foreign Office and South Ayrshire Council has agreed to it. While refusing to include Captain von Dehn in the official Varyag ceremonies, the Russian authorities haven't opposed the transfer.

An on-shore memorial – probably a plaque – has been proposed to accompany the deposition of the remains at sea (on the right of the page are some examples of proposed



plaques). The content, location and funding of the memorial are yet to be determined. The details of the transfer are still to be determined, but we intend to give the SRF community advance notice.

For questions and comments address Michael Fulda at:

mfulda@comcast.net

More information and photographs on the internet:

<http://michael.fulda.net>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lili_Dehn

<http://www.battleships-cruisers.co.uk/variag.htm>

KARL von DEHN
HUSBAND OF
LILI von DEHN
1887-1963
Descendant of
Prince Mikhail Kutuzov
Close friend of
Tsaritsa Alexandra
Who baptized their son
Alexander (Titi)
Author of 1922 book
The Real Tsaritsa
Rests in non-Catholic
cemetery of Rome

KARL von DEHN
1877-1932
Captain First Class
Garde Equipage
Imperial Russian Navy
Appointed by Tsar Nicholas II
Last Commander Variag 1916-1917
Remains placed on Varyag
Summer 2008

KARL von DEHN
Military career (1897-1917)
Peking Boxer Rebellion 1900
Defender Russian legation
Russian-Japanese war 1904-1905
Commander submarine Shchuka
Peace time assignments (1902-1913)
Imperial yachts Standard,
Princess, Alexandra
Commander Company of
Mixed Garde Battalion
World War One
Commander destroyer Voyskovoy
(1913-1916)
Assisted capture German
naval code cruiser Magdeburg
Commander Cruiser Variag (1916-1917)
Civilian career (1917-1932)
Fishing enterprise partner;
London 1917-1926
Estate owner; Bielsk Podlaski,
Poland 1927-1932

KARL von DEHN
Russian decorations
Saint George, 4th class,
Saint Stanislaw, 2nd class
Saint Ann, 2nd class with swords
Saint Vladimir, 4th class with swords
Peking Boxer Rebellion 1900
French Knight of the Legion of Honor
Italian Knight of the Cross
Japanese Rising Sun, 6th class
Prussian Crown with swords, 4th class,
Prussian Red Eagle, 4th class
Austrian Knight of the Cross
Turkish Medjidie 3rd class
Commander Montenegro Cross

Among Russian sources we find Maria Sergejevna Mukhanova, maid-of-honour to the Tsar family and a memoirist, who visited Karass in 1810 at the age of seven with her father, a courtier. In her memoirs she recalled visiting the colonists' dwellings and how she was fascinated with the printing press

used to print holy literature in the local languages of the region.

Another interesting point in my research is the study of correspondence carried out by the Scots at Karass. Henry Brunton's letters are impressive and we can only but envy his elegant handwriting (see below).

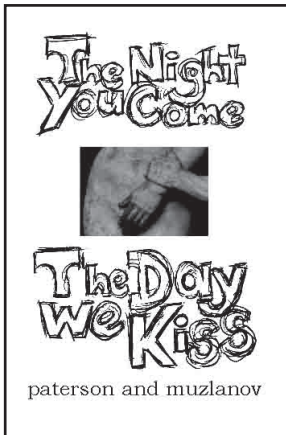
The few letters that remain give an insight into his interests, which range from the situation in Russia and Turkey, missionary news from Kalmykia, printing and translation of the New Testament into Turkish, Persian, Kalmyck, and even into Chinese, which he discussed during a meeting with the prominent scientist Julius von Klaproth.

I intend to visit Karass (Inozemtsevo) this summer for more insight into these "generous islanders" in this distant but pleasant place called Little Scotland in the North Caucasus. The discovery continues.

**Mr Anton Grizenko, FRGS,
78 Linden Road, Reading,
Berkshire, RG2 7EH
primaxim@hotmail.com**

Harap Feb. 4 23 1807
Rev. & Dear Sir,
I would have answered yours
of Sept. 15th 1806 some time ago, had I not been
waiting for better informations with regard to the queries
than I proposed when I received them.

Sample of Henry Brunton's handwriting



Excerpts from the new book, *The Night You Come The Day We Kiss*, printed by kind permission of the authors.

But for the want of your touch on my skin,
The distance means nothing to what lies within.

The kiss of your phantom,
Your lips on my own,
The distance means nothing to dreams dreamt alone.

Save for the warmth of your body in mine,
The distance means nothing to fantasy fine.

Anima doubled,
The future on loan,
The distance means nothing but flesh on the bone.

When miles are traversed to stake claim to desire,
The distance is naught but the wood for the fire.

I watched your mouth
as you spoke to others
and I did not hear a word.

My soul was soothed
by your tone of voice
whose words I never heard.

I looked upon your haunting lips
as they moved in verbal dance,
in earnest talk, philosophy
or "witty repartee"

And I thought that your words
might belong to others,
but your lips belonged to me.

Russian Café-Gallery COSSACHOK

Opened in February 1998 in the Merchant City, Café Cossachok is Scotland's first and only authentic Russian restaurant. The owners, Lev (a musician) and Julia Atlas (a biologist) aim to bring Russian traditions of cuisine, hospitality and culture to the heart of Glasgow.

The cooking meanders from Russian into Georgian, Ukrainian, Armenian and other East European genres with great aplomb, offering a gastronomic refuge for both meat and vegetarian connoisseurs.

Café Cossachok is an established arts venue, with live folk, jazz and world music, played every Sunday night by outstanding musicians. The dark walls, the sea of shawls on the ceiling, the carved heavy wooden furniture and candlelit tables create a warm atmosphere, especially after you've downed a chilled vodka or three exclaiming "Na Zdorovie!"

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38, Albion Street, Merchant City, Glasgow G1 1LH

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www.cossachok.com

TO RUSSIA

Strathclyde University's Chamber Choir made its first ever trip to Russia in April. The 32-strong choir spent a week in Moscow and performed at the Pushkin Museum, the Conservatoire Rachmaninov Hall, the British Embassy and the Church of the Immaculate Conception, a Catholic Church built by Poles and one of the few venues in Moscow that has an organ.

The trip was the first time a Scottish chamber choir had visited Russia. Alan Tavener, the conductor, chose a repertoire that reflected the occasion. The programme included music from pre and post-Reformation Scotland, from Romantic Scottish composers as well as poetry from Robert Burns, set to music by, among others, James MacMillan.

The visit was in collaboration with the Moscow Kastalsky Choir



Alan Tavener and the choir at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow

and Svetlana Zveseva, an expert on the composer Alexander Kastalsky.

Among their other pieces, the Strathclyde choir performed a version of Kastalsky's Requiem for Fallen Brothers, which has parts in Latin, English and Church Slavonic,

and can be described as a 'pan-religion' piece, drawing influence from a variety of faiths and styles of music.

For more information about the choir, see www.strath.ac.uk/music/activities/chamber.htm

FROM RUSSIA

Royal Academy of Arts, London

Reviewed by Chris Delaney

THE From Russia exhibition at the Royal Academy was so popular that the organisers twice extended it into April and even began opening late into the evenings. I caught the exhibition in its last week (having phoned to book three weeks earlier) and even before the doors opened at 10am, a queue of culture hungry punters was doing a sobre congo round the Royal Academy's courtyard.

The exhibition contains works from Russia's four greatest museums – the Pushkin Museum and the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow and the Hermitage and the Russian Museum in St Petersburg. The mere fact that there was an exhibition – bearing in mind the big bureaucratic hurdles organisers must have jumped to put these works together as well as the ridiculous politicisation of the event – was a triumph in itself. It's worth noting that it came to London after a stint at the museum kunst palast in Dusseldorf.

From Russia: French and Russian Master Paintings 1870-1925 From Moscow and St Petersburg – to give the exhibition its full title – attempted to highlight the complementary influences and movements in Russian and French art around a century ago. The organisers placed the works in such a way as to make explicit the link between the art of the two countries.

On one wall we see Exter's Still Life next to Picasso's Violin and Guitar. Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin's Boys Playing hangs nearby Matisse's dancers (which was the 'poster boy' of the event). And in the middle of the exhibition there is an astounding video creation of Vladimir Tatlin's Monument to the Third International, a huge angular metal structure which was to dwarf the Eiffel Tower and distort its symmetry. Next to that we see a big picture of the Eiffel Tower in its early stages, with only two tiers.

I imagine for some art lovers the Russia-France link was just too

explicit, too neat and a bit like a soundbite approach to complex artists and an innovative period. Personally, I don't think I have ever enjoyed a gallery so much.

As someone who goes to art galleries when abroad but struggles to 'read' paintings, I found the exhibition informative but not patronising. I was guided round the museum gently, methodically, thematically, from French influences in Russia to the pioneering collectors Shchukin and Morozov; I saw how Russia digested these influences and began to create, or recreate, its own abstractions in the works of Malevich, and ended up at constructionism through Tatlin.

The exhibition was also physically manageable; and instead of having to scan every painting as one does in the Hermitage like an undergraduate scans a literary masterpiece, I could stop and try to read every painting (with the crowds, of course) and still had the time and the energy for a walk down Piccadilly.



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Café Cossachok

Reviewed by Wendy Muzlanova

ONE (very) quiet Thursday lunchtime, Café Cossachok in Glasgow saw the arrival of a “delegation” from The Perth Russian and English Conversation Group. Our objective? Reconnaissance! Our humble (but not so little) group in Perth enjoys many “extra-curricular” social events (har har!) and we are always on the look-out for new venues in which to enjoy ourselves. It was imperative that we discover whether the menu available on the Café’s website was really as impressive as it looked. Our intrepid group consisted of four Scots and two Russians. Our appetites had been thoroughly whetted and we had suffered travel delays including some creative map-reading. We had our critical hats on and we were going to be a tough crowd to please.

The staff at Cossachok were charming and disarming in their welcome. We surveyed the restaurant quickly – apart from our group, only one other table in the restaurant was occupied – and this by a single diner. Such lunchtime tranquillity was unsettling, and I am sure we were all secretly doubting the culinary claims of the website. Or to put things into the vernacular: “Oh no! It’s deserted! Will the food be crap?”

Certainly, the café is beautifully Bohemian in style – where else can you find a ladies’ room decorated with Rachmaninov sheet music as wallpaper? The Russians among us grumbled about the authenticity of the decor, but the owners do know how to create a pleasant and relaxing space. I am certain of one thing – I was very glad that the design theme was not 1970s Soviet *stolovaya*.

The set menus for lunch looked very appetizing, but we were all feeling expansive, so we opted for the very extensive a la carte option. Now, as a Vegetarian Pariah, I am accustomed to being scowled at and unfavourably discussed by carnivorous chefs and fellow diners alike. In the past, in less tolerant company, I have been variously lambasted with requests for my opinions on the following urgent matters: “But scientists have PROVEN that carrots have feelings. What do you think about that, then?” or “What’s your opinion on vegetarian shoes, then?”

Well guys, just to let you know – I will go on eating all sentient vegetables in my usual callous manner and I don’t mind what the shoes eat. It’s a free country, after all.

Given my previous fraught dining experiences, I had no reason whatsoever to expect that I would suddenly find myself in Vegetarian Heaven. Oh, thank you, Café Cossachok – thank you for offering more than TWELVE vegetarian options – none of which comprised a limp lettuce leaf and a solitary, sad tomato. This is THE place to bring vegetarian pals if you are entertaining them in Glasgow – they will be friends for life!

On Alexander’s recommendation, I began with the Blini and Vegetable Ikra. My taste-buds were transported. For my main course, I opted for the Armenian Mussaka. How I wish I lived locally to this wonderful place. (Cossachok, I mean – not Armenia – although I’m sure

it’s lovely.) My husband Yuri chose the Beef Stroganoff which was both delicious and substantial. My son Eoghan was not overly keen on the Chakhokhbili, a Georgian chicken dish. He had, however, been making approving noises about Burger King earlier, so maybe he wasn’t really where he truly wanted to be. Lynda and Kevin both enjoyed the St. Petersburg Blintzes – a delicious dish of pancakes stuffed with glorious mashed potato – not to mention the mushrooms, onions, creamy sauce and salad. Everything went down extremely well with the feisty and tasty Oblomov – a little beer of deceptive power. Actually, a couple of our party also went down very well with the Oblomov. (We do wonder if the beer is named in this way because of the sounds one might make in a futile attempt to speak properly after several bottles of the stuff.)

The background music was melodic, eclectic and relaxing – or at least it was, until Yuri discovered the existence of Cossachok’s piano, at which time we were treated to a thumping, thundering rendition of Chopsticks. Well, the old tunes are the best and he did give everyone (including the staff) a very good laugh. Oh, Oblomov, you have much to answer for!

Mellowed and in good humour, we enjoyed exploring the Art Gallery in the basement – don’t miss out on this part of the Cossachok Experience.

Our sole regret about the trip was our inability to manage any of the many wonderfully tempting desserts on offer. This shameful lack of stamina will not be evident upon our next visit. I am in training.

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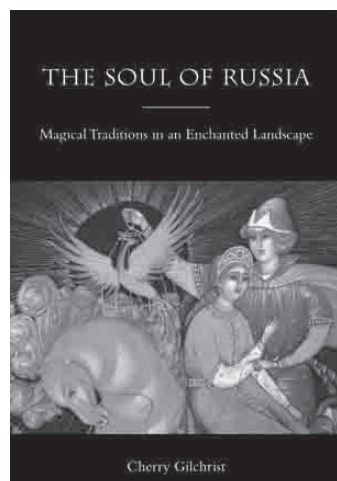
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The Soul of Russia

by Cherry Gilchrist
Reviewed by
Susan Geddes

INSPIRED by her love of Land fascination for Russian culture, and with painstaking research and personal engagement, Cherry Gilchrist aims to give us a “living picture of Russian myth and magic”.

The Soul of Russia is a worthwhile read, although not an easy one. The enormity of the subject and detail involved make it a little ‘textbookish’ at times. (Even what constitutes “Russia” and “Russian” is not easily defined). Added to the difficulty of the volume of information and the author’s desire that we should internalise the concepts, as she has, is the fact that for many readers there is a lot of new information in there. Even as a lover of all things Russian, my knowledge did not extend much beyond Baba Yaga, Dyed Moroz, house spirits and the bread and salt ceremony. I have definitely learned a lot from this book.



Where the book really comes alive is in Cherry’s anecdotes and diary extracts. Were all her writing like these, the book would be very much more of a dip-in type of read, but it would also be very much less complete. To organise the subject matter – beginning with the “tree of life” and finishing with the “wheel of time” – could not have been an easy task. Other strengths are that the bulk of information is in the text, thus avoiding lengthy references at the end, and the flavour added by judicious use of transliterated Russian words.

There are a number of well reproduced photographs which enhance the writing, illustrating the themes of folklore in folk art (the firebird, divination, the snow maiden, bears) as well as putting these themes in the context of festivals past and present such as Maslinitza. A little more background information might have been helpful – some of the information seems to hang in a kind of vacuum, and it is hard to see where it fits in with, say, the hardships of the Soviet era. An index may also have been helpful for anyone wishing to use the book for quick reference, but this would miss the point of what the author has quite successfully done, that is, to give a glimpse of the Russian soul and its magical world.

The Sacred Book of the Werewolf

by Victor Pelevin
Reviewed by Wendy Muzlanova

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ILIKE a man who can make me laugh. In his latest work, *The Sacred Book of the Werewolf*, Pelevin does just that. He made me laugh on the bus, he made me laugh at the breakfast table – he even made me laugh in bed. The book is a satirical delight.

Apparently, the entire text of the book was found on the hard drive of a laptop, which was found (or planted) at a crime scene – or so the story goes.

This is a tale (pun quite intended) of a beautiful woman who is really a fox – who is really quite something else yet again. She creates hallucinogenic illusions using her tail – a talent which comes in handy during the scrapes she gets into working as a Moscow Lady of the Night: “Flogging someone is hard work, even when the procedure is merely a hypnotic suggestion...”

Our heroine hails from China, but unfortunately, her beautiful given name does not translate well into Russian – “Something like living in America and being called Whatze Phuck...” The narrative voice of our leading lady, A Hu-Li, is particularly strong throughout the book – well, she does have to contend with several different aspects of her personality all having contradictory conversations with each other at the same time.

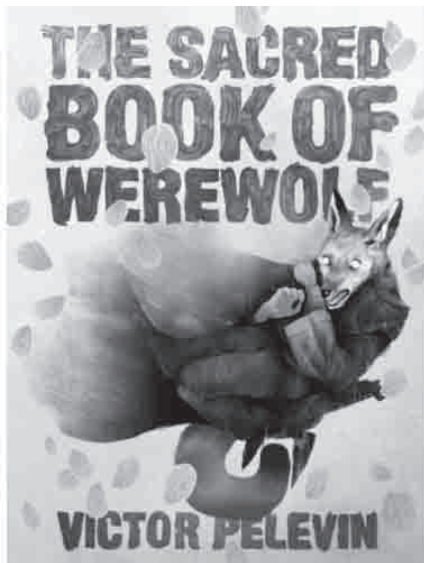
Throughout the book, there are many pop-culture/consumerism references. T-shirts bear the legend “ckuf” (sic) and James Bond, PlayStation and Jaguar all receive a passing nod, as do Gucci, CNN and *The Matrix*.

At times I felt as though I was reading Russia’s answer

to America's Bret Easton Ellis, albeit a much funnier and more intelligent answer.

There are also many literary references – Blok, Nabokov, Tolstoy, Proust, Joyce – but the heart of this novel is a philosophical one, Nietzsche and Berkeley being included alongside reams of Eastern thought and mythos.

This book is a treat for the ponderer: “character has to be trained during the difficult periods of life, when the meaning of doing it is not obvious. That's when it does the most good.” If you have a few spare hours, try ruminating upon this: “The cause of error by living beings is that they believe it is possible to cast aside the false and attain unto the truth. But when you attain unto yourself, the false becomes true, and there is no other truth to which one need attain after that.” Our philosophical fox has equally deep-minded siblings, one of whom counsels her about the West: “Do you know what the secret horror of life here is? When you buy yourself a blouse or a car, or anything else, you have in your mind an image, implanted by advertising, of some wonderful place you will go wearing that blouse or driving that car. But there is no such wonderful place anywhere, apart from in the advertising clip, and this black hole in reality is lamented by every serious philosopher in the West.”



Descriptions of the characters who populate the book are vivid and humorous: “a certain trapezoidal quality in the plebeian proportions of his features made his face look like the West's cliché of its Cold War opponent. Movie characters of that kind usually drank a glass of vodka and then ate the glass as a snack.”

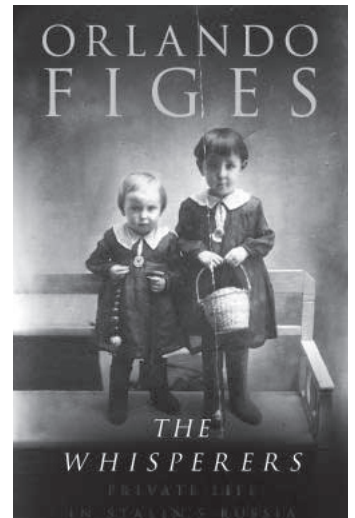
Later in the book, the “super-werewolf” story-line takes over, alongside a poignant love story, alongside a fantastical oil-prospecting mini-tale. It is no surprise, then, that the overall feel of the book is a little over-stuffed and more than a little chaotic. All this and Norse mythology too – oh, and Russian folk tales as well... and...and...

Then again, what do I know? I'm just a monkey missing a tale.

The Whisperers

by Orlando Figes
Reviewed by Dairmid Gunn

THIS book had to be written; it provides an unusual and revealing insight into what it was like to live in the Soviet Union from its inception after the Revolution until its demise in 1991. In Russian two nouns are derived from the common stem ‘to whisper’, one meaning someone speaking in a whisper and the other signifying someone who listens and informs. Both meanings are apposite to the main theme of the book of a country dominated by a sense of fear.



Using the letters and diaries of scores of ordinary people, Figes describes most chillingly the ruthless drive by the Bolsheviks to foster the idea of collectivism on the way to the creation of an ideal communist state. One of the obstacles in the way was the strength of family relationships and associated inbuilt loyalties. For the new regime there had to be no distinction between private and public. The moral space of the family, therefore, is the main arena of action and thought in the book. How did families react to preserve their values and pass them on if these beliefs were in conflict with the public goals and morals inculcated into the young by schools and institutions?

Society was turned upside down. Importance was attached not to ability but rather to the provenance of the people. Connections with former peasant farmers (kulaks), the bourgeoisie and nobility had to be concealed as young people strove to be considered part of the order entrusted with the industrialisation and modernisation of the country. For others, being part of the system was a means of survival. To be ‘accepted’ often necessitated the suppression of emotional ties to the family, and even betrayal.

Strangely enough, the war during its duration made the country more human. A poem, ‘Wait for Me’, written by a well known poet for his girlfriend, became a hit in the army and the country as a whole. To win the war the authorities had connived at patriotism in terms of love of family and land.

The layered portraits of successive generations, brilliantly orchestrated by Figes, have a cumulative effect that enlightens and poses questions. In the 1980s the image of the Stalinist years was dominated by narratives of writers from the cultured milieu, who had dug deep into themselves, to build up internal resistance to the abuses of power. The feelings of the silent majority were rarely portrayed. They had accepted and absorbed, sometimes

superficially, basic Soviet values and conformed to public rules. For them it had been impossible to think or feel outside the terms defined by the public discourse of Soviet politics. They had simply to survive.

The legacy of the Stalinist years, and later, lives on in peoples' minds even today, and *The Whisperers* is and will be a memorial to the thousands of Russians who lived and died during one of history's most horrifying periods; it will also be an essential text for those wishing a deeper understanding of Russia and its people.

The New Cold War: How the Kremlin Menaces both Russia and the West

by Edward Lucas
Reviewed by Carl Thomson

THE last few years have not been good for relations between Russia and the West. Already chilly as a result of what many believe to be Putin's backsliding on democracy, the temperature has fallen further due to disputes between Russia and Ukraine over energy supplies, alleged provocations by Russia against Georgia and Estonia, and the apparent poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko in London.

Edward Lucas's *The New Cold War: How the Kremlin Menaces Both Russia and the West* is not the first book to argue that this all amounts to a new Cold War, but it is by far the most disappointing. The most obvious criticism is that Lucas's central thesis is flawed. There may be legitimate questions about the state of democracy in 21st Century Russia, but the real Cold War ended a long time ago. There is no new clash of ideologies between East and West, and Russia no longer seeks to enforce her will through the barrel of a gun. Russia may retain a formidable nuclear arsenal, but we are further away from open conflict than at any time during the Sixties and Seventies. For Lucas to suggest otherwise trivialises the seriousness of the real Cold War and the suffering of millions who endured Soviet repression.

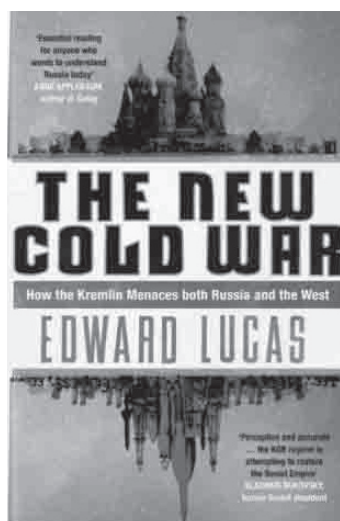
This could be forgiven if Lucas had reached his conclusions through detailed research and analysis. Unfortunately, the book's recommendations from hardly dispassionate figures as Vladimir Bukovsky and Mart Laar, and a glowing review from the borderline-racist "La Russophobe" website, are the first indications that Lucas's main goal is not an even-handed pursuit of the

facts. Essentially, *The New Cold War* can be summarised as a list of all the things Putin was alleged to be responsible for during his time in the Kremlin, but without the depth of critique one would expect from someone with Lucas's contacts and experience. Lucas gives credence to every allegation against Putin, no matter how absurd, without offering the reader any facts to back them up or considering any alternative interpretations. He is rightly critical of the number of journalists killed in Russia under Putin. However, he fails to put this in context by looking at the number of journalists murdered during the Yeltsin era, and leads the reader to believe that all those who died in the last eight years were killed as a result of their political reporting, which simply not the case. The death of Alexander Litvinenko is described as an act of "state sponsored terrorism" which was carried out on Putin's orders. Anna Politkovskaya is likewise eulogised as a victim of Putin's autocratic tendencies, but Lucas neglects the multitude of other, equally plausible theories which have emerged about both Politkovskaya and Litvinenko's deaths.

Lucas's failure to engage in any sort of analysis means he frequently slips into lazy clichés. He interprets every conflict in the former Soviet Union as a zero-sum game between the "pro-Russian" forces of authoritarianism and the "pro-Western" defenders of democracy. Ukraine's Viktor Yanukovich is given his standard label of "pro-Russian", despite supporting Ukrainian membership of the European Union. Georgia's Mikhail Saakashvili is hailed as an "American-educated, Economist-reading reformer". One must assume *The New Cold War* was completed before November 2007, when Saakashvili declared a state of emergency, shut down the country's only independent television station, and had opposition protestors in Tbilisi beaten in full view of the world's media. Having lambasted both Europe and America for refusing to stand up to the Kremlin, Lucas then fails to conclude with any obvious policy recommendations. He calls for "moral renewal" in the face of Russian aggression, but does not articulate what this would entail in practice. He calls for an expansion of both NATO and the EU to counter Russia's growing influence, but neglects to explain what security benefits the West would gain from Moldovan membership of NATO or Montenegrin membership of the EU.

The New Cold War is not a book one would expect from an experienced journalist like Lucas. It is riddled with sloppy spelling and grammatical errors. Moreover, it is already outdated just two months after publication. There is nothing on the ascendancy of Dmitry Medvedev to the Kremlin, United Russia's triumph in the 2007 election, or the behind-the-scenes scramble amongst the siloviki to hold on to their influence and patronage. It may not be as bad as its harshest critics claim – one Oxford academic described it as the second worst book he ever read – but *The New Cold War* will certainly be a disappointment to anyone who has enough of an interest in Russia to be a member of the Scotland-Russia Forum.

Carl Thomson has a postgraduate degree in Russian and East European Studies from the University of Glasgow.

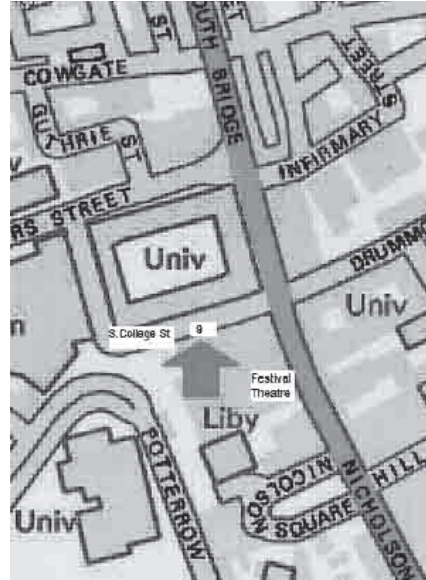


SRF Cultural Centre

SINCE our last *Review* we have been searching for premises and are now in negotiations to rent a very suitable property in central Edinburgh – 9 South College Street. All being well we should move in in June.



View from South College Street



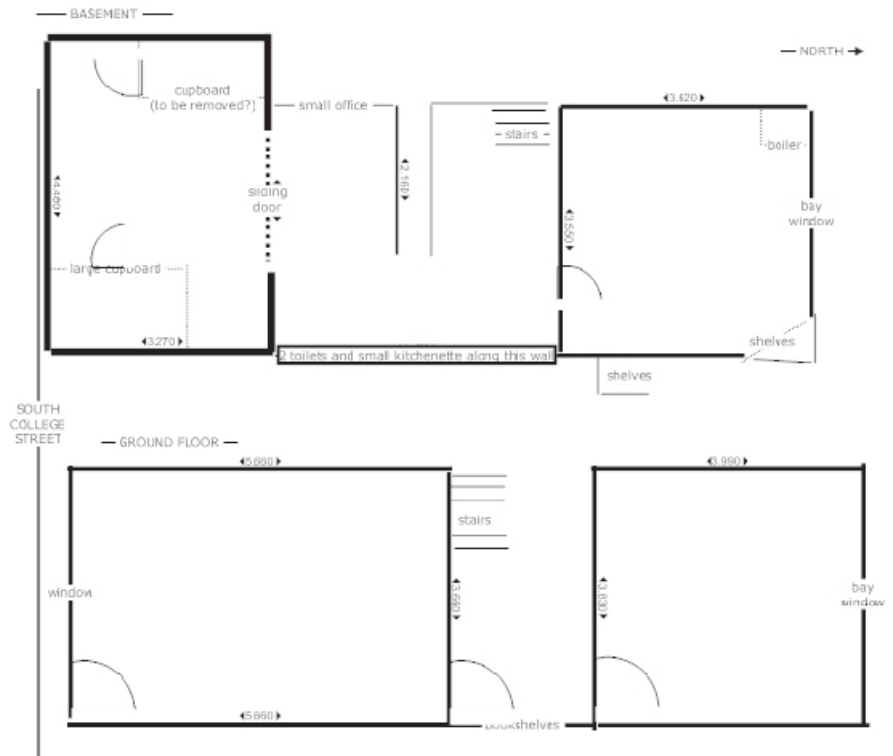
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Below is a rough plan of the interior (measurements are in metres). It is difficult to be categorical about what the various rooms will be used for, though pretty certain that the rooms on the ground floor will be first choice for meetings of all sorts and exhibitions. Yet to be decided is the location of the library. Classes will probably be held downstairs.

What is certain is that we'll be busy over the summer equipping and decorating the centre. We will employ specialist help for some jobs and are applying for grants to purchase equipment and some furniture BUT would be most grateful for all offers of help. In particular

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