



The Scotland-Russia Forum

Review



Contents

Exhibition of a northern
life at the SRF Institute,
chair's report **3**

Kitezh: a different
approach to bringing
up children in Russia **4**

Delivering the message
on human rights in Russia **5**

The Soviet snowdome,
classics in the Borders **6-7**

Songs from
a dying village **8**

Reviews: books, theatre

Living Souls
by Dmitry Bykov **9**

2017: A Novel
by Olga Slavnikova **10-11**

Get Started in Russian
Fast-Track Russian **12**

The White Guard
at the National Theatre **13**

Red Star Over Russia
by David King **14-15**

Dear Readers,

Themes of perception and image run through this edition: our contributors remember what has past with a new perspective, see a disappearing present, and imagine what the future could be.

Our front cover is graced by the beautiful pictures of Elizabeth Warner, who has travelled to the north of Russia and captured a fragile existence with respect and honesty. In a similar project, poet Tom Pow has written *Songs from a Dying Village*, and from the collection we publish four *chastushki*.

In other articles, the SRF's first language assistant shares her experiences of a year in snow-blurred Pskov, Simon Cosgrove tells us about his new project to bring human rights issues in Russia to an English-speaking readership, we look at one future for orphans in Kaluga Region, and Prokofiev ... via the Borders.

In our reviews section you will find out about the latest publisher to tell us we can learn Russian in a matter of weeks, we provide reassurances to those who have ever tried to come to terms with Dmitry Bykov and Olga Slavnikova's certainly-not-anti-utopian novel *2017*. David King's outstanding collection of pictures just might make you look anew at the imagery of the Soviet Union.

Finally, farewell and thanks to Wendy Muzlanova, reviews editor, who is leaving for pastures new.

Read, reflect, and enjoy the summer.

Chris Delaney
Editor

Editor: Chris Delaney
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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.

Portraits of the North

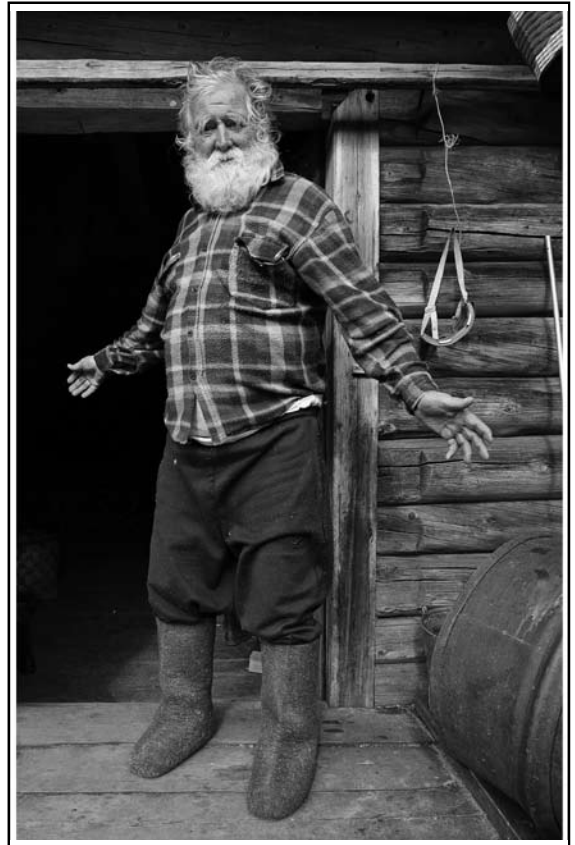
OUR COVER pictures were taken by Professor Elizabeth Warner and are part of a collection that will be on display at the Scotland-Russia Forum Institute in Edinburgh from September 11 to October 9, 2010.

Professor Warner has been documenting the people of North Russia since 1995, concentrating on Vologda and Arkhangelsk provinces. In spite of many privations, the rural community in north Russia, although fragile, has managed to preserve something of its unique way of life: its beliefs in a multi-layered fantastic world, both Christian and pagan.

Elizabeth Warner is a fluent Russian speaker and has spent months living close to her subjects. As a result she presents intimate and sensitive portraits of the home, daily tasks, celebration, christenings, parting with the dead.

A graduate of Edinburgh University, Professor Warner has taught at the universities of St Andrews, Hull and Durham, where she was head of the Department of Russian. Her main research has been in Russian folklore and ethnography.

Professor Warner will give a talk about her work on Friday, September 17, in the SRF Institute. For more information see www.scotlandrussiaforum.org and go to 'events' or email info@scotlandrussiaforum.org.



SRF chair's report

WE ARE coming to the end of a second busy year at the Scotland-Russia Institute – highlights since January include:

- The introduction of advanced Russian to our portfolio of Russian classes in January. All students were asked, anonymously, to rate the classes and the response was even more favourable than we'd dared hope: the word 'excellent' repeated again and again to describe our teacher, Natasha Samoilova, and the textbook used for two classes, 'Ruslan', also singled out for praise.
- A successful business conference was held in April with the support of the University of Glasgow / CRCEES, the Scottish Government, the SDI and the UKTI. Two speakers came all the way from Moscow (Caroline Wilson from the British Embassy and the SDI's Yuri Andreev) and other excellent speakers included a representative of the Russian Trade Delegation in London. Delegate feedback was very enthusiastic – and included praise for Mila Seglina's excellent Russian lunch.
- Our library is increasingly popular. The highest demand is for contemporary fiction and we lend an average of 25 books a month. Many of our borrowers (but not all) are local Russians. All SRF members are entitled to borrow for free (and non-members for a modest £10pa).
- Exhibitions continued to be lively and varied – oil paintings by members of the St Petersburg Union of Artists, screen prints of St Petersburg by Edinburgh's Shelagh Atkinson, an informative exhibition on Georgian writing opened by a representative of the Georgian Embassy, and the current photographic exhibition by Craig

Brandist, which the Scotsman awarded a 4-star review.

- We continue to campaign for the (re)introduction of Russian in schools: we attend regular meetings with government and local government officials alongside representatives of the more established cultural organisations (the Goethe Institute and others); we have been awarded a grant by Russkiy Mir to write new teaching materials for UK schools and other projects (details still under discussion); we delivered 'taster' Russian classes to 275 children in West Lothian primary schools!

With all this activity we expect 2009/10 participation numbers to be around 20 per cent higher than last year's 3000 and much higher than the average 400-500 achieved before we had our own premises – a definite success in view of our aim to raise interest in Russia and its neighbours. Our membership of 310 is now at a level that makes us one of the largest Russian societies in the UK – if not the largest?

There is of course one major problem: unless we raise finance and get more volunteer help we cannot sustain this level of activity. And the more success we have the more we lose by retrenching. Members have received a letter asking for their help and we hope you will give this serious consideration.

Russia still has a ridiculously low profile in Scotland – please help us to change that.

Jenny Carr, SRF chairperson

A home for orphans in Kaluga Region

The Kitezh partnership of foster families was set up in 1992 to provide orphans with a stable and loving upbringing. Its founder, Dimitry Morozov, left his job as a radio journalist in Moscow and, with a group of like-minded people, started building on 100 acres of what was once a collective farm, putting up houses and vegetable gardens, a school, a farm and a church. Despite harsh economic conditions, this dedicated group has built two thriving eco-village communities of foster families that provide an education and a home for orphaned Russian children. Therapeutic education is the main focus, to develop emotional stability. Kitezh is funded by a variety of state and private institutions. It also generates its own funds.

Kitezh Children's Community is the cornerstone of Ecologia Youth Trust's financial and practical aid in Russia. Ecologia Youth Trust is based in Scotland and is the contact point for the Kitezh Network outside Russia. For more information go to www.ecologia.org.uk.

Earlier this year, Stephen Bellamah, who had previously worked in Russian children's home, spent two months as a volunteer in Kitezh. He shares his experience here.

These are also the stated intentions of state Russian children's homes but unfortunately the political and cultural biases of the country and the profoundly deep emotional legacies of the people, carried through many generations, completely sabotage all attempts at positive change.

There are, of course, the exceptional children's homes where the directors and their staff meet the

THE biggest difference is in the care of the children. Kitezh is structured for and dedicated to providing a healthy and healing environment for the care and upbringing of very emotionally damaged children.

I have always known that no matter how badly damaged these children are, given enough love, opportunities, guidelines, boundaries, patience, caring, proper teaching and nourishing, they can heal and go on to thrive in life.

needs both of the children and of governing officials, but these are rare exceptions.

The Russian government's own statistics state that approximately 90 per cent of children from state homes succumb to drugs, alcoholism, crime, prostitution and suicide. So how does Kitezh differ? It is the nature of the community itself.

The community has undergone a series of severe challenges and difficulties since its inception and, having survived these, I believe that there is an innate understanding among the individuals that the priority is to maintain the health of the community if it is to carry out the greater goals to which it aspires.

In Kitezh there is a group of hard-working, intelligent, dedicated adults, who are willing to sacrifice and to adapt as is necessary for the common good of the community. Though such qualities can be found in individuals everywhere, most of these qualities are not esteemed, taught and encouraged by culture and societal organisations.

Kitezh is unique in its openness under the scrutiny of Russians and foreigners. In actual fact they go out of their way to encourage visitors to come and see what they do.

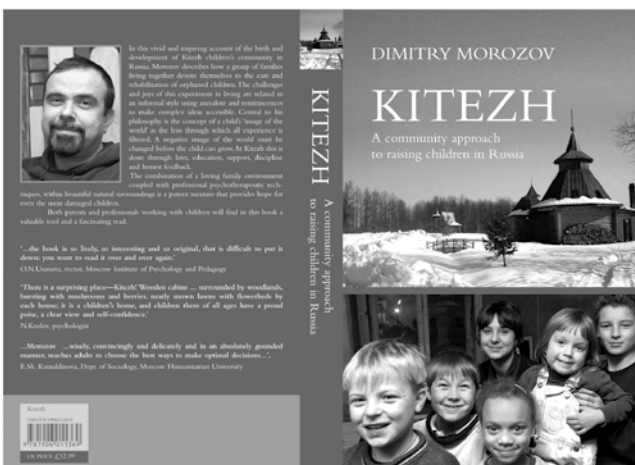
Key individuals in the community adopt a variety of roles for the benefit of the community. The community leader is humble, loving, caring, humorous and forever affirming and building people up. Whatever happens he just absorbs it all and deals with it in a loving and caring manner.

Almost every one else in this community (extremely impressive, smart, talented and remarkable in their own ways) is totally dedicated to the care of each other and the children, and to the success of the community.

Since most learning is achieved by observation and experience, what better examples of family dynamics – coping, loving, sacrificing, discipline and teamwork – could these children have? That, in and of itself, is probably the most valuable experience and learning these children will take with them as a legacy for living their lives.

KITEZH: a community approach to raising children in Russia

By the founder of Kitezh Children's Community in Russia, this long awaited book gives a personal insight into why the community was founded and how the foster families learned to approach the problems of the orphan children they took into their hearts and homes



Price £14.99 incl p&p Available from

Ecologia Youth Trust, The Park, Forres, Moray IV36 3TD

www.ecologia.org.uk

Proceeds support the children at Kitezh

Rights in Russia

Rights in Russia brings together information and opinion about human rights in Russia. Since the website's launch, its readership has grown steadily. Its founder and editor Simon Cosgrove here tells us about the site and its purpose.

'... the striving for freedom has never died out in Russia. Down the centuries, in each generation, there have been people who devoted their lives to the struggle for freedom, and sacrificed their lives for freedom's sake.'

Ludmila Alekseeva, chair, Moscow Helsinki Group

THESE words introduce the home page of www.rightsinrussia.info. They characterise the driving force behind the human rights movement in Russia and, in its own modest way, the motivation for this website: an English-language resource intended to inform a wide audience outside Russia and help it to educate itself about the evolving human rights situation there.

Rights in Russia is a non-profit, non-governmental organization set up to bring together people who are committed to supporting human rights in Russia. The website is a voluntary effort by a team consisting of the editor and a small group of contributors and translators. Rights in Russia was established on January 2010, marking the first anniversary of the tragic double murder in Moscow of human rights lawyer Stanislav Markelov and journalist Anastasia Baburova.

The website has three specific purposes: to provide information about human rights in Russia in the English language; to act as a channel by which the voices of Russian human rights defenders and human rights organizations can reach an audience outside Russia; and to promote knowledge of, and contacts with, Russian human rights groups.

The website was set up to meet a perceived need for a resource that gathered together in one place as much information as possible in English about human rights in Russia, providing further links to numerous and varied sources of information. If visitors could not find the information they were looking for immediately, they would be guided as to where else to look for it. The website closely follows events in the Russian Federation, publishing weekly and monthly summaries of developments at Human rights week by week.

What we outside Russia know about human rights in that country comes largely from the Western media and reports by international human rights groups. These sources are extremely valuable, yet the voices of Russia's own human rights defenders are often less audible. One aim of the website is to provide accessible and reliable translations of statements and articles by Russian human rights defenders.

The human rights movement in Russia contains a

diverse range of views and tendencies. Another purpose of the website is to provide the English-language reader with an accurate impression of this variety of opinion and approach. To this end a partnership has been established with www.hro.org, one of the leading Russian websites providing information on human rights. Rights in Russia carries regular translations from www.hro.org (these may be found at hro.org in English).

The website provides information about Russian human rights groups, and the work they do. The site aims to facilitate links between individuals and groups, in and outside Russia, aiding in the development of new collaborative ideas and projects. Relevant materials on the website can be found at Human rights groups and press releases.

Readers can subscribe to the site's publications by sending a request to: subscribe@rightsinrussia.info

Those interested in contributing to the work of the website are welcome to contact rightsinrussia@rightsinrussia.info.

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The Soviet snowdome

Vivika Cairns has just returned from Pskov, where she spent nine months on the SRF's language assistant scheme. At the half-way mark, she wrote an account of her experience, of Soviet teaching materials, the overbearing gaze of Lenin and of coming to terms with two-pinned plugs...

"Pskov is an ancient and interesting city. Many sightseers come to our city for the historical and architectural monuments. Pskov is very beautiful. We love our city."

- Students of Pskov State Polytechnic Institute

PSKOVIANS are intensely proud of their city. And in many ways rightfully so. It was independent until 1510 and claims links to some of the most historical events in Russian history: famous battles against foreign forces were fought and won here; Pushkin's estate lies just to the South; the last Tsar abdicated here; and it was the document signed at Pskov train station which created the Republic in 1917; even Lenin resided and worked here (only for a matter of months but we shall overlook that). Maybe because of all this history, Pskov feels like it hasn't quite made it into the 21st Century.

When the Scotland Russia Forum offered me the chance to live and teach somewhere other than Moscow and St Petersburg I looked forward to the chance to improve my Russian and see a different Russia to the one of Red Square and the Hermitage. I knew from teaching elsewhere that the claims of motivated enthusiastic students eager to learn would be a little far-fetched and at Pskov State Polytechnic Institute it is fair to say that English is not top of the agenda, but is compulsory.

As my classes have moved away from the

traditional read-and-translate format towards discussion and expressing opinions, I am proud to say that I am the only teacher who can boast of growing class numbers.

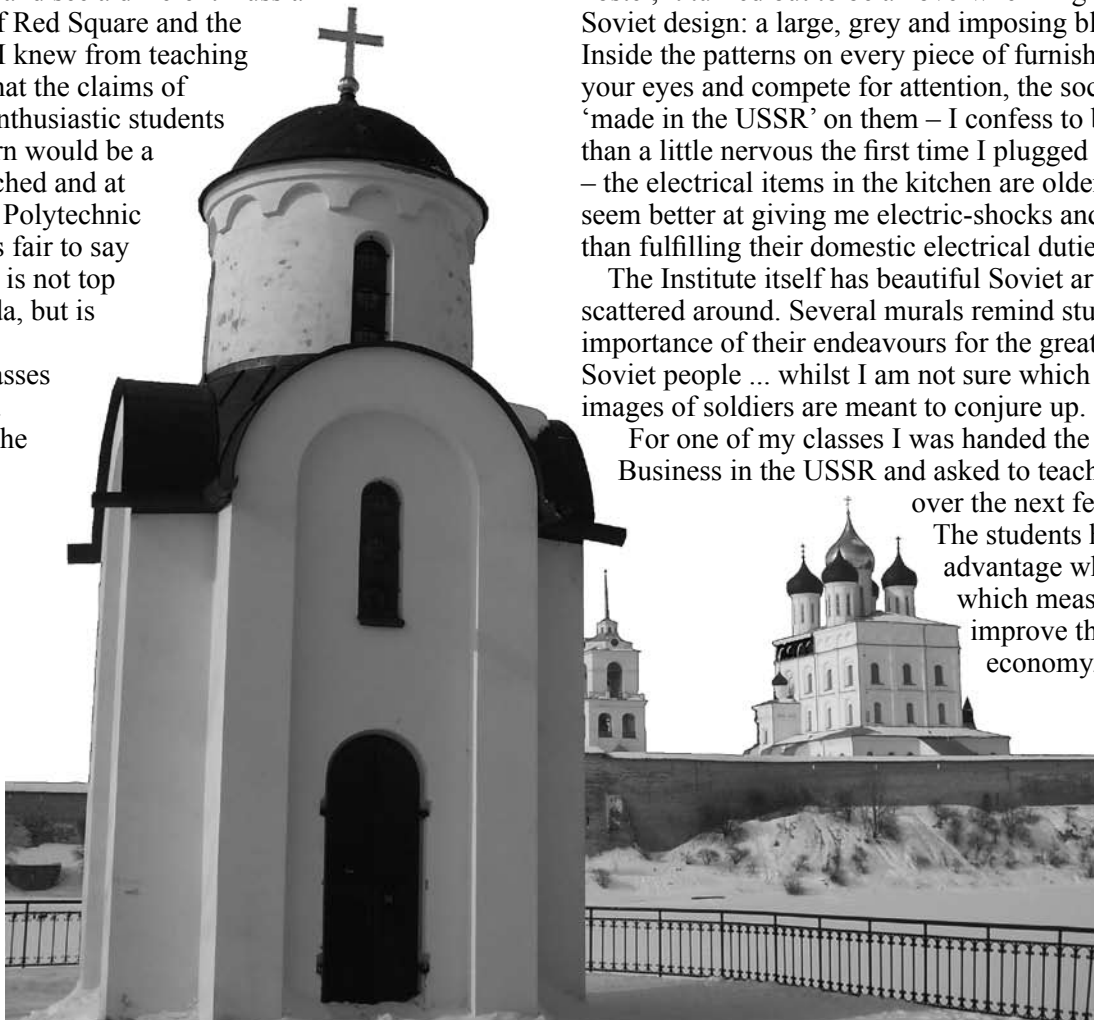
As well as working on changing the format of classes, within the constraints of the curriculum, I am updating many of the teaching resources so that texts no longer refer to Thatcher as the Prime Minister and the two Germanys. The students are starting to pick up on the advantages of learning English rather than focusing on learning lists of words, although some of the computer science students would still prefer to email me grammar than give an opinion in class. Being the first ever Irish passport holder to apply for a work permit in the region has also been an adventure for both myself and the immigration authorities.

Arriving in Pskov, I was greeted by a huge square with a statue of the great man himself, Lenin (my colleague informed me that many Russian towns are removing such statues but Pskov likes its). When I finally located my hostel, it turned out to be an overwhelming example of Soviet design: a large, grey and imposing block of flats. Inside the patterns on every piece of furnishing attack your eyes and compete for attention, the sockets have 'made in the USSR' on them – I confess to being more than a little nervous the first time I plugged something in – the electrical items in the kitchen are older than me and seem better at giving me electric-shocks and making noise than fulfilling their domestic electrical duties.

The Institute itself has beautiful Soviet art work scattered around. Several murals remind students of the importance of their endeavours for the greater good of the Soviet people ... whilst I am not sure which feelings the images of soldiers are meant to conjure up.

For one of my classes I was handed the book *Doing Business in the USSR* and asked to teach the topic over the next few weeks.

The students had a definite advantage when guessing which measures may improve the Soviet economy. As a bust of



Lenin looked in on another class, I felt uneasy discussing profit margins in multinational companies.

I have come to view Pskov as a Soviet snow-dome for several reasons. Firstly, the snow has continually fallen for four months now and most mornings it looks as though our snow dome has been well shaken. Secondly, Pskov is a little world of its own, accessible only by badly-timetabled night trains and buses, but shows no sign of wanting it any other way. Her churches and Soviet memorials sit side-by-side snug in the blanket of the final snow in Western Russia. Pskov is a proud little city with her very own character and no plans to hide it or the statues commemorating her past.

At the same time though, she needs to find her way in the future. Other towns in the area have been able to attract some much needed foreign investment and graduates with a better grasp of English might just be the key to this for Pskov.

With the development of the Euro-faculty within the Institute and the funding attached to the programme, I hope that the Institute and its students will come to realise the importance of English for themselves and the area, not only in the here and now but also in the long term.

For my part, I think I am starting to agree with my students' view of Pskov. There is something magical about this Russian Brigadoon, my Soviet snow dome.

Prokofiev... via the Borders

OVER FIVE hundred Scots packed a hall in the Roxburgh town of Kelso to hear Scottish Borders choirs sing an all Russian concert. The words and music to the three Russian compositions took the singers six months of preparation to perfect.

The performances of Tchaikovsky's Romeo and Juliet overture, Borodin's Polovtsian Dances and Prokofiev's Alexander Nevsky cantata were conducted by Catherine Fish, and accompanied by The Yetholm Symphony Orchestra, led by Geoffrey Emerson.

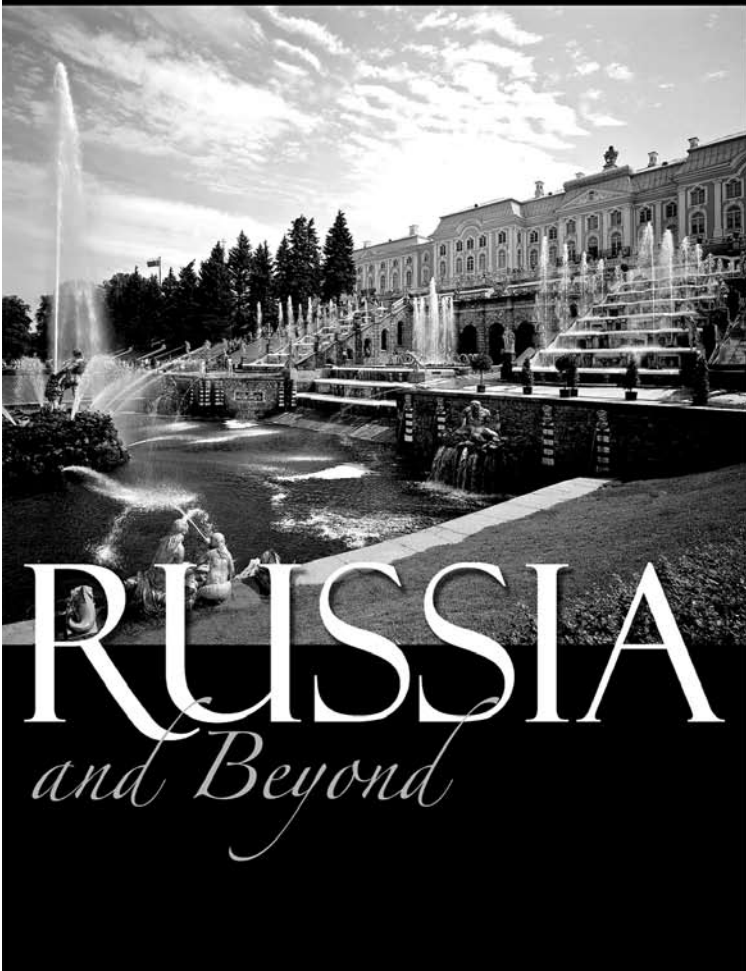
Joining the impressive size and sound of the seventy strong orchestra were over one hundred singers from the five Border choirs: The Eildon Singers, Berwick Arts Choirs, The Roxburgh Singers, Andante Chamber Choir and The Merse Singers.

Thanks to hard work of the leading choir, the Melrose based Eildon Singers, the concert raised £5,000 from Scottish Borders Council, £2,000 from Awards For All, and generous donations from local benefactors.

The organisers are also indebted to the Scotland Russia Forum for their kind introduction to Dr Andrei Rogatchevsky, lecturer in Russian language and culture at Glasgow University, without whose rigorous instruction the concert would not have been possible.

Sandy Neil

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Songs from a Dying Village

Poet Tom Pow travelled to Russia as part of a project to document Europe's changing demographic landscape, its ageing villages and dying cultures.

A CHASTUSHKA (plural: chastushki) is a short Russian folk song. In the emptying villages of the Kostroma region, north of Moscow, a request to hear a chastushka drew the same knowing smiles from the old women I asked. Many claimed they knew only indecent ones and one old woman excused herself by saying, 'These teeth aren't for singing any more, only swearing.'

Chastushkas are often compared to limericks for their memorability – four rhythmic, rhyming lines – but actually we have no equivalent in our culture. It was a song so widespread – and so receptive to the moment ('spontaneous' is a word frequently used to describe them) – that at one time it was easily adapted for the dissemination of revolutionary belief. The Songs from a Dying Village are derived from certain aspects of the chastushka – its assertion of values that are in opposition to those of the city, its frequent sexual nature, its brevity. The subheading, *Scottish Chastushkas*, is therefore a nod towards their inspiration, but *Songs from a Dying Village* is the more accurate title.

Tom Pow

VII

She's sitting on the old green bench
by the side of the lilac tree.
Oh, the songs she once sung here!
The thought of them still makes her blush.

IX

There are no children to harvest
their fruit, but these fruit trees don't tire
of giving. Gangs come from the town,
strip cherries till the trees are bare.

VIII

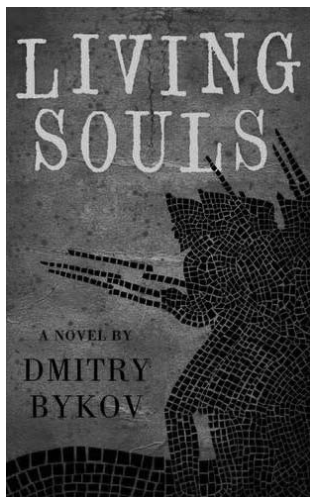
People from the city have bought
the old horse farm. See the horses!
Their ribs knit beneath their matted coats.
Horses? Crops like any other.

X

From heaven fell a little star.
It landed right on Isupovo.
It took the life of its last man,
the famous Vasily Bykov.

Songs from a Dying Village by Tom Pow (Pueblo Press, letterpress, signed and numbered) is available through www.dyingvillages.com for £6.50 + postage.





by Dmitry Bykov,
Alma Books, 2009,
pp. 640, £17.99

Living Souls

Reviewed by
Wendy Muzlanova

I AM a newcomer to Dmitry Bykov's work. 'Living Souls' was to be my first introduction to his writing. Although this particular introduction was

There are touching and lyrical moments: 'suddenly he was five years old again ... looking out at the stars, his freshly-washed feet stung by nettles and mosquitoes, and they were the same stars ... and soon his mother would read to him and he would feel the cool linoleum under his heels as she shooed him to bed.'

Dmitry Bykov's writing is beautiful. Of this, there is no doubt in my mind. I have a massively strong suspicion that upon this occasion, it is the reviewer who is lacking in insight, rather than the author.

However, aside from the pressure of endeavouring to remember 'Who's Who' in 'Living Souls' – there are many characters bearing similar names and some of them seemingly without greatly differing characteristics – I was also informed by my husband (who is from The Provinces and most definitely not a Muscovite) that Mr Bykov is my mother-in-law's all-time favourite author and television personality.

'You will write good review for him. Yes?'

not an entirely happy one, I do plan to become more acquainted with him in the future.

I did want to like this book. I do admire his style. I certainly admire what he seems to be trying to achieve in this novel, which appears to be an attempt to create a grand, satirical mythology.

Perhaps the satire went swooping right over my head like some kind of bizarre politically-aware *chaika*, cackling its superior derision at my naivety all the way?

Answers (as to exactly what this book is all about) on a postcard please, but don't bother addressing them to me. Once I had given up trying to fathom out the greater meaning to the text, I began to enjoy the story and, now, I don't care anymore that I don't think I actually understood it. I'm not going to agonise any longer about the deeper meanings behind Vasilenko Syndrome or, for that matter, Phlogiston.

I am going to remember with delight the hilarious portrait of Field Commander Said and his passionate war against the Unbelievers, 'It was becoming harder to cut down Infidels, as they rarely went voluntarily to the mountains.'

I don't think I will ever forget the magical town with the magical stove which bakes pies all by itself or the 'Joes' who walk around and around or travel the metro endlessly in circles, trying to prevent anything from starting or finishing.

There is also a talking dog which never talks and a talking mouse which does. At times I did forget that I was reading Bykov and felt as though I was reading something collected by Afanasyev. What's not to like?

There are sparkingly witty lines: 'When will we learn to fight, Sergeant? Are we going to be Muscovites all our life?'

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by Olga Slavnikova, Overlook Press,
2010, pp. 448, £16.99

2017: A Novel

Reviewed by
Alexandra Smith

Translated by
Marian Schwartz

A NOVELIST and critic, member of the Union of Russian Writers, the Russian PEN Centre, and the Russian Booker Committee, Olga Slavnikova was born in Ekaterinburg in 1957 and has spent many years working as an editor of the literary journal *Urals*. Slavnikova has lived and worked in Moscow since 2001.

During Gorbachev's perestroika, Slavnikova became involved in publishing and started running her own Book Club. In addition to writing highly successful novels, she serves as General Director of the Debut Independent Literary Prize: it helps authors under twenty five to be published.

Since 2005, it enjoyed the official support of the Russian Federation's Presidential Administration. The list of Slavnikova's achievements include the fact that her third novel *The Man Who Couldn't Die* won her the Apollon Grigoriev Prize and was short-listed for both the Belkin Prize and the National Bestseller Prize, and her most recent novel, *2017*, won the 2006 Russian Booker Prize.

Despite the title invoking George Orwell's novel *1984*, Slavnikova says that her novel should not be read as anti-utopian narrative and highlights the importance of the love theme in the novel. It features Krylov, a gifted gem cutter whose life is torn between his ex-wife Tamara and a mysterious woman Tanya. Another plot

line of the novel involves Krylov's mentor – Professor Anfilogov. He is a wealthy and pragmatic man who sets out on an expedition to unearth priceless gemstones.

Although the novel features an imaginary region called Riphean Mountains, it strongly resembles the Urals. In many ways, the use of magic realism and dystopian overtones enables the author to engage in the satirical depiction of post-Soviet reality and pose a question about ecological problems facing Russia today.

Thus, Tamara's speech on the future of the diamond industry in Russia reveals the widespread anxiety among Russian nationalists about the ownership of mineral resources and exposes the greed of many post-Soviet entrepreneurs. Tamara explains to Krylov: 'The Diamond Club is supporting diamond prices by brutal artificial measures. Some deposits – in South Africa and Brazil – are being strictly conserved. [...] Today the technology exists [...] that allows them to take pictures of the entire earth crust from a satellite.

'That is, they can see right through our dear Ripheans like a silk stocking stuffed with presents. They can assess the ground reserves of gem-quality diamonds within one or two tenths of a carat. What does it mean economically? It

means that tomorrow I can calmly throw the Liz Schwartz necklace I paid fifteen thousand euros for yesterday in the garbage.'

Tamara's assessment that 'today, humanity is holding in a secret pocket a fundamentally new world in which it is incapable of living' encapsulates the main message of the novel that might be seen as a philosophical parable in the style of the Strugatsky brothers' writing.

Given that the novel is saturated with references to post-Soviet everyday life and language, Marian Schwartz must be congratulated for her brave attempt to render many slang words, post-Soviet idiomatic expressions as well as peculiarities of Slavnikova's style into English.

For example, the sentence 'Самый мощный хрусталь, где словно таял, превращаясь в воду, рыхлый и радужный каменный снег, был выше пятиклассника Крылова на все свое трещиноватое тупое острие' has been translated as 'the most powerful rock crystal,

inside of which iridescent mealy stone-snow seemed to be melting, turning into water, was taller than twelve-year-old Krylov by its entire blunt fissured point'. Schwartz's sensitivity to Slavnikova's style and the broad knowledge of contemporary Russian language are truly admirable.

Undoubtedly, Slavnikova's novel will provide an enjoyable reading to anyone who is interested in post-Soviet culture and society.

Alexandra Smith is Reader in Russian Studies at the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures, University of Edinburgh.

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ELISABETH SMITH'S FAST-TRACK RUSSIAN

Pick up the basics in just minutes a day (page xx) Learn only the stuff that's really useful (page xx) Have fun with specially written dialogues (page xx) Get to grips with the grammar you actually need (page xx) Start speaking straight away (page xx) Pick up relevant new words at every stage (page xx) Get your pronunciation right (page xx) Understand what people say back to you (page xx) Check your progress (page xx) Test yourself and learn online (www.teachyourself.com/fast-track-russian)



Level 2
by Elisabeth Smith,
Teach Yourself Books,
2010, pp. 176, £8.99

guide: what you should read, listen or learn on Day One, Day Two, etc. And the Introduction says: 'stick to it' and 'don't skip bits'. Oh, you might be relieved to find out that you are allowed to take one day off per week – it is Day Seven.

Some people might dislike such a prescriptive textbook, whereas others may benefit from the tight deadline.

Fast-Track Russian

Reviewed by
Natasha Samoilova

A VERY informative front cover promises readers that they will speak Russian in just six weeks. How is that possible? By working hard. The book offers a very tight schedule for this period: you should study 45 minutes a day and if you miss a day, add one. For each week it gives a Day-by-day

The book starts with a long conversation in Russian using Latin letters. How can you read it without learning the alphabet first? You do not learn the alphabet at this point or any time later: all Russian words throughout the whole book are transliterated with Latin letters. This will give you a quick start. By the end of the first week you should be able to translate into Russian the following sentence: 'The job is very good, but a holiday is better.'

But what price have you paid for this type of learning? You have learned stock phrases from the dialogue but you cannot change anything. First of all, if you want to use a different word and it is not on the list, then you cannot express what you want to. You cannot use a dictionary because you do not know the alphabet – and the book does not teach you Cyrillic.

Secondly, you do not understand the grammar of the sentences used in the dialogue. If instead of the feminine noun 'работа' you use, for instance, a neuter noun, the ending of the adjective will be wrong and you will not be even aware of it.

This is the only Russian textbook I know that does not use the Russian letters at all. It is supposed to make the language seem easier but such monsters as *v ooneeveersetyetee* (в университете) may not be very encouraging. The main problem with this approach is that it is a blind alley: when you finish the book you still cannot use a dictionary, you cannot read signs while in Russia, you cannot create your own sentences, you can only stick to the dialogues in 'Fast-track Russian'.

GET STARTED IN RUSSIAN

Get to grips with the absolute basics (page 00) Learn Russian in easy steps (page 00) Read and write the alphabet (page 00) Exchange greetings (page 00) Master Russian names (page 00) Social customs and culture (page 00) Ways of saying 'you' (page 00) Ask for and give directions (page 00) Say what you want (page 00) Get to grips with numbers (page 00) Find the best hotel (page 00) Tell the time (page 00) Talk about your likes and dislikes (page 00) Russian family life (page 00) Use public transport with confidence (page 00) Search out the best souvenirs (page 00) Test your Russian and drinking (page 00) Test yourself online (www.teachyourself.com/Russian)



Level 3
by Rachel Farmer,
Teach Yourself Books,
2010, pp. 336, £12.99

Russian textbook. As a Russian teacher I have always felt envious of my English colleagues who can work with so brilliantly published textbooks in colour.

Being a self-study textbook, 'Get started in Russian' has everything you need to study the language on your own: Pronunciation guide, complete audio support, tests at the end of each unit and an answer key. What this book also does is show pronunciation in Latin letters next to each word for the first half of the book. Though having pronunciation shown may seem helpful at first sight, it will slow down the development of your reading skills in Russian as your eye will immediately go to the familiar English letters. The author must be aware of that as she writes in the introduction: 'Try not to become dependent

Get Started in Russian

Reviewed by
Natasha Samoilova

This is a self-study course in Russian to use if you are a complete beginner or have just a smattering of Russian.

The book has an easy-to-follow page design and fun pictures that should make you think that learning Russian is fun and easy. Unfortunately, it is yet another black-and-white

on this, but just use it to check any sounds you are not sure of'. I wonder if it is realistic.

As far as presenting grammar is concerned, the book introduces the Russian grammar in an easily accessible manner without overloading you with too much detail. The word 'grammar' itself seems to be avoided at all as the grammar sections in each unit are called Mechanics of the language and the traditional grammar summary at the back – very short in this book – is called a Summary of language patterns. And you will not find any tables with the endings we are so used to see in Russian textbooks.

Apart from the language sections with language patterns and exercises, you will also find Insight boxes with basic information on customs and way of life, e.g. information on transport in Russia or currency exchange. You might find this very helpful especially if you plan to visit Russia.

Finally, the book contains various useful suggestions on how to succeed in learning Russian. One of them is the following: 'Spend a little bit of time on Russian each day'. It is hard to disagree.

The SRF Institute hosts its very own Russian lessons. Courses cater for beginner, intermediate and advanced levels, as well as classes for individual needs. You'll have access to the library, materials via email should you miss a class ... and free tea and coffee.

Courses are led by Dr Natasha Samoilova (PhD St Andrews), who has taught Russian at all levels and was Language Assistant at Edinburgh University.

For further information on all Russian courses email russiancourses@scotlandrussiaforum.org

The White Guard

National Theatre, London

reviewed by
Chris Delaney

THE WHITE GUARD is the National's third recent big-budget adaptation of a Soviet-inspired work. First *The Philistines*, and now, after the success of *Burnt By The Sun*, the National stages Andrew Upton's take on Bulgakov's classic, *The Days of the Turbins*, restoring it to its original title. At its premiere in the Moscow Arts Theatre in 1926, the play aroused a just little suspicion (the main characters being liberal intelligentsia who seem to be in favour of the pro-Tsarist White Guard) but Stalin liked it, and it became a hit.

The wide stage of the National's Lyttelton Theatre accommodates throughout most of the play the apartment of the Turbin family, who are coming to terms with encroaching civil war and the Bolshevik revolution. They stand to lose a lot: Alexei and Nikolai Turbin are officers in the White army; Lena, their sister is married to a member of the Ukrainian Tsarist-supporting administration, and their friends fight for the Whites. But the Turbins never seem to recognise how much they have to lose.

To express the Turbins' failure to come to terms with what is happening around director Howard Davies makes Upton's adaptation musical and funny. At the play's opening Nikolai Turbin sits in thick woolly socks strumming on a guitar singing daft verses. Alexei, his more earnest brother, is trying to figure out the machinations of the political happenings and scolds him lightly. In this we see the start of what is to be a theme throughout the production: the seriousness of the events unfolding around the family and the light-hearted detachment from those events in the apartment.

The politics of the time are complicated, but the characters' reaction to what is happening almost always is bewildered bumbling. In the imperial palace, Hetman, Ukraine's weakened imperial leader, insists that his German-Russian speaking aide talk the 'language of the people' – Ukrainian – and what follows is marvellous piece of comedy theatre as, without ever leaving English, the struggling aide squints and squirms in trying to express himself.

During scenes of street fighting, what was an overly spacious area for an apartment and a

palace, turns into a cramped and impressive bunker where the less well-heeled Bolshevik soldiers hide out. More comedy ensues as a hapless cobbler with newly fixed boots accidentally wanders into the encampment.

Lena, who as the only woman in the play is the object of all the men's desire, grounds the action and shatters the comedy with a powerful lament for her brother, who is killed in an explosion. The sadness and power with which Justine Mitchell performed the piece was a jolt to the system after the joviality and blasts of the previous parts. And when we return to humour, as the once-epauletted Whites put on black flat caps and suit jackets so as not to be noticed on the streets of now Communist Kiev, the emotion of the previous scene blots the comedy. Perhaps this was intentional. I never quite knew what to feel after the revolution had taken place on stage and the Whites had fled: to laugh or to cry ... and I would hazard a guess that some of those living through these events 90 years ago might have felt the same.

And this is the triumph of the play: it makes the whole political machinations of Reds and Whites seem a bit silly. What is important is the memory of a shared past and the relationship between family members.

If Andrew Upton and the National have any more Russian ventures up their sleeves, I would recommend booking tickets now.

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by David King, Tate Publishing, 2009, pp. 352, £30

Red Star Over Russia

reviewed by
Scott Telfer



USSR Construction magazine's interpretation of how the Red Army was greeted when it invaded and annexed eastern Poland, including most of Polish-held Belorussia.

WHEN I was a teenager, at Christmas I would eagerly await an annual of my favourite pop band or fad of the day. But come Boxing Day I was always sorely disappointed by these publications.

They always churned out the same pictures, poorly researched and giving away the author's lack of interest in the subject, bar making a quick buck.

When I became interested in the arts of the Soviet Union, I found books and collections on the topic to be in a disappointingly similar vein – all Vera Muchina, Red Wedges and Palace of the Soviets repeated ad nauseam.

Even when going to Russia proper I hoped to find some quality

catalogues in high-end shops. But the content of most books habitually seemed to suggest: if you've seen the 'Ne Boltai' poster, some kitsch tourist postcards and one of the Seven Sisters – then you've pretty much seen it all.

This is where Red Sky Over Russia steps in. Actually, make that 'strides' in. It manages to bridge the gap between dusty photo archive, historic tome and Italian Vogue in a way that would have blown my Christmas day annuals out of the water. Cutting to the chase, I would say this book is essential for anyone with even a passing interest in the visual sources of Soviet history.

I toiled in many an archive of Soviet Art when at university and I am struck by just how many of these images are completely new to me. Of course, the staples of Soviet propaganda are present, but not fawned over. Vast crisp pages are dedicated to sleeping

conditions in a homeless hostel, a beautiful still of unaware young Red Army cavalry men reading the paper and grizzly mug-shots of show trial defendants. I particularly like that the book isn't dominated by Moscow centrism and poster art, and that through King's



Four posters by the English artist Reginald Mount in 1942 for display on the crates containing equipment and supplies for Russia. 'From the British People, To Victory! We are with You.'



Wet nurses at a collecting station for the distribution of mothers' milk to industrial areas.



A mass hanging of Russian peasants by retreating Nazis, late 1943

visual journey we are also presented with sculpture, crockery, textiles and sketches from across the vast ethnic tapestry of the USSR.

The picture quality is nothing short of outstanding. Especially given that, for more than half a century, the Soviet regime invested many

man hours in trying to eradicate a great many of these images.

I found King's narrative captivating. His frantic opening gives us just tasters of the lifetime of scrabbling, searching and devotion necessary to

amass such a collection. The commentary and layout let us easily imagine King toiling over piles of unfiled photographs. And unlike many large image-based books of its ilk which often end up as vacuous Tatler-like catalogues, King's text provides a comprehensive, lucid,

touching and human history of the subject matter.

My only mild criticism would be – and for me this extends to almost all works on Soviet art and architecture – why the narrative stops at 1953. Soviet Art does not end with Stalin. Personally I find the art of the later decades of the Cold War to be the most illuminating of real life in the USSR.

Don't pick up *Red Sky Over Russia* expecting an anodyne collection of well-known stirring posters, because you will be shocked by its interjections of starvation, hanging, slave labour and daily grind – but that is exactly why you should pick it up.



Stalin portrayed by Lieutenant General Nikolai Vlasik, known as 'Stalin's faithful dog'. He had great power in running Stalin's everyday life. In 1952 he was arrested, badly beaten and sent to the Gulag. He has not been rehabilitated.



A poster for the 1928 silent film 'The Mullah's Third Wife', directed by Vyacheslav Viskovsky. The film, which has since been lost, is a bitter criticism of the lack of freedom for women in the East.

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RUSSIA: PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

BUSINESS CONFERENCE

**Thursday 25th
November 2010**

Birmingham

Cost: **£95 +VAT**

Russia is not as difficult a market as some make out, and small manufacturing companies in particular will benefit from taking a closer look. You do not have to be a seasoned exporter to access this market, where margins are far higher than in western Europe.

Russian companies have a good history of paying on time, and payment can sometimes be received in advance. Many problems people associate with Russia have been resolved; others were exaggerated, and others, irrelevant or simply untrue.

With Sterling so weak, and the Russian economy so strong by comparison, there has never been a better time to look at exporting to Russia.

Shrewd company directors are aware of this. In 2009, trade between Russia and the UK leapt yet again, and Russia remains one of the UK's most significant export markets. Russia is among the most popular 5 markets researched via the UKTI website. And the UK is one of the largest foreign investors in Russia.



This one-day event is an opportunity for companies working with Russia, or interested in opportunities there, to hear the latest developments, make new contacts, swap experiences with others doing similar things, and develop business opportunities with other companies and service providers.

You will hear presentations from the British Embassy in Moscow, from companies which successfully export to Russia, and from specialist companies which can help with travel and visas, product certification, export documentation and more.

Legal firm Wragge & Co will be offering legal advice, and there will be specialist sessions on intellectual property and on the automotive sector.



Places are filling faster than in any previous years. For more information on this popular event, or to register, log on now to:

www.albionoverseas.com

or call 01732 769 003 / 004