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Feature

From Moscow to Beijing: An Olympic Journey

By Jim Riordan

The Chinese are coming – not only with the Beijing Olympics this summer, but in quite stunning economic development. Western ‘mandarins’ like Peter Mandelson object that they don’t play by the rules set by US-controlled agencies, such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization. Perhaps that is why China, unlike many African and South American states, has benefited so much from globalisation. In being only the second communist country to stage the summer Olympic Games, China has also had to withstand attacks from right-wing groups in the USA. Yet, significantly, no Western government has gone so far as to propose or organise a boycott, as some did against Moscow in 1980. They have learned their lesson.

Nearly 30 years on, it is worth a backward

glance at what happened over the Moscow Olympics. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) selected Moscow as the 1980 host at its 75th session in October 1974; Moscow won the vote comfortably over its sole rival, Los Angeles. It was the first time in history that a communist nation had been chosen to host the summer Games.

At the time many felt the USSR worthy of the honour: not only was it the most successful and versatile nation in Olympic history, but it was considered to have done much in Olympic forums to enhance the pre-eminent role of sport and the Olympic movement. It was a popular choice with East European states (but not all communist nations – China turned down its invitation). It was also supported by many Third World countries whose political and sporting causes had gained Soviet support in such matters as the banning of racist South Africa and Rhodesia from the Olympic movement, the training of coaches, construction of sports facilities and free attendance of athletes at Soviet sports colleges. As for Western governments, despite their distaste for communism, it was generally thought that the appointment of Moscow might somehow make a contribution to the process of détente then underway.

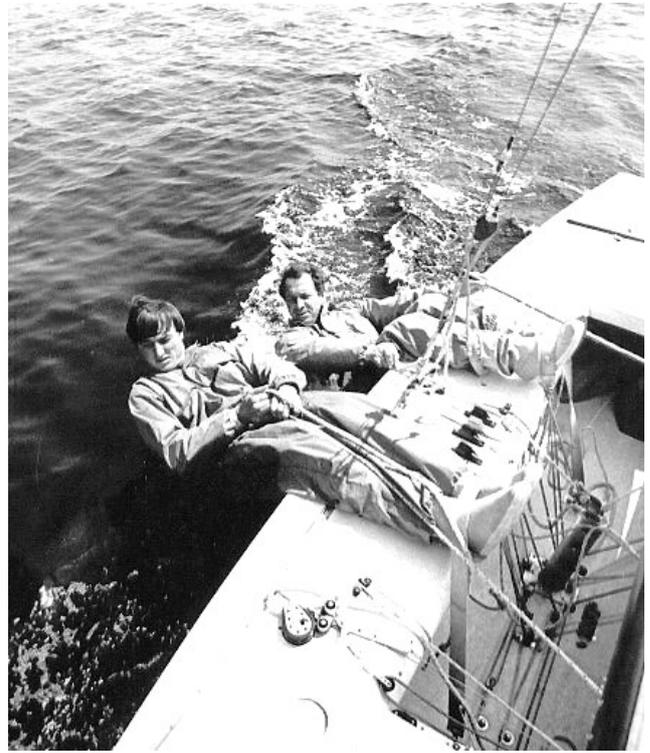
However, opposition to Moscow’s staging of the Games commenced almost at once. It gained a boost with the entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan on 17 December 1979. This provided the anti-Moscow campaigners with precisely the ammunition they needed. Following US President Carter’s lead, the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, called on the British Olympic Association (BOA) and, over its head, all British athletes, to boycott

the Games.

The pressure became intense. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, condemned any athletes who decided to go to Moscow, as did other church leaders, although the Methodists and Baptists left the decision up to individuals. Big business withdrew offers of financial support. The television networks, which had already spent millions of pounds on TV rights, announced that coverage of the Games would be drastically cut. The Thatcher Government put every obstacle in the way of athletes intending to take part in the Games. For example, civil servants and army personnel hoping to compete were refused special leave to travel to Moscow. The House of Commons approved the boycott by a 315–117 majority, even though public opinion polls were showing some 70 per cent in favour of British athletes going to Moscow.

It was virtually impossible to hear a dissenting voice in the media. Given lack of funds, the troubled domestic atmosphere and the Government's refusal to allow the British state airline to fly anyone or anything involved in the Olympics to Moscow, British athletes and officials had to be ferried out to Moscow and back home only for the duration of their events. The four main BOA officials, including myself, had to drive two Land Rovers from London to Moscow and back with medical and other equipment.

Despite all this pressure, the BOA decided by a 19–1 vote, with four abstentions, 'for immediate acceptance of the invitation to Moscow'. Subsequently, the yachting, field hockey and equestrian federations voted against going to Moscow. On 27 May 1980 the IOC announced that 85 countries had accepted invitations to compete in Moscow. Of the 22 nations that had won two or more gold medals in the 1972 and 1976 Olympics, only five boycotted the Games: the USA, West Germany, Norway, Kenya and Japan. The most conspicuous break in the boycott was paradoxically made by Western Europe. The British team, consisting of 326 athletes, was the fourth largest at the Games.



Moscow Olympics: gold medallists V Mabkin and A Muzychenko (SCRSS Photo Library)

Failure of the boycott underlined the worldwide strength of the Olympic idea and movement, and its relative independence of governments. It also demonstrated the utter hypocrisy of the boycotters over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Not only had the USA staged the Winter Olympics at Lake Placid during the Vietnamese War, the US Government now gave military backing to the Taliban in its opposition to Soviet-led Afghan forces, nurtured the Taliban leader Osama Bin Laden and provided generous assistance to other anti-communist groups in the Middle East, notably Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

It is worth noting that the Moscow Olympics went off without a hitch and represented one of the most successful and spectacular sporting spectacles of our time. Despite that perception, there is in Russia today a conviction among some people that everything associated with the Soviet past must be malign and cast into oblivion. So with the Moscow Olympics. When the IOC awarded Sochi the 2014 Winter Olympics, it signalled a fresh opportunity for Russia to demonstrate its ability to hold a successful Games and the country's prowess at sport – the authorities have already set a target of

14 gold medals. One reason why the Black Sea resort of Sochi won the bid is that not only is Putin an extremely popular president at home (especially for enhancing Russia's standing internationally and standing up to the world's single remaining superpower, the USA), but he has support around the world from nations fed up with President Bush's aggressive policies.

Without doubt the Sochi Games will be successful. Sochi is a natural summer and winter resort and President Putin will ensure the timely building of a first-rate sports and leisure infrastructure. By the time the Games are held in six years' time, many Russians believe that Putin will again be president and enjoy the prestige of hosting the world's premier sporting event in the full glare of the world's media. He has, of course, 'leant' on oligarchs like Deripaska, Abramovich and Weinstock to provide funding for sports amenities and hotels (and regularly reminds those who don't play ball by hurling more accusations at the imprisoned Khodorkovsky).

It is unrealistic to expect the Olympic movement to solve the world's problems. Sometimes, as in the US-led boycott of the Moscow Olympics, the movement may be taken to the brink of disaster. But it survived, as it has always done, overcoming political manipulation and international rivalries. The founder of the modern Games, Baron Pierre de Coubertin was wise to say, just before his death, "To ask the peoples of the world to love one another is merely infantile. To ask them to respect one another is not at all Utopian; but in order to respect one another it is first necessary to know one another."

That, surely, is one of the paramount aims of the Olympics in Beijing, London and Sochi.

Jim Riordan was the British Olympic Attaché at the 1980 Moscow Olympics. He is Visiting Professor in Sports Studies at the University of Worcester.

SCRSS News

Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the SCRSS AGM will take place at 10.30am on Saturday 17 May 2008 at the Society's premises in Brixton. The meeting is open to SCRSS members only. Nominations for members for election to the next Council and motions for the AGM should be sent to Head Office no later than Friday 19 April 2008. All nominations and motions must be seconded by another SCRSS member. The existing Council member due for re-nomination to the Council in 2008 is Jill Cunningham.

The following motion has been submitted to the AGM by the SCRSS Council: 'That the annual membership subscriptions should be increased from June 2008 as follows (*existing subscriptions in brackets*):

London & Home Counties: £25 individual (£20), £30 joint (£25), £15 unwaged (£12).
Other UK: £15 individual (£12), £17 joint (£14), £10 unwaged (£7).
Affiliations: £100 commercial (£45), £50 educational/institutional (£45), £35 community/voluntary (£30).
Overseas: £25 Europe (£20 EU, £25 non-EU), £30 global.'

2nd SCRSS Russian Seminar

The SCRSS Russian Seminar will take place on Wednesday 2 and Thursday 3 April at the Society's premises. The seminar is a two-day intensive course given by two lecturers from St Petersburg State University. The course is aimed at teachers of Russian, graduates and final-year undergraduates of Russian who have a good aural understanding of Russian and wish to keep abreast of the latest developments in Russia. Lectures, given in Russian only, will cover Russian language and contemporary society, politics and culture. Topics will range from contemporary Russian vocabulary, to the recent Duma and presidential elections, to Russian art.

The course advisor is Dr Roy Bivon. The course is organised in conjunction with the City of St Petersburg Administration, St Petersburg State University and the St Petersburg Association for International Co-operation.

As places are limited, early booking is recommended. An application form and further details are enclosed with this mailing (also available from the SCRSS website at www.scrss.org.uk).

Seeking the Twelve!

In the autumn 2007 issue we publicised Council member Andrew Jameson's offer to donate £1,000 towards the development of the Society's work and premises if 12 others would do the same. We are delighted to report that two other members have responded to the appeal so far – 10 more to go! Please contact the Honorary Secretary of the SCRSS if you would like to help.

Events

Friday 22 February 7pm

Lecture: Aspects of Post-War Art in Belarus: An Illustrated Talk

By Christine Lindey, lecturer in art history and author of *Art in the Cold War*. Christine visited Belarus in October 2007 to meet two well-known Belarus artists of the socialist realist period, Mikhail Savitsky and May Dantsig.

Friday 7 March 7pm

Film: The Fourth Year of the War

An authentic account of Soviet military intelligence units in World War II, focusing on the heroic activities of a woman agent behind enemy lines. Shown to coincide with International Women's Day. Dir. G. Nikolayenko, Gorky Film Studios, Moscow, 1983. English commentary, colour, 100 mins.

Friday 6 June 7pm

Lecture: Russian Verbs of Motion

By Dr Roy Bivon. Roy's lectures on Russian grammar have proved highly popular with

SCRSS members, both teachers and students. He is co-author, with E Petrukhina, of *The Russian Verb* (Zlatoust, 2004).

Feature

Elections in Russia

By Ralph Gibson

Grand Plan

Midway between parliamentary and presidential elections in Russia it seems that everything is on course for a stable transfer of power from President Vladimir Putin to his designated successor, Dmitri Medvedev, currently first deputy prime minister.

Last December, Russians gave a two-thirds majority in the State Duma to United Russia which had Putin at the top of its candidate list. And Medvedev has already said he will nominate Putin as his prime minister should he be elected president on 2 March.

Thus the grand plan to ensure continued stability in Russia as it emerges from the crises of the 1990s appears to be on course. Needless to say, the plan has not met with universal approval in the West or within Russia with journalists, academics and politicians lining up to condemn what they see as the crushing of opposition voices and manipulation of political parties – all in the cause of preserving the current elite in Moscow.

State Duma Elections

There were several key changes to electoral law prior to the fifth post-Soviet parliamentary elections: the threshold for parties to gain any seats was raised from 5 to 7 per cent of the vote; all votes were cast for party lists (rather than a proportion of seats being reserved for directly-elected Duma deputies); and the electorate had no opportunity to vote 'against all' if dissatisfied with all the manifestos on offer.

There were no real surprises on election night – in fact, the final results pretty much reflected polls and predictions made in the run-up to 2 December. The balance of power from the previous Duma continues largely unchanged.

Only four of the 11 parties that contested seats passed the 7 per cent mark. Together, these four parties amassed almost 92 per cent of the votes cast. The minimum threshold meant that these four received additional representation (or ‘bonus seats’) from those parties which failed to make it.

And so, for the record, United Russia took 64.26 per cent of the vote but gained 70 per cent (315) of the 450 seats of the seats in the new parliament. The Communist Party (KPRF) gained 11.59 per cent of the votes cast and 57 seats; the Liberal Democratic party (LDPR) 8.15 per cent and 40 seats; and Fair Russia (or ‘Just Russia’) – 7.76 per cent and 38 seats.

Of the other parties contesting the election, the Agrarian Party did best with 2.5 per cent. Yabloko and SPS (Union of Right Forces), which had fought and won seats in previous Duma elections, managed to poll less than 2 per cent.

Various commentators have pointed to the significance of the United Russia total – it could now easily muster the two-thirds majority required to amend the Russian Constitution.

President Medvedev

Russians go to the polls again on 2 March – and it seems virtually certain that they will elect Dmitri Medvedev as their next president.

He will face a very narrow field. Parties represented in the State Duma are allowed to nominate contenders directly. Otherwise, potential candidates must collect two million signatures of support. This hurdle proved too much for ex-prime minister Mikhail Kasyanov – too many of his supporting signatures were rejected as invalid by the Central Electoral Commission.

Medvedev himself was nominated by United Russia and he is likely to be joined on the ballot by only three other names – Gennady Zyuganov, the leader of the Communist Party; Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, leader of the LDPR; and Andrei Bogdanov, leader of the tiny ‘pro-Western’ Democratic Party (who did manage to amass the requisite number of signatures).

Early polls predict Medvedev is likely to get anything up to 75 per cent of the vote. Attention therefore shifts to what changes might be expected – if any – when he is inaugurated in May and formally takes the reins of presidential power from Vladimir Putin.

Vladimir Nikonov, president of the Politika Foundation, is clear in his view. “The most important aspect of the Medvedev doctrine is its anti-revolutionary nature. Medvedev is not a proponent of drastic reforms or political surprises.” (*Izvestiya*, 6 February 2008). Nikonov points to Medvedev’s emphasis on building up human capital and creating a civilised legal environment. It is certainly true that his work on the ‘national projects’ has given Medvedev an insight into the urgent necessity of improving housing, healthcare, and birth rates, and tackling the high mortality rates that are a major cause of the dramatic year-on-year decline in the Russian population. Interestingly, 2007 saw a huge leap in the number of births registered in Russia – 1.6 million – up over 8 per cent on 2006 and the highest number since 1991.

‘Cohabitation’

As highlighted in the ‘annual threat assessment’ presented to the US Senate by the Director of National Intelligence, Russia is set to reach “an important milestone – the first on-schedule change in leadership since communism and the first voluntary transfer of power from one healthy Kremlin leader to another”. As might be expected, the report raises doubts about Dmitri Medvedev’s proposal to nominate Vladimir Putin as his prime minister, but the Russian people have demonstrated their wish to retain Putin in a position of power. His approval rating

remains extremely high and many voters clearly wished he could remain as president, something acknowledged by some of his fiercest critics. Putin, of course, rejected all the proposals to amend the Constitution to allow himself another term as president and so it will be fascinating to see how Russia develops in the next few years of a Medvedev–Putin ‘cohabitation’.

Sources: PBN (www.pbnco.com/eng/news); Russia Profile (www.russiaprofile.org); RIA Novosti (www.en.rian.ru).

Ralph Gibson works for the Russian press agency RIA Novosti in London and is Vice-Chairman of the SCRSS.

Soviet Memorial Trust Fund News

Holocaust Memorial Day

Almost 100 people gathered at the Soviet War Memorial in London on 27 January for the annual Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony. In a joint event with Southwark Council, Rabbi Alan Greenbat conducted a service beforehand at the nearby Holocaust Memorial Tree. Cllr Bob Skelly, the Mayor of Southwark, HE Yury Fedotov, the Russian Ambassador, and Simon Hughes MP (representing Southwark and Bermondsey) were joined by diplomats from a number of CIS embassies, British war veterans and representatives of various organisations that support the work of the Soviet Memorial Trust Fund (SMTF), including the SCRSS.

The outdoor ceremony was followed by a fascinating lecture inside the Imperial War Museum (IWM) by war veteran Leslie Sutton. A participant of the Normandy beach landings in 1944, after the war he found himself in Nuremburg where he was involved with escorting witnesses to the Trials. He was able to give an insider’s view of the preparations and proceedings, as well

as exploring broader themes connected with his wartime experience.

The talk was complemented by a newsreel and documentary from the museum archives. It conveyed some of the contemporary perception of just how momentous and significant the Nuremburg Trials were and the passionate belief of all the participants that the process would help to prevent the horrors inflicted by the Nazis from ever happening again.

Events

Friday 9 May 11am

Victory Day Act of Remembrance

Members and friends are welcome to participate in our next SMTF event at the Soviet War Memorial. The ceremony will be followed by a talk inside the Imperial War Museum by Sir Rodric Braithwaite (ex-British Ambassador to Moscow) on his highly-acclaimed book *Moscow 1941: A City and Its People at War*. The talk is free and open to the public. For more information – and to reserve a place at the talk – please email smtf@hotmail.co.uk or write to the SMTF c/o 320 Brixton Road, London SW9 6AB.

Public Sculpture in South London

Members may be interested to know that the SCRSS gets a number of honourable mentions in connection with the erection of the Soviet War Memorial in a new book *Public Sculpture in South London* by Terry Cavanagh (Liverpool University Press, 2007). It records in some detail how the initiative came from the SCRSS and, specifically, a decision taken at its AGM in May 1995.

The Soviet War Memorial is located in the Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park (adjacent to the Imperial War Museum), Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ.

Art & Theatre Reviews

From Russia – French and Russian Master Paintings 1870–1925 from Moscow and St Petersburg: Royal Academy of Arts, London

Presenting French and Russian art 1870–1925 from four major Russian museums, this exhibition aims to explore the interaction between art of the two nations. In so doing, its nine rooms tell a loosely chronological narrative of the major ‘isms’ of early modern art – from the realism of the Russian Wanderers and the French Impressionists to the various developments in Russian art that led to Kandinsky’s and Malevich’s Non-Objective art in the early 20th century.

The second major theme is Russian patronage. Tretyakov’s collection of Russian art is followed by a centrepiece celebrating Shchukin’s and Morozov’s massive collections of French avant-garde painting. These are stupendous. You only see a small part of their collections yet you can feast your eyes and mind on an entire wall of Cézannes and another of Gauguins. Picasso’s uncompromisingly sexual, larger-than-life nude *The Dryad* hangs near several large Matisse’s, including *The Dance*. Manet, Monet, Van Gogh, Bonnard, Vuillard flood your responses and still there is more.

These paintings take your breath away. Blasting out the finicky hypocrisies of 19th century Salon painting, they boldly speak of youth, vitality and truth. They have now become such frequently reproduced favourites that to see the originals is to feel some of the shock which they caused in their day.

The French avant-garde spurred its Russian counterpart and it is a rare pleasure to see Levitan’s moody responses to the Russian landscape, Falk’s and Altman’s cubist-inspired portraits, Konchalovsky’s and Mashkov’s energetic brushwork and vivid colour, as well as the better-known paintings of Goncharova, Popova, Petrov-Vodkin and

others. For many, such encounters with Russian art – still far too little known in the West – will come as a welcome discovery.



Sergei Shchukin (SCRSS Library)

But the focus on collectors and stylistic movements marginalises discussion of the political and social context. How or at whose expense the textile merchants and manufacturers Tretyakov, Shchukin and Morozov amassed their wealth is not questioned. Moreover, such is the anti-Soviet bias that we get a reconfiguration of art history which claims as Russian what was Soviet and which minimalises or ignores the Soviet contribution. Communism is barely mentioned and then only derogatorily.

Much is made of Morozov’s and Shchukin’s vision and daring as collectors and patrons of the French avant-garde. This they undoubtedly were, yet why is the young Soviet state’s equally venturesome patronage of the Soviet avant-garde not mentioned, let alone celebrated? The vast majority of Russian works in this exhibition, including works by Tatlin, Konchalovsky, Chagall, Kandinsky, Malevich and Popova, were bought by the worker’s state in the 1920s.

Indeed, the recent controversy over Shchukin’s and Morozov’s ancestors’ claiming ownership of their collections has been an unacknowledged tribute to the Soviet state’s enlightened cultural policies. It

had the foresight to nationalise works that at the time were disparaged by most people. And it looked after them thereafter.

The most glaring distortion is the marginalisation of constructivism. As a category, constructivism is given the smallest and last room which includes only two works: Tatlin's stunningly dynamic and surprisingly large *Corner Counter-Relief*, 1914, and a model of his *Monument to the Third International*, 1919. While it is heartening that this radically innovatory project will be widely seen, the context in which it is presented is misleading. The work is omitted from the exhibition catalogue (the most lasting legacy of such major exhibitions), as is the video which is projected above it. Showing a digital projection of how Tatlin's Tower would have looked in Petrograd had it been constructed, it tells us that this 'Soviet sculptor' planned to 'violently insert' his 'wildly twisted tower' into the 'old historic city of St Petersburg', so implying a desecration or rape of traditional beauty.

A few proto-constructivist works by Popova, Rodchenko and others can be spotted among the paintings in previous rooms, but are not identified as such. Divorced from the stage, ceramic, graphic and textile designs to which they led, their links with the constructivist's art into production ideology is defused. Yet this was the most influential of Russian / Soviet innovations between 1875–1925.

By marginalising the Soviet contribution to Russian art, the exhibition misses the opportunity to show Western Europe that the achievements of its avant-garde art and patronage was, in fact, more amazing than is shown here.

Cultural history is rewritten to suit the current dominant cultural and political climate. National identity, individualism, religion, entrepreneurship and personal wealth are celebrated; internationalism, collectivism, atheism, egalitarianism and the interests of working people are snubbed or ignored.

There is no doubt about it, the exhibition contains some truly stunning works and the only way you can otherwise enjoy them is to travel to Russia. Do go. You will be amazed by the sheer quality of many of the works. But beware of the ways in which they are interpreted.

By Christine Lindey

This review first appeared in the Morning Star, February 2008. See listings (page 11) for exhibition details.

The President's Holiday: Hampstead Theatre, London

The August 1991 putsch against Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov, which quickly led to the supremacy of Russian president Boris Yeltsin and the unravelling of the Soviet Union as a state, is perhaps not the most riveting of topics for a stage play.

So all the more credit to playwright Penny Gold and Hampstead Theatre for staging the political and personal drama of that putsch – *The President's Holiday*. All the action takes place inside the dacha where Gorbachov and his family were on holiday. So the play's drama has to rely more on dialogue than on any external events, which might have had more intrinsic theatricality.

For those who have dismissed socialism as a thing of the past, this play will perhaps not be of much interest. But for those of us who knew something of the Soviet Union and appreciated the good things about that system, the play is interesting because it presents the audience with a taste of the arguments raging in the late '80s about the need for reform of the Soviet system.

Gorbachov is depicted as a humanistic, sincere socialist, who wants to bring more democracy to the system, but who unwittingly brings about the collapse of the very state he wants to preserve. The KGB man – the face of the putschists who are holding Gorbachov and family under house arrest in their seaside dacha – argues his support for the putsch as necessary to

preserve the state, which is in danger of disappearing in the political chaos of Gorbachov's perestroika era.

Yeltsin was in Moscow at the time, hailed as a hero for mounting a tank and denouncing the attempted coup. Did he know that by that act he would be able to usurp power from Gorbachov? That his actions as the elected president of the biggest republic (Russia) would fatally undermine the position of Gorbachov, who was a president (of the USSR) but one who had not been elected – as Yeltsin had been – by direct vote of the people? Could a reformed socialism – of the kind advocated by Gorbachov – really have worked, given more time?

These are the questions thrown up by Penny Gold's play. It is true to history and while perhaps not great drama, certainly presents arguments of interest to anyone who is not convinced that socialism is dead.

By Kate Clarke

Report

The Russians Are Coming!!? The UK Russian Community Acquires a Voice in Multi-Cultural Britain

The Russian community in UK is increasing in numbers and influence. With this comes an inevitable integration on the practical level: children of the Russian community can become anglicised and in a sense lost to Russian culture and the 'motherland'. In an effort to retain these children, Russian supplementary schools now exist in several British cities. Russian is now a 'community language' in the UK.

On the global scale, Vladimir Putin and his government have for several years run a massive outreach campaign to retrieve and re-integrate their Russian compatriots from all over the world, who may now number about 30 million (see Andrew Jameson's

report in *SCRSS Information Digest, Spring 2007*).

A huge event was the launching of the 'Russkii Mir' Fund on 3 November 2007 (see www.ruskiimir.ru/ru/). Its purpose is, broadly, to re-unite Russians round the world through Russian culture and Russian language, and to offer financial support for associated projects.

So it is no coincidence that these events are also reflected in Britain. On 17 November 2007 at Central Hall Westminster there took place the 'First Forum of the Russian Speaking Community in the United Kingdom – Ways of Consolidation'. As reported in the *London-Info* newspaper, 60 similar meetings have been held around the world. The Russian community in Britain now comprises between 400,000 – 800,000 people, depending on who is counting! The Forum was organised by Olga Bramley, director of the London School of Russian, with the support of the Russian Embassy, the Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation, the Moscow City Government and the Moscow House of Compatriots.

Participating in the Forum were 107 representatives from business, social, religious, cultural and educational organisations with a Russian focus, who travelled to London from all over England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. According to delegates' application forms, they represented a total membership of some 20,000 people. The SCRSS was represented by Charles Stewart and Andrew Jameson, both of whom spoke.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergei Lavrov, sent formal greetings. The Deputy Minister, Georgy Karasin, and the current UK ambassador, Yuri Fedotov, were present and both spoke. Another notable speaker was the only (so far) Russian member of the European Parliament, Tanya Zhdanok.

The Forum resolved to establish a Coordinating Russian-speaking Community Council to represent the interests and defend the rights of compatriots in the UK

and abroad. Nine members were elected to this working body. Among others, the Forum also discussed and resolved to undertake forums and seminars to exchange information and experience; to focus efforts on maintaining the Russian language, culture, national and religious traditions; to actively involve young Russian speakers in the work of compatriot organisations; to encourage the involvement of celebrities and business people in community projects; to broaden the dialogue with UK institutions on social, judicial, cultural, educational and other issues; to support social projects aimed at the elderly and other vulnerable groups in the community; to approach the Russian authorities for assistance with the basic funding of Russian supplementary schools in the UK; and to engage with the Russian Government and the Russian-speaking community world-wide with a view to creating a Global Congress of Russian Speakers.

As the press release after the event put it: "Our common objective is to occupy a dignified place in the colourful palette of nations in the United Kingdom, without losing our own identity or contact with our native land, which we remember and love."

For the full text of the press release, texts of some speeches, and any other information, please contact a.jameson2@dsl.pipex.com.

By Andrew Jameson

From the Russian Press

FSB Cultural Awards

Izvestiya recalled how in 1978 the KGB, the forerunner of today's FSB, had launched a prize for the best coverage by writers and film directors of the work of the secret services ('FSB otmetila lyudey iskusstva', 29.1.08, www.izvestiya.ru). Resurrected two years ago, the FSB's creative awards for 2007 had just been announced. This year's jury, made up of seven generals and seven representatives of the creative intelligentsia,

had been chaired by Vyacheslav Ushakov, Vice Director of the FSB.

The first prize in the literature and journalism category had been awarded to Roy Medvedev for his book *Andropov*. Interviewed by *Izvestiya*, Medvedev said that by its very nature writing about the secret services was difficult, but that his book had been made possible by the collapse of the USSR. More than 100 memoirs by members of the secret services had now been published. Medvedev had known Yury Andropov when he worked in the international department of the Central Committee. He now knew for certain that Andropov had forbidden his arrest on a number of occasions and had described his books as tendentious but based on real facts.

The third prize in the film and television category had been awarded to TV presenter and producer Aleksei Pimanov for his debut film *Three Days in Odessa* about the secret services' fight against crime in post-war Odessa. Pimanov said that, while the film was a love story, he had spent some time researching the archives and had come to realise that the work of the secret services could not always be viewed in black and white. However, he had been surprised to hear of the FSB's interest in the film.

New Uniforms for the Armed Forces

Komsomol'skaya Pravda discussed the recently unveiled new uniforms for the armed forces with Vladimir Bogomolov of the Russian Ministry of Defence ('V Den' Pobedy armiya pokazhetsya narody v novoy forme, chast' 2', 8.2.08, www.kp.ru). He explained that a major overhaul of military uniforms took place every 15–20 years as new technologies and materials appeared. The last major changes to military uniforms had been made in 1994 and, given the economic situation, had been influenced by cost factors.

The new uniforms had been created by Valentin Yudashkin, one of Russia's best-

known designers, in consultation with the Ministry of Defence and with input on new technologies from research institutes. The full dress uniforms were based on new colour schemes: for the ground forces – sea blue with red details, for the air force – dark blue with sky-blue trim, for the navy – a traditional combination of black and white. They had also introduced a less formal ‘office’ uniform for military personnel working in administrative posts. Underwear had not been ignored: this would now be light grey for the army and air force, white for the navy, and made of more comfortable jersey material.

Yudashkin said it had been a great honour to design the new uniforms for the armed forces. In doing so, he had sought to create a particularly Russian style (the 1994 uniform had borrowed heavily from NATO forces). He had researched the history of Russian military uniform and borrowed elements, among others, from hussar uniforms at the time of Suvorov and the 1945 Victory Parade uniforms. However, his main aim had been to create a uniform fit for heroes.

Articles selected, summarised and translated by Diana Turner

Listings

Art and Photography

Royal Academy of Arts

Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1, Tel: 0870 848 8484 (advance booking), www.royalacademy.org.uk

Until 18 April 2008, 10.00am-6.00pm daily (Fridays to 10.00pm): *From Russia – French and Russian Master Paintings 1870–1925 from Moscow and St Petersburg*. Admission £11.00 (full price); concessions available.

Hayward Gallery

Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1, Tel: 08703 800 400 (bookings), www.haywardgallery.org.uk

Until 27 April 2008, 10.00am-6.00pm daily (Fridays to 10.00pm): *Alexander Rodchenko – Revolution in Photography*. The exhibition features some 120 original prints and photomontages tracing the development of Rodchenko's photography over a period of two decades. Admission: £9.00 (full price); concessions available.

Film

Curzon Mayfair

38 Curzon St London W1, Tel: 0871 7033 989 (Box Office), www.curzoncinemas.com
Sunday 24 February, 12.00: *The Cameraman's Revenge* and *Aelita*. Part of the 1908–1925 Archive Cinema Season organised by Academia Rossica in association with the Royal Academy of Arts. The screening will be accompanied by live music performed by Sergei Letov and Alexei Borisov on saxophone and clarinet, and Lydia Kevina on theremin–vox.

Lectures

Sutton Russian Circle

Sutton College of Learning for Adults (SCOLA), St Nicholas Way, Sutton. Contact: Leslie Dommatt, Tel 01403 256593
Friday 18 April 7.00pm: 17th Annual Russian Candlelight Dinner at Cheam Sports Centre.

Friday 9 May 7.00pm: a tribute to the great cellist Slava Rostropovich (1927–2007).
Friday 13 June 7.00pm: illustrated lecture on *The Changing Function of Monuments in St Petersburg and Moscow* by Gregory Andrushchuk.

Music

Deptford Town Hall

Council Chamber, Deptford Town Hall; Goldsmiths, University of London SE14, Tel: 020 7919 7646, Email: music@gold.ac.uk
21 February 2008: 6.00pm – Remembering Slava Rostropovich; 7.00pm – charity recital in aid of the Rostropovich Fund by Alexander Ivashkin, cello, and Irina Schnittke, piano, with works by

Shostakovich, Schnittke, Prokofiev and Rostropovich. Admission: £5.00.

The Barbican

Silk Street, London EC2, Tel: 0845 120 7500 (Box Office), www.barbican.org.uk
24 February 7.30pm: London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Yury Temirkanov. Sayaka Shoji, violin, and Sergei Leiferkus, bass, perform Prokofiev's *Violin Concerto No 1* and Shostakovich's *Symphony No 13*. Also 10.00am– 5.30pm: LSO Discovery Day – Shostakovich. A glimpse behind the scenes before the performance and a lecture by Professor David Fanning.

Russian Language

Russian Language Evening Classes

Civil Service Recreation Centre, 1 Chadwick Street, London SW1P 2EP. Contact: charles0207@yahoo.co.uk

Tuesday 5pm–6.30pm post-beginners; 6.30–8.30pm intermediates; Thursday 5pm–6.30pm beginners (accelerated); 6.30–8.30pm advanced. Price: £15.00 per class (discounted for advance quarterly payment). Individual classes by arrangement.

Russian Teachers' Day

Conway Hall, Holborn, London. Contact: Fiona Wright, 40 Carnegie Road, St Albans, Herts AL3 6HL, or www.ruslan.co.uk/teachers.htm
Saturday 19 April 2008, 10.00am–4.30pm. The event is aimed at teachers of Russian in schools, colleges, universities, adult education and the private sector. There will be exciting visiting speakers, the opportunity to share experiences and make new contacts, and an initiative to launch a new Russian Teachers' Association. Provisional speakers: Serafima Khavronina (Moscow University) on *The Development of Russian Language Textbooks*; Elkhan Azimov (Pushkin Institute, Moscow) on *Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language Using Computers*; John Langran (Ruslan Limited) on *Russian Language Games*; Tanya Filosofova (St Andrews University) on *Teaching Business Russian to Advanced Learners*.

South East Russian Language Society 'Friendship' (Druzhba)

Charity No 1111434, Company Reg No 5931435, 105 West Street, Erith DA8 1AW, Email: GalaEduc@aol.co, Tel: 01322 330090, Fax: 01322 333233. Russian language and literature, preparation for GCSE, AS, A-Levels. Russian folk dance, art and Russian ballet classes. Music and gymnastic lessons.

Publications

The Pearl: A True Tale of Forbidden Love in Catherine the Great's Russia (by Douglas Smith, Yale University Press)

Published this spring, the book tells the remarkable story of Count Nikolai Sheremetyev and his serf – and later secret wife – Praskovia 'The Pearl' Kovalyova. Visit www.douglas-smith.info for more information.

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