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Feature

Multi-Faith Russia in the 21st Century

By Nataliya Rogozhina

In multi-ethnic Russia religious coexistence has always been an issue of high importance for state policy. However, every historical period makes its own rules and for this reason relations between Russian Orthodoxy and other religions have assumed a variety of forms.

Orthodoxy was the dominant religion in tsarist Russia. This is illustrated by Nevsky Prospect in St Petersburg, the former capital of the Russian Empire. Churches of other denominations could only be built on one side of the street and their height was strictly regulated. The German, Georgian, Armenian and other churches, therefore, were disposed along one side of Nevsky

Prospect, while the Kazan Cathedral rose up majestically on the other.

It should be noted that there have never been any wars or serious conflicts in Russian history at the root of which lay the persecution of non-Orthodox or non-Christian faiths. Before the Revolution a number of regions had the right to adopt sharia law, the Russian army had both Muslim sub-units and its own imams, and madrasas were active.

The Soviet Union – land of triumphant atheism – was ruthlessly indifferent to the religious feelings of its citizens. In the early days Soviet power continued the practice of encouraging Orthodox and Muslim citizens both at school and in the army. Alas, this only lasted for a short time until the atheist terror trampled over all religious traditions in Russia. It is a well-known fact that Stalin only displayed some tolerance toward religion during the Great Patriotic War.

The new Russian state, born in the crucible of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, has a far more flexible policy on questions of freedom of conscience and religion¹.

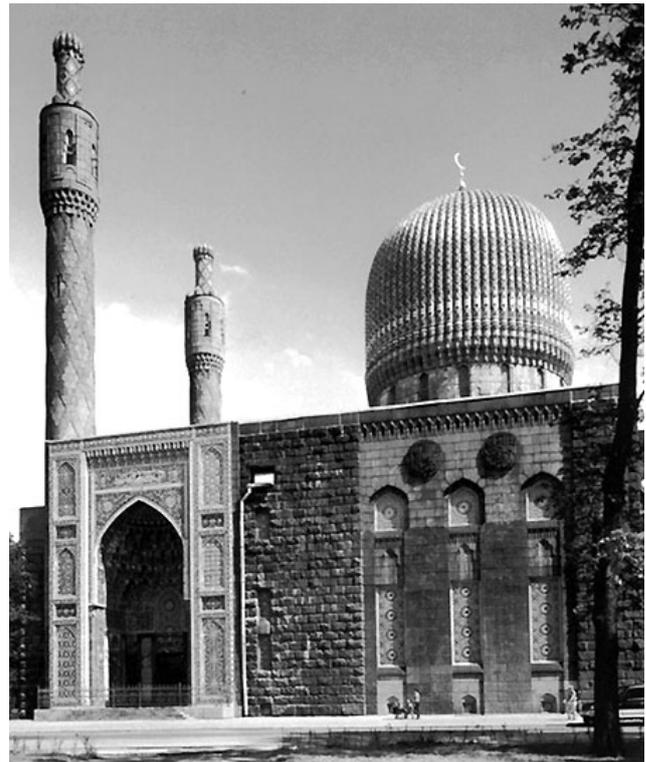
However, things are not quite so simple. Historically, Russia has been considered an Orthodox Christian country by virtue of the fact that Russians constitute the bulk of the country's population. At the same time, a significant portion of its citizens represent an enormous number of large and small nationalities professing other religions. At the beginning of 2010 more than 23,000 religious organisations were registered in Russia. The Inter-Faith Council was created with the aim of achieving a broad dialogue between the faiths in Russia. It brings together representatives of Christianity,

Islam, Judaism and Buddhism who are themselves the embodiment of Russia's different ethnic cultures. For the purposes of this article, our analysis is limited to relations between Russian Orthodoxy and Islam.

Estimates of the numbers of Muslims in Russia vary remarkably. Thus, there were 14.5 million ethnic Muslims in Russia according to data from the Russian National Census of 2002, but already by 2003 Vladimir Putin had put the figure at 20 million. There are other data too. According to CIA information there were 26 million Muslims in Russia in 2004, although this figure includes migrants, both legal and illegal. Back in 1994 Ravil Gaynutdin, chairman of the Russian Council of Muftis, claimed there were 19 million Muslims in Russia, but Geydar Dzhemal, chairman of the 'Muslim Committee', is quite convinced there are more than 30 million. According to research carried out by the sociologists S Filatov and R Lunkin, between 31–46% of Muslims practise their religion, i.e. follow the precepts of Islam. At the same time, according to their estimates, out of 85–95 million Christians only 3–17 million (i.e. between 5–18%) practise their religion. Clearly there can never be a definitive figure since officially data on religious affiliation are not collected, while the Russian Constitution guarantees freedom of religion. The census results only recorded the number of nationalities who follow a particular religious tradition. Based on those figures, however paradoxical it might seem, Orthodox Russia is a predominantly Islamic country. It was for this reason that Russia joined the Organisation of the Islamic Conference as an observer in 2005.

At meetings with the king of Jordan, the prime minister of Malaysia and other leaders of Islamic countries Vladimir Putin has repeatedly emphasised Russia's close relations and commonality of interests with countries of the Muslim world. Speaking at a session of the Chechen parliament on 12 December 2005, he said: "The Russian Federation has always been the most consistent, true and steadfast defender of Islam as a world religion." This can be interpreted as the Russian authorities' view

of the Russian Federation as a multi-faith and multi-ethnic power.



The St Petersburg Mosque (SCRSS Photo Library)

Indeed, there is a long tradition of coexistence and interaction between Islam and Christianity in Russia. In our history there has been intolerance and conflict, as well as dialogue, cooperation and mutual support. In secular Russia today, where church and state are separated, the principle of religious equality has been proclaimed. However, the leaders of our country sometimes have difficulty in 'not forgetting' that the sun shines equally for everyone. Let us give some examples.

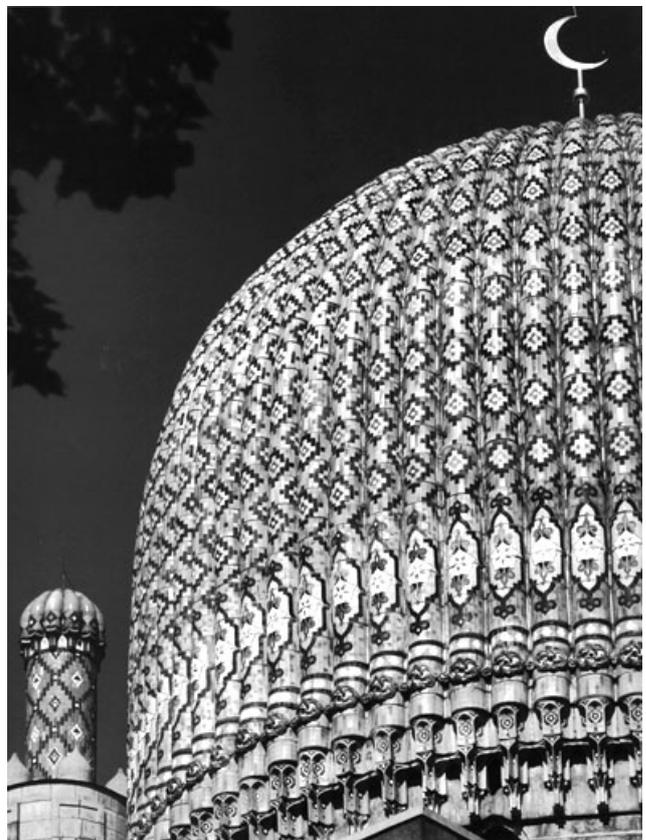
Orthodox Christmas (7 January) is an officially designated public holiday, Easter Sunday is noted as a religious festival on all calendars, but the movable Muslim festivals of Lesser Bairam and Greater Bairam are not noted. It is true, however, that the government authorities in the national republics (Tatarstan, Adygeya, Tuva and others) have the right to designate another day as a public holiday – in place of Christmas – according to the religious preferences of the local population.

And here is one more example. From 2006

Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture was introduced as a subject into the secondary schools programme, while permanent posts for Orthodox padres were instituted in the armed forces of the Russian Federation. However, it was only in 2009 that the situation changed and imams were allowed to work with servicemen and the secondary school subject was given a new name and content – *Fundamentals of Religious (Orthodox, Islamic, Buddhist or Judaistic) Culture*. As an alternative subject, pupils are able to choose *Ethics* or *History of World Religions*. These additions undoubtedly mark the beginning of a new phase in relations between the state and religion. As Muslim public figures themselves point out, there has never been anything like this before in the conduct of the Russian Empire and especially the USSR, not even in the recent history of the Russian Federation.

Religious educational institutions outside the state sector existed in tsarist Russia, as well as later in the USSR. They continue to work today. The Theological Seminary and Theological Academy in St Petersburg are renowned throughout the world. In Tatarstan today a multi-stage system of Islamic religious education has been established: 11 religious vocational training institutions function in the republic, among which the Russian Islamic University occupies a special place. This non-state sector higher educational institution is licensed by the Ministry of Education and Science and trains specialists in both secular and religious subjects. The very existence of such a university has enormous significance in the current climate: it trains Muslim clerics for practically all regions of central Russia, ensuring that they are tolerant and adapted to life in the Russian Federation. Currently, students from 22 regions of Russia and six countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States study at the university. In 2008 the Ministry of Education and Science commissioned the development of a special programme on Russian language and culture to be recommended as a compulsory subject for Islamic educational institutions. These courses are aimed at creating and supporting an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect in the country.

What was it that helped break through the barrier of Soviet alienation of religion and state, and post-Soviet bias towards Russian Orthodoxy? Strange as it might seem, it was the Moscow Patriarchate. During the first years of *perestroika* it had acted tenaciously in its own interest but without regard for Russia's multi-ethnic and multi-faith diversity. Despite well-intentioned motives, the policy of state support for a single religion was rejected not only in atheist circles, but also by practically all non-Orthodox believers, including Muslims. By the beginning of the 21st century a conflict was brewing in the country. Fortunately, it has been successfully avoided.



The St Petersburg Mosque (SCRSS Photo Library)

For the first time in Russia's recent history, President Dmitri Medvedev visited the Moscow Congregational Mosque² and the Buddhist Ivolginsky datsan³ in Buryatia in the spring and summer last year. The newly enthroned Patriarch Kirill (Gundyayev) gave it to be understood that the Russian Orthodox Church no longer insisted on teaching only the fundamentals of Orthodoxy in schools and was not against analogous courses for Muslims, Jews and

Buddhists. A consensus has been reached.

Sociologists predict that the recently begun experiments in the army and schools will lead to changes in society in 20 years' time, when children who have received this new knowledge of religion grow up. They foresee an increase in religious belief among the population, helping to strengthen the country's moral climate. Sceptics and pessimists, however, say that the increasing influence granted to religion in society today will lead to at least two problems. On the one hand, it threatens to undermine the country's territorial integrity, given more overt differences in the mentality of people living in different regions. On the other hand, it increases the probability of inter-faith conflicts, which are characteristic of societies with a stronger sense of religious identity.

It is obvious that on issues of freedom of religion the ideological position of the Russian state today is one of liberal democracy. Russia sees itself as part of the modern world. All countries make their contribution to this world and, accordingly, influence the political space. Russia strives to prove that the oil and gas trade is far from the only thing of which it can be proud. The building of a peaceful and highly moral society is Russia's true contribution to the development of contemporary civilisation.

Footnotes:

¹ The federal law *On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations* was passed by the State Duma of the Russian Federation on 19 September 1997.

² The Moscow Congregational Mosque is Russia's central mosque.

³ The Ivolginsky datsan is a Buddhist temple, monastic centre and the residence of Pandido Khambo Lama, the leader of all Russian lamas.

Dr Nataliya Rogozhina lectures in the Faculty of Philology at St Petersburg State University.

SCRSS News

Annual General Meeting

The Society's AGM was held on Saturday 22 May 2010. At the meeting the following Council members were re-elected for three years: Barbara Ellis, Charles Stewart, Christine Lindey, Victoria Nartova, Diana Turner, Jean Turner. The following Honorary Officers were also re-elected for three years: Professor William Bowring (President), Robert Chandler, Professor Robert Davies, Stanley Forman, Dr Kate Hudson, Rachel O'Higgins, Robert Wareing (Vice-Presidents). The new Executive Committee, elected after the AGM, comprises John Riley (Chair), Philip Matthews (Vice-Chair), Ralph Gibson (Vice-Chair, Hon Treasurer), Jean Turner (Hon Secretary), Charles Stewart, Victoria Nartova. The other members of the Council are Kate Clark, Jill Cunningham, Barbara Ellis, Andrew Jameson, Christine Lindey, Diana Turner.



Christine Lindey (left) gives her lecture on *British Responses to Soviet Art in the 1940s* at St Petersburg State University

The opening remarks were given by Vice Chair and Hon Treasurer Ralph Gibson, who also presented the accounts. The Hon Secretary presented the Annual Report. Among other key events and initiatives over the past year, she highlighted the success of two particular projects:

SCRSS Exhibition: Anglo-Soviet Cultural Exchanges 1941–48

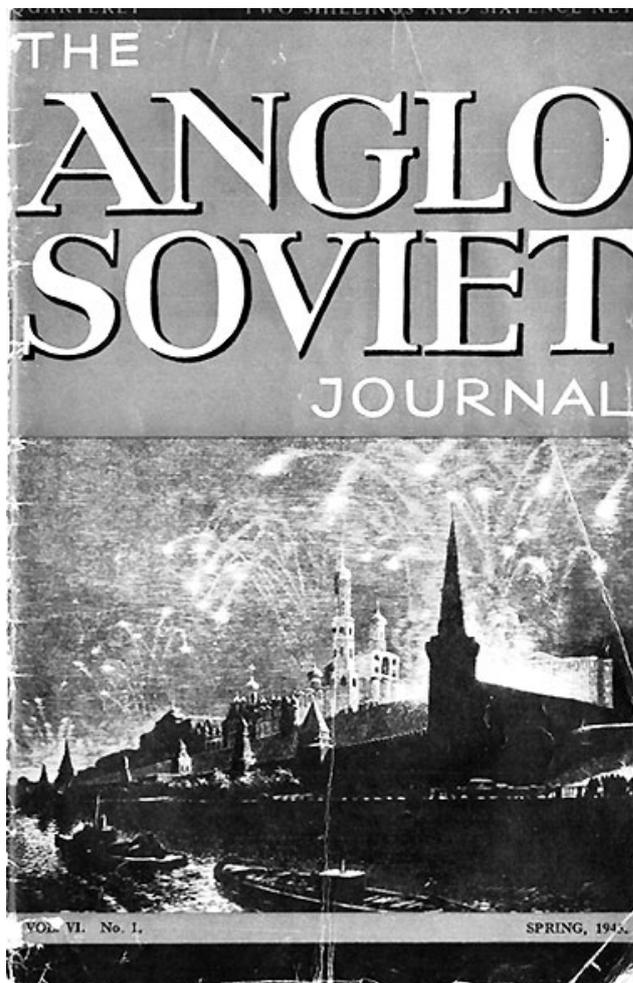
This exhibition commemorated the 65th anniversary of the Allied victory over fascism. Organised in conjunction with the St Petersburg for International Co-operation, the exhibition was shown at two venues: the Russian State National Library in St Petersburg (from 13 April–9 May) and the Diplomatic Academy in Moscow (May). The exhibition included photographic material on British-Soviet cultural exchanges from the SCRSS Archive, a newly digitised version of the SCR Writers Group's 1946 recording of leading British poets reading their work in tribute to their wartime Soviet ally, and a visual presentation of the history of the Soviet War Memorial in London. The exhibition images were also displayed in the Boris Yeltsin Presidential Library's digital archive in St Petersburg. Jean Turner (Hon Secretary) and Christine Lindey (Council) took the exhibition out and attended the opening in St Petersburg, where Christine also gave a lecture on *British Responses to Soviet Art in the 1940s* at St Petersburg State University (*Christine will be repeating her lecture at the SCRSS in October – see Events below*).

SCRSS Fourth Russian Language Seminar, April 2010

The seminar was attended by 26 participants, including teachers, translators, interpreters, graduates and independent students of Russian. The seminar was taught by two lecturers from St Petersburg State University, Vadim Golubev of the Faculty of Journalism and Nataliya Rogozhina of the Faculty of Philology. The feedback from participants was very positive and we hope to continue this initiative, subject to negotiations with the St Petersburg Committee for External Affairs, the St Petersburg Association for International Co-operation, St Petersburg State University and the International Association of Teachers of Russian Language & Culture who have supported all four seminars to date.

It was noted that SCRSS Hon Secretary Jean Turner and Vice Chair Philip Matthews had been awarded medals by the Russian

Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their contribution to international co-operation, in particular through the Soviet Memorial Trust Fund (see page 8).



Cover of the Society's *Anglo-Soviet Journal* celebrating the Allied Victory (Spring 1945)

Note: Members who were unable to attend the AGM may request an electronic copy of the Annual Report by email. If you wish to receive a copy, please email the SCRSS on ruslibrary@scrss.org.uk.

Email Updates

The SCRSS sends out regular email round-ups of our own and other Russian-related events, news and requests. If you would like to be on our email mailing list – or if you are already on but would like to continue receiving updates – please confirm your current email address to the SCRSS on ruslibrary@scrss.org.uk.

Events

Friday 11 June 7pm

Film: The Young Guard (Part 2)

Based on the novel by Fadayev, the film is about a partisan group of young boys and girls who fought the Nazis during the occupation of their small Donbas mining town in 1941–42. Directed by Sergei Gerasimov, USSR, 1947. 84 mins, black/white, English sub-titles.

Monday 14 June 6.30pm

Event: Brest Fortress Exhibition Launch

Launch event at SCRSS premises for the exhibition from Belarus, with a lecture by Russell Porter. For exhibition details, see entry below.

Tuesday 15 June – Friday 25 June

Exhibition: Brest Fortress

The exhibition explores the history of the Brest Fortress and is compiled from material held in the Brest Museum, Belarus. Opening times: Monday–Friday 11am–5pm; Saturday 19 June 11am–3pm. See also the related film show *The Immortal Garrison* on 23 July.



Returning home, 1945 (SCRSS Photo Library)

Friday 23 July 7pm

Film: The Immortal Garrison

The film tells the story of the epic defence of the Brest Fortress following the Nazi attack on the USSR in 1941. The Brest region was the Nazis' first point of entry into the USSR. The garrison, their wives and families fought a gallant rearguard action and held the fortress for several weeks behind the German lines. Directed by Z Agranenko.

chief cameraman and assistant director Eduard Tisse, Mosfilm, USSR, 1956, 96 mins, black/white, English sub-titles. See also the related exhibition *Brest Fortress* at the SCRSS from 15 – 25 June (above).

Friday 3 September 7pm

Film: The Rainbow

This wartime classic is based on the novel by Wanda Vassilyevskaya. It tells the story of a small Ukrainian village under Nazi occupation during World War II. Directed by Mark Donskoi, USSR, 1944, 85 mins, black/white, English sub-titles.

Friday 24 September 7pm

Lecture: Skryabin: Silver Age, Soviet Era, Present Day

By Simon Nicholls. Aleksandr Skryabin (1871–1915) was a composer and pianist of genius, a contemporary and colleague of Rachmaninov who preferred the company of poets and philosophers to that of other musicians. Skryabin's philosophy and its relation to his music caused controversy during the composer's lifetime and the Soviet era, and is still the subject of investigation. His orchestral music is a focus of this year's Promenade concert season in London, clear evidence of the music's power of survival through radically differing eras. Simon Nicholls is a pianist and teacher, has made regular visits to Russia to research the music, and in 2007 was invited to give a talk and masterclass on the composer's piano music at the State Memorial Museum of AN Skryabin. In this lecture he will look at reactions to Skryabin over the last 95 years and give musical illustrations.

Friday 15 October 7pm

Illustrated Lecture: British Responses to Soviet Art in the 1940s

By Christine Lindey. Christine is an art historian and lecturer. Her publications include *Art in the Cold War* (1990) and *Keywords in Nineteenth Century Art* (2006).

Events take place at the SCRSS, 320 Brixton Road, London SW9, unless otherwise stated. Admission fees for films and lectures: £3.00 (SCRSS members), £5.00 (non-members). Other events: as indicated.

Soviet Memorial Trust Fund News

Victory Day: 9 May 2010

Well over 500 people attended the 65th anniversary ceremony at the Soviet War Memorial on 9 May.



Flowers at the Soviet War Memorial, 9 May 2010
(acknowledgements to Owen Liddel)

The turnout of veterans from the UK was especially welcome, given that many of their comrades were travelling to various parts of Europe to mark VE Day where they had fought. Those abroad included a large group of Russian Arctic Convoy veterans who went to St Petersburg, Murmansk and Archangel over the anniversary period. The Mayor of Southwark, local MP Simon Hughes, assembled diplomats from the CIS countries and long-term supporters of the Memorial were joined by representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church and a large number of community organisations representing Russians living in the UK. The Act of Remembrance was followed by the now traditional Victory Toast in the park close to the Memorial, hosted by the Russian and other CIS embassies in London.

Later in the day Sir Rodric Braithwaite delivered an excellent talk in the Imperial War Museum on his book *Moscow 1941: A City and Its People at War* which was followed by several fascinating short films

from the museum's archives. Once again, the Trust is extremely grateful for the support of the SCRSS and its members both before and during the event. If you are interested in becoming more involved with the work of the SMTF – or simply want to be kept informed – please contact the SMTF Hon Secretary (details below).

There were a number of other anniversary events around the UK. At the Russian Embassy prior to 9 May several ceremonies were organised to award the special Russian 65th Anniversary of Victory medal to British Arctic Convoy veterans. On the day itself, in Manchester (twinned with St Petersburg) a ceremony took place at the city's Cenotaph with the Deputy Lord Mayor and representatives from the Russian Embassy in attendance. Exeter University hosted a day of talks, films and exhibitions. And a major gala concert with the participation of the Alexandrov Red Army Ensemble filled the Royal Albert Hall on 10 May.



Victory Parade, Red Square, Moscow, 1945
(SCRSS Photo Library)

There is video coverage of several of the London events on the Russian Embassy website at www.great-britain.mid.ru. In addition, if you would like to see full coverage of the main Moscow Red Square Parade (without commentary) and other TV reports connected with the Victory anniversary, including interviews with veterans and a series of short archive films, visit Russia Today TV's dedicated website at <http://victory1945.rt.com/>. RIA Novosti's *Our Victory* website at <http://eng.9may.ru/> offers contemporary news reports in English from its predecessor, the Soviet Information Bureau, as well as photos, posters and songs from the war period.

Eric Yates

The Trust was saddened by the loss of Eric Yates, a Trustee since the formation of the SMTF. A 90-year-old veteran of the Arctic convoys, Eric continued to attend meetings of the Trustees and most of the events it organised until very recently. He was often called upon to speak to the media and was always happy to oblige with his memories of his time aboard ship in the treacherous Arctic waters.

Medal Awards

At a ceremony on 29 April 2010 in London Philip Matthews (SMTF Chair) and Jean Turner (SMTF Trustee and former SMTF Hon Secretary) were awarded medals by HE Yuri Fedotov, the Russian Ambassador, on behalf of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for their contribution to international understanding. The award is a rare honour and the Trust congratulates them both at this timely recognition of their work over many years.

Events

Sunday 14 November 12.30pm Remembrance Sunday

The next event at the Soviet War Memorial will mark the UK's Remembrance Sunday. If you are not already on the SMTF mailing

list, and would like to receive information about this and future events involving the SMTF, please send your contact details to: The Hon Secretary, SMTF, c/o 320 Brixton Road, London SW9 6AB. Email: smtf@hotmail.co.uk

Ralph Gibson

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

Reports

St Petersburg Association for International Co-operation By Margarita Mudrak, Chair

The St Petersburg Association for International Co-operation is a unique and influential non-governmental organisation that has established long-term relationships with more than 50 countries to promote business, science and culture. The Association is the successor to the Leningrad Branch of the Union of Soviet Friendship Societies founded in 1958. It has also always been an independent member of the All-Russia Association for International Co-operation, set up in 1925 and celebrating its 85th anniversary later this year. We work actively to promote the image of St Petersburg and Russia abroad and, thus, to bring prospective partners, tourists and investors to Russia.

The Association is based on Liteyny Prospect in central St Petersburg. We are a self-financing organisation, reliant on membership contributions, our own fundraising efforts and sponsorship of some key projects by the St Petersburg Government and other state bodies. We are governed by a 100-strong Board under our President, Natalia Eliseeva, and employ a small, committed team of 12 staff.

The Association embraces 36 friendship societies with foreign countries, as well as over 200 corporate and some 1,500 individual members. Our members represent the whole spectrum of St Petersburg life in the fields of culture, business and education.



Board members and staff of the St Petersburg Association for International Co-operation

The Association is a centre for the activities of a number of international organisations, including Rotary International, Lions International and the English-Speaking Union (ESU). We work in close contact with the St Petersburg Government, in particular with the External Relations Committee, the Culture Committee, the Education Committee, the Legislative Assembly and the Government of the Leningrad region. Collaboration with Rossotrudnichestvo in Moscow provides a broader sphere of contacts, including centres of Russian culture abroad. Our close co-operation with universities and schools, together with support from consulates, diplomatic missions and overseas cultural centres, has raised the status of the Association to a high level. We are always keen to develop long-term co-operation and to establish new contacts with Russian and foreign organisations.

In Britain we enjoy well-established and fruitful co-operation with the SCRSS. We also have long-standing relations with the Manchester–St Petersburg Friendship Society, the St Petersburg Forum (Paisley, Scotland) and the Scotland-Russia Forum, and have recently established contacts with

Pushkin House in London. We have also developed a network of contacts with ESU branches worldwide through the headquarters of the ESU in London.

What makes the Association such a unique and exciting organisation? Our excellent reputation is in large part due to the exceptional choice of educational and cultural programmes that we offer. We play a leading role in promoting people's diplomacy and intercultural communications – our events provide opportunities to interact and, thus, break down barriers and prejudices. Our programmes include international festivals, educational projects, the creative arts and cultural ventures. As such, the Association has become part of an international dialogue of culture in St. Petersburg.

Our *Spirit of Friendship Festivals* have become an important part of our activities – inspirational journeys that celebrate and explore the cultures of Japan, China, England, Ireland and Scotland. Our annual *Days of Scotland* festival in St Petersburg (now in its 39th year) is a good example of our many ongoing projects with Scotland. Each year it includes exhibitions by two contemporary Scottish artists, Pat Kramak and May McMaster, while there is the opportunity for youngsters to win some prestigious awards, including a 2-week stay in Scotland, in the *How Well Do You Know Scotland?*, art and essay competitions.



Jean Turner, SCRSS Hon Secretary, speaks at the opening in St Petersburg of the SCRSS exhibition *Anglo-Soviet Cultural Exchanges 1941–48*

To celebrate this year's 65th anniversary of the Allied Victory in World War II we organised an exhibition with the SCRSS dedicated to British-Soviet cultural co-operation during the war (see *SCRSS News on page 5*). This exhibition has attracted a great deal of attention from the media, city officials, diplomatic missions of foreign countries in St Petersburg and the wider public. We have also welcomed British veterans of the Northern Convoys – members of the Russian Convoy Club – and arranged meetings with Russian war veterans, *Your Past – Our Future* conferences at affiliated schools, memorial ceremonies at the Piskaryov Memorial Cemetery and other events.



Preparations for the SCRSS exhibition *Anglo-Soviet Cultural Exchanges 1941–48* in St Petersburg

The Association continues its tradition of weekly lectures with art historians, politicians and writers, among others, invited to speak. Recently, the SCRSS's Christine Lindey gave an outstanding lecture on the influence of Soviet art on British artists in the 1940s, while Jan Stanbury, an English-language teacher working in St Petersburg, involved members in an exciting discussion on political correctness. Lord Watson of Richmond, Chairman Emeritus of the ESU International Council and Honorary Professor of St Petersburg State University, has also visited to promote the idea of international understanding through the widening use of the English language.

Our experience confirms the importance of personal contacts. As such, we organise one-week overseas family exchanges for some 10–20 adults each year. Exchange countries vary – our most recent exchange was with Anjou in France. We also promote international co-operation by sending members abroad to conferences and other cultural events.

Focusing on our English-language activities, the ESU in London offers annual scholarships to members of the St Petersburg ESU to take part in a number of summer programmes. These include the International Relations Conference in Oxford, the Cultural Seminar at Shakespeare's Globe in London and the Shakespeare Study Course in Stratford-upon-Avon. A number of our active young members with a good knowledge of English have been chosen by the Indian Government Programme to take part in short study programmes at Indian universities.

We also promote the Association at a number of prominent international conferences and forums in both St Petersburg and abroad. We are co-organisers, together with the School of International Relations at St Petersburg State University, of the Russian-American Relations Annual Conference in which American universities participate. We also host annual conferences at the House of Friendship on cultural relations between St Petersburg and the countries of Northern Europe, with participants from our city, other Russian and foreign universities.

The Association works with overseas partners to promote Russian language and culture abroad, for example through the SCRSS Russian Language Seminars in the UK. At home we help our young people improve their English language skills through public speaking and debating events. For example, at our annual Shakespeare Drama Festival schools present their own youthful interpretations of Shakespeare's masterpieces. We are proud that our university student Konstantin Lazutin was a winner in the International

Final of the ESU Public Speaking Competition in London two years ago.

Finally, we run a charity programme in support of St Petersburg orphanages. Events include an annual graduation party – for 9th-grade students before they move on to study at technical colleges – and an annual Christmas party. We are grateful for the sponsorship we receive from the Bank of St Petersburg, the Manchester–St. Petersburg Friendship Society, the Relief of Orphans Foundation (ROOF), the St Petersburg Forum in Paisley, and the Lions, Rotary and Soroptimist Clubs.

The Association has continued its work uninterruptedly for some 52 years and continues to grow in strength. We would be delighted to welcome SCRSS members to our offices. If you are visiting St Petersburg, please come and find us at:

St Petersburg Association for International
Co-operation
60 Liteyny Prospect
St Petersburg 191023
Tel: (++7 812) 719 7986

The London Library

By Sarah Morgan

Nestled in the heart of Piccadilly is The London Library, a book lover's dream offering members open access to over one million books.

Founded in 1841, the Library houses a collection of literature in all major European languages, with Russian proving no exception. Begun by Librarian Robert Harrison in 1854, the Russian Collection has been built upon throughout the Library's history, with particularly noteworthy acquisitions occurring under the librarianship of Charles Hagberg Wright. Hagberg Wright's personal friendships with Gorky and Tolstoy instilled a special devotion to Russia, its culture and its political movements. This resulted in a particularly rich collection of Tolstoy's works

from the 1890s and 1900s, including his banned works, less well-known religious and philosophical works, and a substantial collection of first editions, both in Russian and in translation. Criticism of Tolstoy's literature and thought is also well represented in both Russian and English.

The Library also houses a rare series of pamphlets published by the Free Age Press in Christchurch, a conspicuous section of JF Baddeley's own library on the Caucasus and Central Asia, runs of publications issued by various institutes of the Imperial Academy of the time, and a set of *Russkii biograficheskii slovar'* which, due to the Library's policy of retaining all acquired material, is still available to browse in the Reading Room today.

Building upon these historic links with Russia and the wealth of material that has been amassed over generations, the Library continues an active acquisitions policy of Russian monographs and periodicals. This focuses on contemporary literature and fiction, biographies and historical works, art books, reference works and other cultural studies, with recent donations including Tibor Szamuely's library, Isaiah Berlin's library and Sussex University Library, following the closure of their Russian department.

Membership is open to all and starts from just £33 a month. To find out more about the Russian Collection, please contact Claudia Ricci at claudia.ricci@londonlibrary.co.uk. For more information on membership, contact the membership team on membership@londonlibrary.co.uk or 020 7766 4720.

The London Library is located at 14 St James's Square, London SW1Y 4LG.

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Feature

Business Travel to Russia

By Barry Martin, Managing Director,
The Russia House

In the course of my work I attend many seminars on Russian trade. The running theme through these talks, time and time again, is that business in Russia cannot be done at arm's length. Face-to-face meetings are essential to create trust and show your seriousness in doing business in Russia. Russians set great store by personal relationships. Once a business relationship is in place, you will not find a more loyal partner and he will automatically expect the same of you. Joint visits to the bathhouse, fishing trips, weekends at the dacha and, of course, the traditional 5-hour lunch with numerous toasts in neat vodka to the ladies, children, parents, guests, your two countries and the host for the fine fellow he is – all this can be expected. Anyone serious about doing business will be travelling at least three times a year to Russia. This is not cheap but Russia is a big market with huge returns and it is generally accepted that margins are higher. So go in for the long game and you will be amply rewarded.

You will need a visa – a business visa is recommended. Firstly, make sure before applying that your passport has two spare pages and will be valid for six months after expiry of the visa. The visa procurement is in two parts:

- *Support / invitation:* The Russia House applies for this through the Ministry of the Interior and it takes five days to be approved.
- *Endorsement of the visa into your passport:* the Russian Consulate can process a 'standard' issue visa in six working days or a 'express' issue visa in 36 hours

The 2-page visa form is a very complicated piece of bureaucracy that is a tit for tat for the 26-page form that a Russian in Moscow

has to complete for a British visa. We share this Russian visa form with those other two rogues, the USA and Georgia!

Now please sit down before you read this next piece of information.

The full cost of a standard issue Russian business visa is £330, while an express issue is £436. This covers the support / invitation costs, the consulate fees and administration. You might consider a one-year multi-entry visa: the support process takes longer at four weeks but at £630 is cheaper than two separate single visas. A businessman can also travel on a special purpose tourist visa: the support process takes only two hours and the full procurement cost is £217. This is a concession allowed by the Ministry of the Interior and should only be used where there is not time to obtain business support, the visit is of a research nature or, perhaps, to a seminar or conference. This type of visa should never be used if visiting government offices or areas of a military nature.

Full visa procurement instructions, cost breakdown and forms can be found on our website at www.therussiahouse.co.uk.

Flying to Russia is now fairly comfortable and reasonably economical with five airlines running direct services from London. BMI has two services a day to Moscow, as does Transaero (code sharing with BMI). Aeroflot has two daily services to Moscow with an extra flight on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday. British Airways flies three services a day to Moscow and a daily flight to St Petersburg. Rossiya Airlines has a Saturday service to St Petersburg. Fares vary and change almost daily but budget for £350–450, including taxes. Club Class fares start at £1,500.

Hotel costs have come down slightly in price since the heady days but are still costly. For 5-star hotels you should budget £400–600 per night, for 4-star £250–350 and for 3-star £140–250. New hotels are opening on a regular basis. The secret is to find one that is new to the market and offering good start-up prices – it will not last long.

The old favourite that all travellers moaned about, but still stayed in as it was central and cheap, was the Rossiya Hotel. I was fortunate enough to be at the proud opening of this 2000-room edifice in 1963 and to see it pulled down after only 40 years. It is comforting to know that I outlived the Rossiya Hotel. The land was intended for 10 new hotels but a land ownership row has reduced it to an eyesore building site in full view of the Kremlin on the prestigious Moskva river embankment.

A few tips to finish.

Be aware of public holidays: the Russians have many and take them seriously. For instance, there is (new) New Year, Old New Year and Orthodox Christmas, giving Russians a reason to be off work from 1–15 January. In addition, the 1–2 May holidays and Victory Day on 9 May mean that very little work gets done between these dates, so avoid a trip between 1–10 May. However, on the positive side Russians really appreciate your recognition of their public holidays. Send your Russian colleagues congratulations on Army Day (23 February), International Women's Day (8 March) and May Day (1 May).

Take all the medicines that you may need.

Take cash. Euros are the preferred currency but as the euro is volatile at the moment, Russia may switch back to the dollar. Credit cards work in good restaurants but ATMs can be temperamental.

In winter take a fur hat to cover your ears and thermals to cover your other extremities. Take comfortable shoes: pavements are hard and uneven, and roads are wide.

Study the metro map: traffic is awful but the metro is marvellous. However, to use the metro you must understand the Cyrillic alphabet. The Russia House produces a simple system to help you learn the alphabet in three hours, in fact while you are on the flight.

Udachnovo puteshestviya!

Reviews

Change in Putin's Russia: Power, Money and People By Simon Pirani (Pluto Press, ISBN: 978-0-74532690-0, £17.99)

Simon Pirani's book is an important addition to information about modern Russia. In its opening chapters he gives an intelligent account of the economic causes of the demise of the Soviet Union. The Soviet government, burdened with the heavy cost of the arms race but relying on an increase in oil revenues in the late 1970s, imported consumer goods from the West to improve living standards. With the fall of oil prices in the 1980s, the USSR was left with millions of dollars of debt to Western markets. Gorbachev therefore inherited a major crisis in 1985. Pirani argues that his subsequent attempts to introduce market mechanisms into the economy resulted in its collapse.

Boris Yeltsin, whose coup ousted Gorbachev, was encouraged by Western capital to make the transition to capitalism as rapidly as possible, giving rise to the looting of Soviet assets by some members of the government and new entrepreneurs. By 2000, following a bank crash in 1998, Yeltsin's popularity in Russia was near zero, forcing his handover to Vladimir Putin. However, as Pirani points out, Putin's policy was not to oppose the new class of oligarchs but to tax them and target them for tax avoidance if they opposed his policies. His party, United Russia, aims to re-establish state control over vital industries.

In his final chapters, the author refers to the difficulties experienced by Russian activists in setting up organisations opposed to the wars in Chechnya, neo-liberal attacks on the welfare state and unemployment. However, the author's claim that they will lay a foundation for socialism is naïve: the lack of a united, mass socialist movement in Russia is a major weakness.

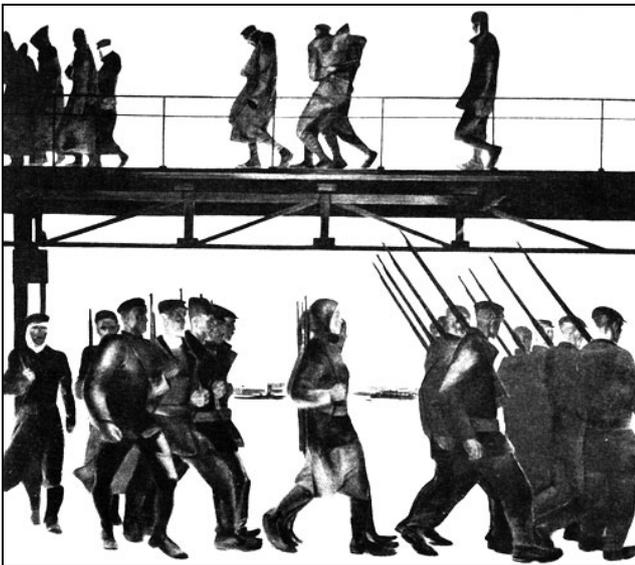
Jean Turner

Alexander Deyneka State Tretyakov Gallery of 20th Century Art, Moscow (17 March – 23 May 2010)

Born in Kursk in 1899, Alexander Deyneka took an active part in the Bolshevik Revolution, joining the Red Army, contributing to art education programmes, and designing campaign trains and ROSTA posters for his home town.

From 1920–25 he attended VkhUTEMAS, the innovatory Moscow art school, where he participated in impassioned debates about the role and form which art should take in the new worker's state.

The communist avant-garde argued for a new visual language to sweep away the art of the bourgeois past. Equally committed to the Revolution, Deyneka and others countered that realism was widely accessible, whereas radical modernism frightened the horses and few liked or understood it. Their art of the people for the people provided the basis for socialist realism formulated in the mid-1930s.



Deyneka's *Defence of Petrograd*, 1927
(SCRSS Library)

But while some returned to tight academic illusionism, Deyneka and others retained the freedom of expression provided by some modernist innovations, while continuing to

create readily legible images. For example, his well-known *Defence of Petrograd*, 1927, breaks with Renaissance perspective, dispenses with illusions of surface textures and simplifies form via a modified Cubism.

Deyneka's visual language became tamer from the 1940s onwards but he continued to celebrate progressive ideas until his death in 1969.

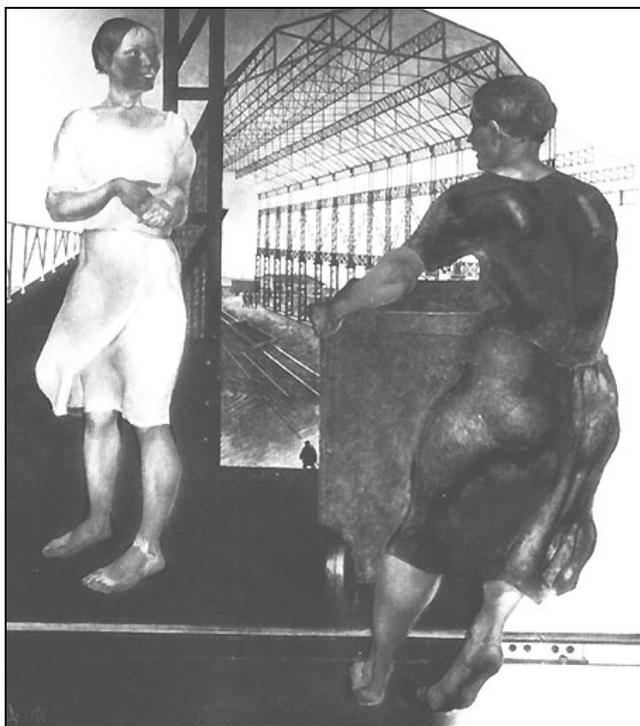
One of the discoveries of this exhibition is the sheer variety of media, genres, scales and processes in which he worked: illustrations, posters, monumental art, sculpture, mosaic and stained glass are displayed, as well as his mainstay oil painting and water colours.

His satirical illustrations for 1920s magazines mock the over-fed bourgeoisie and priesthood. One shows a fat priest making a cow kneel in deference to him, but the rest of the herd has rebelled, wagging their behinds at him as they scatter and he impotently shakes his fist at them.

Deyneka's progressive stance is particularly apparent in his positive portrayals of women which recur throughout his work. With their cropped hair, short skirts and confident stances they break defiantly with the oppressed, demure, mostly illiterate peasant women of tsarist days. Instead they embrace modernity as they read, drive tractors, wield guns, work at precision tools, run, jump and swim with equal intellect and energy as their male comrades.

The myth that Soviet artists were unable to travel is belied as we witness his delight in discovering Paris, Berlin, Rome and New York in 1935. *A Parisienne*, 1935, depicts a pretty woman in red dress and chic red hat, wearing brilliant red lipstick and rouged cheeks against a burgundy wall scratched with graffiti. An orchestration of variations within the single colour red, it possibly also exposes capitalist exploitation since this elegant woman is literally a scarlet woman, heavily made up and alone in a seedy street.

In America and Germany at the height of the Great Depression, Deyneka's social comment was more overt. A sensitive portrait of a young African-American, 1935, shows the thoughtful man as an individual with an inner life, but with the sad gaze of oppressed peoples.



Deyneka's *New Construction*, 1926 (SCRSS Library)

But the majority of Deyneka's works conveyed the optimism and determination of the Soviet people's desire to create a better world. He celebrated collective endeavour and the liberating potential of mechanisation and industrialisation. Aviation symbolised progress and he frequently turned to it, as in his 1938 mosaics for one of the finest Moscow metro stations, the Mayakovskaya.

But his greatest love, and the unifying thread of all his works, was his admiration for the power and beauty of the human body; for him it symbolised the extent of human potential. Frequently focusing on sports persons, he conveyed sport's collective nature and the qualities of endurance, perseverance, self-respect and self-discipline required of athletes.

The works were beautifully displayed in the gallery's spacious rooms. It was heartening to see such a committed Soviet socialist

realist being accorded a serious and comprehensive survey in the 'new' Russia.

Christine Lindey

Sergei Paradjanov Festival London and Bristol (22 February – 9 May 2010)

The films of Sergei Paradjanov are amongst the most extraordinary in all of cinema: their richly coloured images and hypnotic soundtracks bind folk tales to Muslim and Christian traditions – to exquisite, and unique, effect.

However, his complex life and career mean that his films have not always been as easy to see as they should be, so this retrospective was extremely welcome. The festival, with supporting events, was organised by Glaz Multimedia and shown at BFI South Bank and other venues in London, and then in Bristol.

Paradjanov was born in Georgia to Armenian parents in 1924 (the same year as SCRSS) and his Caucasian heritage was the linchpin of his art. He studied film under Dovzhenko and Savchenko, though his early loves of music and dance remained central to his work.

His films are usually based on folk tales or the lives of artists, and on occasion he manages to fuse the two. The season included UK premieres of several early films: *Andriesh* (1954), an expanded version of the lost short *A Moldavian Tale* about a shepherd boy and his pipe rescuing his village from a vengeful magician; *The First Lad* (1958), a charming kolkhoz musical; and *Ukrainian Rhapsody* (1961) about a wartime musical competition, which includes several set-piece performances. *Flower on the Stone* (1962) was his last 'early' film (and his only black and white one) but the story of how a religious cult infiltrates a village could almost be read as an Aesopian criticism of the regime.

But Paradjanov had struggled even to get to this point. In 1948 he had been arrested for

homosexuality (with a KGB officer!) and worked uncredited on films, including Savchenko's wartime drama *The Third Blow*. In his later work his bisexuality became a clear, though not dominant, undercurrent.

Paradjanov had always chafed against authority and, though his early films were conformist, he found socialist realism restrictive. But then he saw a film that changed his life: *Ivan's Childhood*. Tarkovsky became a friend and, for a while, Paradjanov would only talk to people who shared his enthusiasm. It also convinced him that personal work was possible, even under Soviet artistic policy.

In 1964 Paradjanov exploded onto the international scene with the extraordinary, baroquely lyrical *Colours of Our Forgotten Ancestors*. His last Ukrainian film, it retells a Carpathian folk tale about an inter-family feud and a shepherd's search for love. But from now on he found it increasingly hard to pursue his career. *Kiev Frescoes* (1965) was stopped mid-shoot, leaving a tantalising torso that probes a soldier's memories of a wartime romance, but he did manage to complete the short, semi-animated study of the painter *Hakob Hovnatanian* (1967).

His next film, *Sayat Nova* (1968), may be his masterpiece but was certainly his most troubled production. A biopic of the 18th-century Armenian poet Arutiun, it was also a highly stylised lament for the country. Sergei Yutkevich was brought in to re-edit it and, dubbed into Russian, it was released overseas as *The Colour of Pomegranates*. Decades later a different print was discovered and released as the original, though that may be an overstatement and, in any case, Paradjanov apparently didn't mind what has often been presented as Yutkevich's butchery. But it is symptomatic of the problems Paradjanov's films face: made in Caucasian studios, but released overseas in Russian and preserved in archives both at home and in Moscow, the legal and moral rights remain unclear.

Paradjanov again fell into disfavour and again was imprisoned, this time for five

years. Unable to make films, he created hundreds of dolls and richly textured collages. After years of appeals from international artists he was released, but still could not make a feature until 1984's *The Legend of Suram Fortress*. The first film he made in his native Georgia, it is the story of a mythical fortress whose strength depends on a hero's self-sacrifice. The following year he returned to artists' biopics with *Arabesques on a Theme of Pirosmeni*, a short about the famous naive painter.

In 1988 Paradjanov made another study of an artist, *Ashik Kerib*, Lermontov's story of an Azeri wandering minstrel searching for a lost love. Bookending his mature career, Paradjanov dedicated it to Tarkovsky. Sadly, his death cut short the following year's *Confession*.

Fortunately, Paradjanov's films are becoming more easily available on DVD but this season was an invaluable chance to see the films as they should be – on the big screen. To go with it were documentaries, photographic exhibitions, an installation by artist Matt Collinshaw and a lecture at SCRSS. A day-long symposium included contributions from international scholars and friends of the director. It was a fascinating chance to rediscover, and find out more about, a unique artist.

John Riley

Star City: The Future under Communism Nottingham Contemporary (12 February – 18 April 2010)

“Man must at all costs overcome the Earth's gravity and have, in reserve, the space at least of the Solar System. Terrible dangers await mankind on the Earth, all of which suggest that man should look far away into the Cosmos.”

These words of astronautics pioneer Konstantin Tsiolkovsky adorned one of the first rooms of this rather eclectic exhibition held as part of *POLSKA! YEAR*, a joint

initiative by Poland's Ministry of Culture & National Heritage and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was a strange assortment of film and posters of Star City, the USSR's training centre for cosmonauts outside Moscow, and various artists' work reflecting the contrast between the noble communist ideal and the daily reality of life in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.

So there was an installation of sixties-style domestic appliances by Cuban artist Diango Hernández and an assortment of strange and unsettling audio-visual installations such as Micol Assaël's *Elsewhere*, whose harsh, other-worldly sounds echoed from the entrails of a machine emitting sparks and surrounded by water. A film showed Deimantas Narkevicius's alternative ending to Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris*, featuring the original lead actor.

Upbeat posters of the world's first cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin, and first female cosmonaut, Valentina Tereshkova, showed the optimism and confidence of the socialist system during the sixties, when everything, including conquering space, seemed possible. Jane and Louise Wilson's huge video installation on four walls gave a fascinating glimpse into cosmonaut training at Zvyozdny Gorodok (Star City). Spacecraft submerged in enormous tanks of water and cosmonauts being whizzed round at breakneck speed in a chair attached to a huge metal arm contrasted with the tranquillity of the silver birch woods surrounding the training centre.

A film by Otolith showed footage of Valentina Tereshkova landing by parachute in a field after her historic flight and one could not help recapturing for a moment the excitement of those times, well before the collapse of the Soviet socialist system.

The exhibition programme states: "Star City asks if any of the remains of the collectivist future under communism are still relevant now that the global ethos of profit-before-people is being challenged. With our economy rocked by the 'credit crunch' – and alliances of activists formed to fight exploitative labour practices, third world debt

and climate change – will the vision of universal capitalism one day resemble an irrelevant ruin too?"

Kate Clark

Obituary

Noëlle Mann

Noëlle Mann was best known as the founder curator of Goldsmiths' Prokofiev Archive and the firm but diplomatic editor of the Foundation's journal *Three Oranges*, aptly named after his opera. But she was an indefatigable promoter of Russian music in general and her input to a raft of publications, documentaries and events was quite simply essential.

In 2003 Noëlle marked the 50th anniversary of Prokofiev's death with a typically ambitious series of events, capped by a conference in Manchester, attracting academics from throughout the world. Before that she had organised a Rimsky-Korsakov conference that shed fascinating light on that composer.

Having studied music at Goldsmiths, she stayed on to teach. But, though education was central to her life, she had little time for academicism: research should lead to something practical – a revised edition, a book, a performance. When she found some passing references to Prokofiev's ballet *Trapeze*, neglected after its disastrous premiere, her painstaking work led to its reconstruction and performances by English National Ballet.

She also conducted two choirs, Goldsmiths Chamber Choir and her own Kalina, which performed Russian music. She encouraged both groups to produce an amazingly authentic Russian sound.

After leaving Goldsmiths, Noëlle turned to a new task, editing an anthology of Russian choral music. Finding previous editions

surprisingly error strewn, she began corrections so that the collection, to be published by Oxford University Press, will set new standards in accuracy.

Russian music has been robbed of one of its great champions but she has left a phalanx of enthused and informed people to carry on her work.

Noelle Mann (née Pujol). 11 July 1946 – 23 April 2010.

John Riley

From the Russian Press

Housing Fit for Veterans?

Timed to coincide with the 65th anniversary, President Medvedev had announced that all Russian WWII veterans who needed better housing and had registered before 1 March 2005 would be provided with new apartments before 9 May 2010 ('Podarok s ogovorkami', *Argumenty Nedeli*, p. 11, No 17, 6.5.2010). Thirty-three regions had already fulfilled their obligations, among them Moscow and the Komi Republic, while the remainder promised to do so by the end of May. At the same time, the waiting list was growing rapidly, following a presidential decree at the end of 2009 that lifted the deadline on registration. The Minister for Regional Development, Victor Basargin, estimated that the waiting list for veterans could rise to 140,000 by the end of the year, while an increase in federal subsidy was unlikely due to the economic crisis. In addition, many veterans were ineligible since only those with less than 18 square metres' living space per person qualified to join the waiting list. This affected veterans living in large, but dilapidated accommodation. Another rule disqualified veterans whose living space had been reduced by registering other tenants in their homes for more than five years (for example, children and grandchildren). The regions had also introduced their own

restrictions to try to limit the waiting list. For example, in St Petersburg only veterans who had lived in the city for more than 10 years were eligible for new housing.

Looming Pensions Crisis

At 1 January 2010 the average pension in Russia was more than 7,000 roubles, while the minimum wage was only 4,300 roubles ('Pensionnyi perekos', *Argumenty Nedeli*, p. 10, No 8, 4.3.2010). Over the past two years pensions had increased more than two fold and the country now spent more than 10% of GDP on pensions. In contrast, the minimum wage had not increased since late 2008, while spending on occupational health and safety, for example, had remained static. With Duma elections next year and presidential elections in two years' time, some analysts saw this focus on pensioners as an electoral ploy. However, the ageing population threatened a pensions crisis. Currently the ratio of pensioners to working adults was 2:3, but by 2020 it was estimated that numbers would equalise. Potential solutions included transferring some responsibility for pensions provision to employers and reviewing those special categories of pension inherited from the Soviet period (for example, early retirement for workers employed in dangerous jobs or in the Far North, as well as long service pensions for doctors, teachers and actors). A third of the 2.5 million new pensioners each year were taking early retirement.

Summarised and translated by Diana Turner

Listings

Courses

International Journalism Programmes at St Petersburg State University

International Service, Faculty of Journalism, St Petersburg State University, Room 301, 26 1st Line V.O., St Petersburg 199004, Russia. Contact: Dr Vadim Golubev, Head,

International Service, Tel: (+7-812) 328 4648, Email: vadimgol@gmail.com, Web: <http://eng.jf.pu.ru>

The faculty offers an International Non-Degree Programme *Journalism, PR and Advertising in Russia*, aimed at overseas students attending St Petersburg University. All courses are taught in English. For more information on course outlines, timetables, costs and how to apply, refer to the faculty website or contact Dr Vadim Golubev.

Music

Alan Bush Music Trust CD Appeal

Alan Bush Music Trust, Honorary Secretary: Dr Rachel O'Higgins, 7 Harding Way, Histon, Cambridge CB24 9JH, Tel: 01223 232659, Email: info@alanbushtrust.org.uk, Web: www.alanbushtrust.org.uk

The Trust has launched an appeal to raise £4,000 for a new CD of Alan Bush's *Concert Suite for Cello and Orchestra*, Op. 37 (1952), along with two other works by York Bowen and Havergal Brian. The recording session with the BBC Concert Orchestra is arranged for September 2010 and the CD will be issued by Dutton Epoch in late 2010 / early 2011. The works will be performed by the internationally celebrated cellist Raphael Wallfisch. The first broadcast performance of the *Concert Suite* was in 1953, followed by a Proms performance in 1956, but it has not been performed since. This is a wonderful opportunity to revive the piece and extend public knowledge of Alan Bush's orchestral work. Contact the Alan Bush Music Trust to make a donation and for more information. The Trust will send a free copy of the CD to anyone who sends a donation of at least £20.

Alan Bush was a former Vice-President of the SCRSS.

News and Current Affairs

Moscow News Online

For anyone of a certain age the weekly English-language newspaper *Moscow News* will be a familiar name. It is now being published again, by RIA Novosti, and can be

viewed on its standard website at www.mn.ru or, if you prefer to browse by 'turning the pages' of the newspaper onscreen, a 'smart' edition is now viewable at <http://smart.mn.ru/epaper/viewer.aspx>. Viewing is free but users should register to access the smart edition and receive email alerts as each issue is published (Tuesdays and Fridays). Alerts include a summary of each issue's contents with links to articles.

Russia Today

This English-language satellite TV station is now available on the UK Freeview digital TV platform (Channel 85), broadcasting from 06.00–08.00 and from 18.00–22.00 daily. The station presents a broad spectrum of programming – from politics and economics, to culture, geography and history. The service is produced in Moscow but has correspondents around the world, including the UK, and provides an alternative perspective on news and current affairs. Items broadcast by the station can also be viewed on its website www.rt.com.

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