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Feature

The New Soviet Man at War: Culture and the Construction of the Ideal Soldier, 1941–45

By Claire McCallum

The image of the archetypal Soviet soldier is one that is very familiar to us, immortalised by the countless wartime posters that presented his muscular physique, handsome features and unflinching bravery to both a foreign and domestic audience. While the poster was a key medium for the state in articulating exactly what it expected from its military men, it was not the only means the Stalinist regime had at its disposal during the Great Patriotic War for shaping the behaviour and attitude of its armed forces. When we look at the newspapers aimed specifically at a military readership, we find many of the same themes and concerns that were voiced through the wartime poster echoed in the articles published on their pages. However,

perhaps more surprisingly, we also find a significant emphasis on what can be broadly thought of as cultural material – that is, cultural products themselves (poems, plays, stories, etc), details of cultural atrocities committed by the enemy, and articles on various historical events or people, which often had a cultural focus. Drawing on material



Drawing by V Bogatkin in *Годы войны – The War Years* (SCRSS Library)

published in one newspaper, *Krasnaia zvezda* (Red Star), the official paper of the Commissariat of Defence, this short article will offer some thoughts on why the dissemination of culture was so important during the war and what role this material played in creating the ideal Soviet soldier.¹

Founded in 1924, *Krasnaia zvezda* was a centrally issued newspaper with five editions each week – a frequency that was maintained throughout the entire war despite the desperate paper shortages in the Soviet Union by 1943 – and although official circulation figures for the paper are still classified, it can be assumed that both the number of copies printed and the number of people reading the paper increased significantly during the war years.² As one of the main channels for communicating with the armed forces *en masse* then, what was printed on the pages of this newspaper can tell us a great deal about how the war was presented to those who were fighting it and how the state continued to socialise and shape its population, even during this time of crisis. In some respects, what we find in *Krasnaia zvezda* is in line with what we find in other forms of media produced during the war. For example, although he is a continual textual presence, Stalin only appears visually in the paper a few times each year – usually around the anniversaries of the death of Lenin and the October Revolution, and the celebrations of May Day and his birthday in December, and most frequently in the form of a sketched portrait rather than a contemporary photograph. This trend has been seen as indicative of how the idea of fighting for Stalin and the state was replaced by a more traditionally patriotic rhetoric of fighting for the motherland and family, at least until victory at the Battle of Stalingrad was assured.³ We also find extensive coverage of the atrocities being carried out by the enemy, something that was not confined to military publications but was also an important part of how the war was presented to the civilian population, with newspapers such as *Izvestiia* and *Pravda* also containing coverage of the same atrocities, often using the same images and, indeed, the same page layout, as *Krasnaia zvezda*.⁴

However, there are aspects of what we find in *Krasnaia zvezda* that are perhaps more unexpected, particularly when we consider the paper's intended readership. One of the most striking things is the amount of what we might think of as 'cultural content' in the

paper – that is, the number of short stories, plays, and poems published in each issue. Although we associate some of the most impassioned and inflammatory writing of the war with correspondents such as Ilya Ehrenberg and Konstantin Simonov, both of whom wrote extensively for *Krasnaia zvezda*, the features published by the paper were far more diverse than simply being designed to instil hatred for the enemy in the Soviet soldier. Ideas about family relationships, about love for the motherland, about the qualities of Soviet heroism, and about the sacrifice that was entailed in protecting both home and country, proliferated in the cultural offerings that ran alongside such prominent articles and the ubiquitous military orders and updates.

In part we can see the incorporation of such material as indicative of the total mobilisation of Soviet society for the war effort. This obviously included cultural production and to some extent we could



Captain Zverev's sappers reading the newspaper, 1945. Sketch by Il'ya Krichevsky in *По дорогам войны* – Along the Roads of War (SCRSS Library)

attribute the quantity of material published to the need to engage, educate and entertain the soldiery in the rest between battles in an ideologically appropriate manner, as reading a paper such as *Krasnaia zvezda* would have been viewed as a key part of how these men should pass their time. However, this kind of cultural production was coupled with frequent articles on leading cultural and historical figures, from the obvious candidates of Aleksandr Suvorov and

Mikhail Kutuzov – the commander of the army under Catherine the Great and a key figure in the victory of 1812, respectively – to the less obviously didactic figures of the eighteenth-century polymath and writer Mikhail Lomonosov, the great nineteenth-century artist Ilya Repin and the Revolutionary poet Vladimir Mayakovsky. Taken together then, this interest in culture, both past and present, served to construct an ideal military man who was characterised as much by his *kul'turnost'* ('culturedness') and intelligence as he was by his physical capabilities.⁵

Of course, the idea that the Soviet citizen was an educated and thinking being was not an invention of the war years, but it is an idea that took on a new significance during a period marked by violence and barbarism. In addition to the human toll, the cultural cost of the war was consistently referred to in the paper – as it was elsewhere – with a particular focus on the destruction of Leo Tolstoy's estate at Iasnaya Poliana and Tchaikovsky's house-museum at Klin, both of which warranted lengthy articles complete with photographs detailing the devastation. This coverage only served to make the dichotomy between the supposedly brutal and uncivilised Nazi invaders and those defending both the (predominantly) Russian cultural heritage and the Soviet way of life even more pronounced. In contrast to the German soldier, whose violation of women and children and violation of the legacies of Tolstoy, Tchaikovsky and Gogol were seen as almost equally as heinous, the Soviet soldier was repeatedly presented as fighting not simply for the protection of his own country but for the protection of the whole of civilisation.⁶

More than being just a useful rhetorical position to take in presenting the Soviet soldier as the complete opposite to his Nazi counterpart though, culture also had an important symbolic role. A soldier often occupies a rather ambiguous place within a society as a man who lives outside the parameters of social norms, and as an individual who has potentially carried out acts of unspeakable violence in the name of national or personal preservation. In this

respect we can see the use of culture as a way of tethering the military man to Soviet society more generally, for the cultured man was intrinsically tied to notions of civilisation and civility, regardless of what current circumstances might demand of him. Indeed,



Reading the newspaper in a trench near Berlin, 1945. Sketch by Ilya Krichevsky in *По дорогам войны* – Along the Roads of War (SCRSS Library)

this association of the military man with cultured behaviour remained a key part of how the soldier was conceptualised even after the end of the war, as artists in particular grappled with the issue of how to represent the heroism of the soldier – by its very nature rooted in violence – now that the fighting was over and these men were once again part of civilian society.

Just from this brief discussion then, we can see that *Krasnaia zvezda* did far more during the war than simply keep soldiers up to date with the latest developments from the various fronts, or abreast of the latest *ukaz* issued by Comrade Stalin; even in the darkest days of the war, the desire to educate and socialise its readership through the articles it published and the cultural outputs it included was never abandoned. While in many ways the vision and rhetoric of the war was very much in line with what we find in other newspapers, the inclusion of such an array of cultural items and articles on key cultural figures far outstripped those we see in other such publications, signifying

the dual function of the military paper to be both a source of news and suitable entertainment. It also hints at a more symbolic need for the soldier to retain his ties to civilised society during a period of extreme violence and whilst fighting an enemy who was presented as a vandal and barbarian. In this respect culture played an important role in not only articulating exactly what these men were fighting for but also in defining what kind of soldier they should be.

Dr Claire McCallum is a Lecturer in Modern European History at the University of Exeter, where she has taught since completing her PhD in 2011. Her current research examines the changing visual representation of the ideal Soviet man in the two decades following the end of the Second World War. The book based on this work is forthcoming.

Footnotes

¹ Despite there being several hundred thousand women who served on the front lines during the Great Patriotic War, they were a minimal visual presence on the pages of *Krasnaia zvezda*. The coverage of the death of Marina Raskova, a renowned and highly influential aviator, in January 1943 was a rare exception to this. For more on the role of women in the Soviet military, see Anna Krylova, *Soviet Women in Combat: A History of Violence on the Eastern Front* (Cambridge, 2010).

² Karol Berkhoff, *The Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda during World War II* (New York, 2012), p 17. In addition to *Krasnaia zvezda*, the other key publication was *Krasny flot*, the paper of the Soviet Navy, which published around 300 issues each year.

³ Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin!: Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton, 1999), especially pp 161–87.

⁴ See, for example, the coverage of the atrocities committed in the village of Vertyachiy (near Stalingrad), published in *Pravda* on 21 December 1942 and in

Krasnaia zvezda on 22 December, using exactly the same photographs and presented in exactly the same way on the page.

⁵ In the Soviet case, *kul'turnost'* could refer to a whole range of behaviours, from brushing your teeth and eating with a knife and fork to having knowledge of classical works of literature. For more information, see Vadim Volkov, 'The Concept of *Kul'turnost'*: Notes on the Stalinist Civilizing Process' in Sheila Fitzpatrick (ed) *Stalinism: New Directions* (London, 2000), pp 210–30.

⁶ This ideal was, of course, subverted by Nazi propaganda, for example as we see in Goebbels' article 'The So-Called Russian Soul' (July, 1942).

Note: Picture research for *SCRSS Digest* by John Cunningham, SCRSS Library Assistant

SCRSS News

SCRSS AGM 2015

The Society's AGM took place on 16 May 2015. In addition to discussing the Annual Report and Financial Statement, several members of the existing Council were re-elected and two members were elected for the first time – Michael Costello and Leonard Weiss.

Thus, the new list of the Society's Honorary Officers, Executive Committee (EC) and Council members is as follows. *Honorary Officers:* Professor William Bowring (President); Robert Chandler, Professor Robert Davies, Dr Kate Hudson, Dr David Lane, Dr Rachel O'Higgins and Robert Wareing (Vice-Presidents). Honorary Officers are entitled to attend and speak at Council meetings. *EC:* John Riley (Chair), Philip Matthews (Vice-Chair), Charles Stewart (Vice-Chair), Ralph Gibson (Hon Secretary), Jean Turner (Hon Treasurer), Christine Lindey (Visual Arts Officer), Kate Clark. EC members are also Council

members. *Council:* Mel Bach, Christine Barnard, Michael Costello, Andrew Jameson, Diana Turner, Leonard Weiss, Fiona Wright.



Hon Secretary Ralph Gibson (left) and Chair John Riley (right) at the SCRSS AGM on 16 May 2015

The SCRSS Council meets regularly to take decisions on the activities and management of the Society; it can also discuss ideas and suggestions from the membership between AGMs. One key part of the discussion at this year's AGM was the need to retain existing and recruit new members, if the Society is to thrive in the future. All members are encouraged to promote the Society to interested individuals, institutions and organisations. The latter can spread the word among their own members and affiliate to the SCRSS if desired. It is clear that many students, for example, who could benefit from the resources available at the centre, are simply unaware of our existence.

The Annual Report and Financial Statement approved at the AGM were emailed to everyone on the SCRSS Members list on 19 May 2015. If you did not receive the email or

would like a paper copy sent by post, please contact the Hon Secretary.

Michael Jones on *After Hitler*

In March 2015 historian Dr Michael Jones delivered a fascinating and well attended lecture relating to his new book *After Hitler: The Last Days of the Second World War in Europe* (reviewed on page 13 of this issue). This was a joint event with the Soviet Memorial Trust Fund to mark the 70th Anniversary of the Allied Victory over Fascism. Dr Jones discussed the actions of all sides in the final days of the war, following Hitler's suicide on 30 April, in particular the attempts by Hitler's successor Admiral Doenitz to divide the Allies. The significance of particular decisions and actions at this crucial phase were highlighted, including the signing of a surrender document with the Nazis on 7 May without a senior Soviet representative present. Such actions were bound to affect post-war relations. This fresh and balanced perspective on the Soviet contribution to victory was welcomed by everyone present. A key feature of all Dr Jones's work on the Red Army in World War II is the power of eyewitness testimony, based on his interviews with Soviet veterans, and this was demonstrated by readings from his book. The speaker brought matters right up to date by indicating that a commitment to attend the Victory Day parade in Moscow by senior politicians from the Allied nations, though unlikely to happen, would be a very positive step towards healing some of the current tensions.

Yuri's Night

The Society once again marked the anniversary of the first human space flight – by Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin on 12 April 1961 – with a screening of the 2013 film *Gagarin: First in Space*. The event was promoted jointly with the British Interplanetary Society, also based in the London Borough of Lambeth, and brought several of its members to the centre for the first time. The *Yuri's Night* website

(<https://yurisnight.net/>) unites hundreds of organisations around the world with the aim of marking the historic date on or near 12 April each year. The SCRSS aims to continue to participate, given our direct connection: Yuri Gagarin visited the Society's premises in Kensington Square during his stay in the UK in July 1961. An exhibition of photos from that day, together with space-related book covers, posters, stamps and illustrations, was mounted for the event and remains on display to members and visitors on weekdays until late June (by appointment).

SCRSS Seminars

The Society hopes to run its popular Russian History Seminar again in the autumn. Details will be emailed out as soon as available and included in the next issue of the *SCRSS Digest*. Although we were unable to run our regular Russian Language Seminar this year, the SCRSS Council is looking at proposals for 2016. Please contact the Hon Secretary if you would like to be kept up to date with developments.

Volunteering



The team working on the SCRSS art collection
Left to right: John Cunningham (SCRSS staff), Mel Bach (SCRSS Council), Claire Weiss and Bethany Aylward (library volunteers)

At the recent AGM there were encouraging signs of increased interest in volunteering. Two more members have committed recently to regular work on listing the library's art collection, joining Claire Weiss

on this epic undertaking, while another member has offered his services to re-shelve loaned books. There are many different ways members can make a contribution – helping out prior to and during events, offering to staff the reception once a month, etc. Such practical support would be of enormous help to our existing corps of volunteers, which includes members of SCRSS Council and our sole part-time paid member of staff, John Cunningham.

Join Our e-Newsletter List

The SCRSS is making increased use of email to communicate with members between issues of the *SCRSS Digest*. Our regular e-newsletter includes news about the Society's own activities, details of other relevant events and special deals to members from other organisations. To ensure we have your up-to-date email address, email ruslibrary@scrss.org.uk with your name in the subject line and we will check and add / update your details.

Membership Renewal

If your membership is due for renewal in the period up to the end of August 2015, you will find a renewal slip enclosed with this *SCRSS Digest*. The Society values and relies on your continuing membership, so please renew promptly and consider making a donation in addition to your membership fee. Please note: if you pay by Bankers / Standing Order, please check that the amount payable to the SCRSS is still correct – current membership fees are listed on the SCRSS website at www.scrss.org.uk/membership.htm.

Help Us with Gift Aid

If you are a UK taxpayer, please make sure we have a completed Gift Aid form from you. The Gift Aid scheme allows the Society to claim 25 pence for every pound donated over and above the membership fee, now and for as long as you are eligible. Download the form from the SCRSS website

at www.scrss.org.uk/membership.htm or ask us to post you a copy. Gift Aid is an extremely valuable source of income for the Society.

Next Events

Saturday 4 July, 2–5.30pm Event: SCRSS Summer Open Day

Come and join us for the afternoon – and bring a friend! Admission to this event is free of charge for both SCRSS members and visitors. Light refreshments available.

2–4pm:

Exhibition: Reproductions of drawings by Soviet war artists from the SCRSS art collection, to mark the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II

Bookstall: surplus stock from the SCRSS library at bargain prices

15-minute library tours: at 2.45pm and 3.15pm, each highlighting one special section of the SCRSS library collections

4pm: Film: *Man with a Movie Camera* (dir Dziga Vertov, 1929, USSR, b/w, 68 mins, silent with musical score). Acclaimed Soviet director Dziga Vertov's experimental silent documentary film is famous for its extraordinary range of innovative cinematic techniques. In a rollercoaster of a ride, the audience experiences a day in the life of a Soviet city in the late 1920s – with a montage of people, streets and machinery, from dawn to dusk, at work and at play. The film came out in 1929, five years after the foundation of the SCRSS. It was named best documentary film of all time by *Sight and Sound* in 2014.

5.30pm: Doors close

Events take place at the SCRSS, 320 Brixton Road, London SW9 6AB, unless otherwise stated. Up-to-date details for all events are available on the SCRSS website at www.scrss.org.uk/cinemaevents.htm. Please note: dogs are not permitted on SCRSS premises, with the exception of guide dogs.

Soviet Memorial Trust Fund News

Victory Day 2015: 70th Anniversary Celebrations

By Ralph Gibson

On 9 May the Soviet Memorial Trust Fund (SMTF) organised an Act of Remembrance at the Soviet War Memorial that attracted a record number of organisations laying wreaths, as well as hundreds of spectators.



Aerial view of Victory Day 2015 at the Soviet War Memorial, London (photo by SMTF / Darryl Bevan)

Opening the ceremony, SMTF Chair Philip Matthews welcomed the dignitaries, veterans, diplomats and other participants gathered around the Memorial, located in the Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park adjacent to the Imperial War Museum in London.

The Mayor of Southwark, Cllr Sunil Chopra, reminded everyone of the deep debt of gratitude owed to the twenty-seven million Soviet civilians and military personnel who died in the Second World War.

Admiral Lord West referred to the gallantry, courage and sacrifice of the Soviet people, and said that, although the Royal Navy might have destroyed much of the German Navy, victory would have been impossible without the decisive role of the Soviet (Red)

Army that effectively “ripped the guts out of the German war machine”.

The Rt Hon Simon Hughes thanked those who had stood up and opposed the extreme nationalism, racism and intolerance that were hallmarks of the Fascist governments of Germany and Italy at that time. He expressed the hope that in the future “the Europe we build ... is one where we never threaten our neighbours but always support them and love them and care for them. We want an end to wars in Europe forever.”

HE Alexander Yakovenko, the Russian Ambassador, concluded the speeches. “Nobody doubts the decisive contribution of the peoples of the Soviet Union to the defeat of Nazi Germany. We shouldn’t forget what was at stake. Professor Geoffrey Roberts rightly wrote in the *Financial Times* that ‘the Second World War was far more than a geopolitical contest. It was a struggle for the future of Europe, and European civilisation was saved from Hitler and Nazi barbarism by the colossal sacrifices of the Soviet people and the Red Army’.

“World War Two taught us lessons that are relevant today. Seventy years after the Great Victory we observe attempts to rewrite history to suit some geopolitical conjuncture of today, to revive Nazi and nationalistic ideologies, racial intolerance, to sow the seeds of conflicts and international tensions.

“One of the lessons is that the victory could only be achieved by the joint efforts of all who participated in the struggle against Nazism. We will always remember our allies – Great Britain, the United States, France and other countries who fought in the anti-Hitlerite coalition, the German and Italian resistance. We remember and honour all Europeans who paid a high price to free mankind from Nazism.

“Today we pay tribute to veterans who went through all the hardships of war towards the long-awaited victory. Years will pass but the memory of your heroic feat will remain

forever in the hearts of succeeding generations.

“I cannot stress enough the significance of the Soviet War Memorial that has become a sacred place where British and former USSR citizens, especially veterans, can lay flowers to honour the memory of those who gave their lives for their countries during the Second World War. It has now been sixteen years since the unveiling of the Memorial. I am sure that the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Great Victory will become another milestone in the history of the Memorial.



Soviet veterans from Russia and Latvia pay their respects to fallen comrades at the Soviet War Memorial, London, 9 May 2015 (photo by Karl Weiss)

“I would like to thank all the members of the Soviet Memorial Trust Fund, and especially its Chairman Phillip Matthews and its Secretary Ralph Gibson for their hard work dedicated to organisation of the annual Victory Day ceremony and other events.”

The Ambassador drew attention to a British oak tree nearby which had been planted on behalf of Ambassadors of the CIS countries to symbolise the importance of the wartime alliance and their gratitude to the British veterans, including those who went on the Arctic Convoys, whose sacrifice had helped bring VE Day closer. On behalf of the Russian President, the Ambassador then went on to present Russian jubilee medals commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the Victory to a group of Soviet veterans living in the UK and to British Arctic Convoy veterans.

Prior to the wreath-laying the Russian Orthodox Archbishop Elisey of Sourozh led prayers. Deputy Lieutenant for Southwark, Jenny Bianco, once again laid the first wreath, followed by the speakers mentioned above, as well as Commander Nicholas Wheeler RN on behalf of the UK Ministry of Defence, newly elected local MP Cllr Neil Coyle and the Mayor of Lambeth. Ambassadors and diplomats from countries of the former USSR and, for the first time, the DPRK, preceded a significant group of Soviet veterans from Russia and Latvia, in London especially for the anniversary weekend, who laid a wreath on behalf of all their comrades, followed by Arctic Convoy and other veterans' organisations. Representatives from some fifty other organisations then laid their tributes, including the SCRSS, political groups, Russian community organisations, the nearby London Nautical School and Sea Cadets. The wreath-laying was concluded by students from the Russian Embassy School who laid their flowers while their colleague Alsinia Elovik sang the well-known song *Do the Russians Want War?* with lyrics by Yevgeny Yevtushenko.

The haunting sounds of the Last Post, and exhortation by Stanley Ballard from the Russian Convoy Club, led into the two minute silence.

Concluding the ceremony, Philip Matthews reminded everyone of the history of the creation of the Memorial, and the significant role played by the SCRSS, a role which continued to the present day. He specifically

mentioned Jean Turner, former Hon Secretary of both the SCRSS and SMTF, who stood up and was warmly acknowledged by the crowd.



Arctic Convoy veteran Stanley Ballard receives his 70th Anniversary of Victory medal from the Russian Ambassador at the Soviet War Memorial, London, 9 May 2015 (photo by Karl Weiss)

Photos and a full video of the ceremony are available via a link on the local news website www.london-se1.co.uk/news/view/8249. Further coverage can be found on the Russian Embassy website (www.rusemb.org.uk), where there is also information about the many other events commemorating the 70th anniversary and a link to a complete recording of the Red Square parade in Moscow.

The Soviet War Memorial, dedicated to the 27 million Soviet men and women who lost their lives during the fight against fascism in 1941–45, is located in the Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park, Lambeth Road, Southwark, London SE1 (adjacent to the Imperial War Museum). The SCRSS is a founder member of the Soviet Memorial Trust Fund. For information on future events, email smtf@hotmail.co.uk or visit the SCRSS website.

Feature

Gay Rights in Russia

By Bill Bowring

Homosexuality is not a criminal offence in Russia – since 1993. In 1999 it ceased to be regarded as a mental illness. Indeed, Russian history has many famous homosexuals – the poet Alexei Apukhtin; Sergei Diaghilev, the founder of the Ballets Russes; and, of course, the composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. The younger brother of Tsar Alexander III, Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich Romanov, was famous for his homosexual exploits while serving as Governor of Moscow from 1891 to 1905.

Homosexuality was legalised following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. But in 1933, under Stalin, Article 121 of the Criminal Code made male homosexuality a crime punishable by up to five years of imprisonment with hard labour. This anti-gay law, like the prohibition of abortion at the same time, was strongly supported by the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), which began to revive following the enactment of the 1936 USSR Constitution, Article 124 of which declared freedom of religion. The Church was fully rehabilitated by Stalin in 1943 to play a decisive role in the Great Patriotic War. The ROC is to this day a fierce opponent of gay rights.

In 2006 gay activists attempted to organise the first Gay Pride march in Moscow, but this was banned by the Moscow city authorities and marchers were forcibly dispersed. Applications to hold a Gay Pride march in Moscow have been rejected every year since. On 21 May 2015 the city once again rejected an application to hold a march on 30 May 2015. RIA Novosti news agency quoted the Mayor's spokesman Alexey Mayorov as having said "[w]e have warned the organisers that the demonstration will not be authorised" and told them of the risks, should they ignore the ban. No reasons for the ban were given.

The gay rights activist Peter Tatchell was present with other foreign observers in 2006 and said: "We were immediately set upon by about 100 fascist thugs and religious fanatics who began pushing, punching and kicking us." In 2007 Tatchell and the German parliamentarian Volker Beck were punched in the face by anti-gay protesters.

In 2007, 2008 and 2009 the leading Russian gay activist Nikolay Alekseyev applied to the European Court of Human Rights, complaining of a violation of his right to peaceful assembly on account of the repeated ban on public events he had organised in 2006, 2007 and 2008. He also complained that he had not had an effective remedy against the alleged violation of his freedom of assembly and that the Moscow authorities' treatment of his applications to hold the events had been discriminatory.

He argued that his right under Article 30 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, which provides that everyone has the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly, had been violated. Article 55 (3) provides that rights and freedoms may be restricted by federal laws for the protection of constitutional principles, public morals, health, and the rights and lawful interests of others, and to ensure the defence and security of the State. The 2004 Federal Law *On Assemblies, Meetings, Demonstrations, Marches and Picketing* should, if applied properly, permit Gay Pride marches where application has been made beforehand.

On 21 October 2010 the Court unanimously – including the great Russian judge Anatoly Kovler – concluded that the ban on the events organised by Mr Alekseyev did not correspond to a pressing social need and was thus not necessary in a democratic society. Furthermore, he had been denied an effective legal remedy, and he had suffered discrimination.

This resounding judgment did not lead to a change in the policy of the Moscow authorities. Many more complaints to the European Court of Human Rights are pending. It is highly likely that the Court will

adopt a 'pilot judgment' against Russia, setting out detailed instructions designed to resolve what is clearly a systemic issue.

On 13 December 2010 the Federal Law *On Protection of Children from Information Leading to Harm to their Health and Development*", promoted by Yelena Mizulina, came into force, and has been amended – and made more severe – by amendments in 2012 and 2013. The 2013 amendment added "propaganda" promoting "non-traditional sexual relationships" as a class of harmful content under the Law. The Code of Administrative Misdemeanors (KOAP) provides by Article 6.17 for punishment of violation of the Law by large fines. Yelena Mizulina is the chairperson of the Russian Duma's Committee on Family, Women and Children. She is the Russian Mary Whitehouse, a champion of high moral standards who promotes legislative initiatives to improve the morality of Russian society.

Nevertheless, there have been few prosecutions to date. Here are some examples. In December 2013 Mr Alexeyev and Yaroslav Yevtushenko picketed outside a children's library in Arkhangelsk holding banners that read: "Gays aren't made, they're born!" The two were fined 4,000 roubles and their appeal was rejected. The activist Dmitry Isakov protested the law in Kazan. Several months later, he was summoned to court after a teenager in Arkhangelsk had seen photos of his protest online and filed a complaint. Isakov was fined 4,000 roubles (about £50) in January 2014. The newspaper editor Alexander Sutorin was summoned to court after he published an interview with an openly gay schoolteacher in his weekly paper in Khabarovsk. Fines are much higher for those accused of spreading propaganda with the help of media or the Internet, and Mr Sutorin was fined 50,000 roubles (about £650) in 2014. In the interview, the teacher, who was told his school contract would not be renewed after he came out publicly as gay, defended LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) rights. The teacher's dismissal has been upheld in court.

Every year 17 May is the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. That date was chosen to commemorate the decision to remove homosexuality from the International Classification of Diseases of the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1990.

On 17 May 2015 various events devoted to the International Day took place all over the world. In Russia applications to hold LGBT pickets or demonstrations are highly likely to be rejected by the local authorities. Activists have therefore organised 'rainbow flash mobs', and these and other events took place in sixteen Russian cities – in Arkhangelsk, Voronezh, Ekaterinburg, Krasnodar, Moscow, Nakhodka, Novosibirsk, Murmansk, Samara, St Petersburg, Omsk, Perm, Tolyatti, Tomsk, Tyumen and Khabarovsk. Most rallies took place without serious incidents.

Readers can follow the Russian LGBT movement in English on www.lgbtnet.ru/en and in Russian on www.lgbtnet.ru/ru. You can sign up for regular email updates on the website.

Bill Bowring is Professor of Law at Birkbeck College, University of London, where he teaches Human Rights, Public International Law and Minority Rights. He is currently on sabbatical at the Human Rights Centre at the University of Essex. His latest book is 'Law, Rights and Ideology in Russia: Landmarks in the Destiny of a Great Power' (Routledge, 2013).

Report

Find Out About Russia! A New Website for Children

By Jenny Carr

The Scotland-Russia Forum (SRF) is a volunteer organisation trying to raise interest in Russia and her neighbours to encourage debate and (ideally) improve understanding.

We usually concentrate our efforts on the adult population – with events listings in a variety of media, occasional talks and social events, business workshops, evening classes and a magazine. However, we are increasingly aware that the Russian language and Russian affairs are almost entirely ignored by the school curriculum. In Scotland the main school exam programme (Nationals to Highers – the equivalent of GCSE to A-Level) will not include Russian after this summer and there are currently no schools in either the maintained or independent sectors offering Russian as a timetabled subject. In England and Wales the situation is slightly better, but not rosy.



Find Out About Russia (mobile version showing the main menus), www.findoutaboutrussia.co.uk

It is as vital to foster a wide-ranging interest in Russia among young children, who are our future business people, politicians, artists and art lovers, travellers, and global citizens, as among the rest of the population. But if Russian isn't on the

timetable, the impression children and their parents receive is that the country and its culture, economy and politics are not important or relevant – and this could not be further from the truth. From this lack of interest flows lack of coverage in the media, lack of discussion and lack of understanding.

Unfortunately, unlike all the other major languages and cultures, there is little support for such initiatives from the Russian state. There is no equivalent to the Goethe Institute, the Japan Foundation or the British Council – and their counterparts in many other countries. If Russia itself does not care, it is hard, but necessary, to convince British institutions that it is in the British interest to understand Russia.

The SRF has been trying for some time to get Russian back onto the school curriculum in Scotland, and began offering tasters and setting up school clubs. The taster programme continues, slowly, but we are now trying a new tack. In March this year we launched our *Find Out About Russia* website at www.findoutaboutrussia.co.uk offering an introduction to aspects of Russian culture that we hope will interest children. The website covers: The Russian Language, Russian History, The Largest Country, The First Human in Space, Who Was Alexander Pushkin?, Russian Folk Tales, Music, A Visit to the Ballet, Famous Scientists, Sport, Food and Drink, Festivals and Holidays. Authors range from professional specialists to a 15 year old schoolgirl; we have also had contributions from Russian-speaking children – in the Russian Language sections, for example – and hope for more.

We are publicising the site with a competition open to all UK primary schoolchildren. Entrants can choose to illustrate or retell a folk tale, or to design activities (quizzes, worksheets, computer games) for any section of the site. We hope to feature some of the entries in appropriate parts of the website. All entrants will receive a 'mystery gift' and – thanks to the generosity of our sponsors – there will be lots of prizes for winners.

Please encourage your children, grandchildren, neighbouring schools, etc, to look at the website and take part in the competition!

Jenny Carr is Chair of the Scotland-Russia Forum, Web: www.scotlandrussiaforum.org, Email: jenny@scotlandrussiaforum.org

Book Reviews

After Hitler: The Last Days of the Second World War in Europe
By Michael Jones (John Murray, 2015, ISBN: 9781848544949, Hbk, 372pp, £25.00)

In his latest book on the Second World War, Michael Jones takes us on a detailed journey through the last ten days of the war in Europe, starting with the suicide of Adolf Hitler on 30 April and ending with Victory Day on 9 May. Each chapter of the book covers one of those days, with background information from the whole course of the war interwoven with the events happening during each particular 24-hour period.

The actions and decisions taken by key individuals on all sides of the bloodiest conflict in the history of the world are drawn together in a complex and fascinating account. Though mistakes, misunderstandings and deliberate fabrications were all part of the story, what is perhaps most remarkable is that the Allies managed to maintain their unity against the Fascist menace until their task was completed.

The brief role played by Admiral Karl Donitz and his short-lived Nazi government in Flensburg in northern Germany is covered in some detail. His attempts to divide the Allies, and to avoid the surrender of Nazi forces to the USSR wherever possible, could have easily led to fighting between the US and / or British troops and the Red Army without the intervention of senior

commanders – and the good sense of officers on the ground.

On the US side, General Dwight Eisenhower emerges with credit, particularly for doing his best to stick to agreements made with the Soviet side, and keeping them as well informed as possible during the sometimes chaotic and fast-moving events of the final days of the war.



Red Army recruits swearing the Oath before advancing to the front, 1942 (SCRSS Photo Library)

The complex surrender negotiations are well covered. The Soviet insistence that the final surrender could only properly happen in Berlin led to two different Victory Days – 8 and 9 May. But as the author notes: “Having sacrificed some 27 million soldiers and civilians to defeat the Germans, every Soviet citizen would have wanted and expected the surrender to take place in Berlin and for Russia to be represented by its foremost commander, Marshal Zhukov. This was neither political machination nor pedantry. No other alternative would have been acceptable to any Russian.”

As he has done in previous works on the battles of Moscow and Stalingrad, the siege of Leningrad and others, the author draws on eyewitness accounts to bring events

vividly to life. At his SCRSS lecture in March, Dr Jones emphasised the importance he attached to such testimony and how, if approached properly, such accounts recorded even decades later should not be dismissed as having no historic value. His long experience with Soviet veterans, in particular, adds a fresh dimension for Western readers, allowing them to follow the action from all sides. Though often forgotten during the Cold War that followed, there is genuine warmth and gratitude for the Soviet contribution to victory in the contemporary accounts written by Western participants.

Ralph Gibson

Russia and Development

By Charles Buxton (Zed Books, 2014, ISBN: 9781780321080, Pbk, 254 pp, £24.99)

As the author himself puts it, this is “a small book on a big topic”. The theme of the transition to a capitalist society of not only Russia (mainly Siberia), but also the republics of Central Asia, is, of course, a mighty task. The author, Charles Buxton, has lived and worked in the Soviet Union, and more recently in Russia and Kyrgyzstan. He is well qualified to write on this and, in particular, the issues of development, having worked for VSO and other development agencies in Central Asia.

“Russia’s progressive development tradition suffered a major setback with the triumph of privatisation policies as the USSR broke up,” he writes. “We are talking about the destruction of a social safety net, the absence of redistributive economic policies and the rapid growth of inequality.”

How civil society has managed to cope with this situation after the break-up of the USSR; the role of the many different development agencies (some with very differing political agendas); the struggle to replace with volunteer and grant-funded agency work what used to be provided – however inadequately – by government; the context of the raw, rampant capitalism of the

1990s – all is admirably covered in the book, making it essential reading for anyone interested in development work and the wider issues of transition from one kind of society to another, very different, one.

He describes various historical attempts at democratic initiatives, among them *zemstva* and the *Narodniks*, to show that civil society did have a base even before the Bolsheviks took power in 1917.

After 1991, development agencies such as USAID, Know How Fund, World Bank, European Bank of Reconstruction and Development and many other smaller agencies all rushed into Russia and Central Asia with funding for private enterprise. Buxton writes that, as a practitioner, it was “uncomfortable” working with such agencies “with their simplistic, pro-market messages, hardly bothering to cover up their attack on the role of the state, full employment and decent social safety nets”.

In the 2000s pressure has been put on non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that accept foreign funding, and some have been closed down. More Russian Government support has been forthcoming and a ‘Public Chamber’ set up with the aim of developing inter-sectoral dialogue between government, civil society and business.

The author describes some local campaigns, such as ‘Baikal is more Important than Oil’, resulting in Yukos’ proposed oil pipeline having to be re-routed, and states that Russian NGOs have helped open up a public debate on issues such as feminism, domestic violence, disability, military service and the environment.

Working as a Moscow correspondent in the late 1980s, I became convinced of the need for campaigning groups, especially in a one-party system. I saw, for instance, that no one ever seemed to question the assumption that women had two roles – that of mother / housewife and worker. The narrative was “how can we ease the burden for her?”, rather than questioning the

underlying assumption that housekeeping is the sole sphere of women.

Russia today can be described as “a free country with an authoritarian regime”, Buxton says.

According to polls quoted in 2012, 40 per cent of Russian voters consider themselves socialist and 20 per cent as communist.

The book has several revealing tables and many useful citations from Russian and foreign sociologists.

Perhaps because of the very wide scope of the book, Central Asia is less satisfactorily covered. With the author’s undoubted expertise, it would be good to see another book devoted to that region alone.

Kate Clark

Penguin Book of Russian Poetry
Edited by Robert Chandler, Boris Dralyuk & Irina Mashinski
(Penguin, 2015, ISBN: 978-0-141-19830-9, Pbk, xix + 572 pp, £12.99)

The appearance of this anthology is a major advance in the appreciation of Russian poetry in the West. The previous *Penguin Book of Russian Verse* (PRV1) was just one of a brilliant series of Penguin anthologies in many languages that placed the foreign text foremost and added a plain English translation in smaller type below. The Russian volume did an excellent job of covering poetry starting from the *Igor Tale* (complete, in the original Old Russian), right through to the postwar period. The publication date in 1962 meant that it was unable to include the remarkable flowering of Russian youth culture of the sixties that gave us Yevtushenko, Voznesensky, Akhmadulina, Okudzhava and many others – a golden time treasured by older readers.

Unfortunately, Penguin did not decide to update these anthologies (the Russian one was minimally updated in 1965) so the great flowering was not recorded. An honourable

successor to PRV1, the *Garnett Book of Russian Verse* (2000) uses the same format but also chooses to ignore the ‘popular’ poets and bards of the 60s.

The new *Penguin Book of Russian Poetry* (PRV2) reflects a different attitude to Russia in the West, and caters to a different audience. Where PRV1 was part of a series that assumed some study of the language, and placed the original text at the forefront, PRV2 has no Russian language texts and takes a more academic line, with an impressive ‘apparatus’ designed to place poetry in its historical and biographical context. The volume could be regarded as a reference book, as much as an introduction to a nation’s poetry. However, to pay the editors their due, the breadth of coverage is outstanding.

The works of seventy poets are represented here. As one would expect, there is a massive presence of twentieth-century Russian poetry and, in particular, postwar poetry. Once again the popular poets have only one poem each, but one begins at last to sympathise when one sees that the editors are ‘putting history to rights’ by including many neglected writers. The popular poets may have been the darlings of the West for too long, whereas previously neglected names such as G Ivanov, Kharms, Khlebnikov, Khodasevich, Prigov, Shalamov and Slutsky will amaze the reader with the breadth and (sometimes) weirdness of their talent. The introductory article contains an interesting discussion of who has been included and who omitted, which provides further pointers to interesting writers outside the scope of this book. The Russian tradition contains some formidable women writers, and the golden (early nineteenth) and silver (1890–1920) eras of poetry are all well, and fairly, represented.

With its suggestions for further reading, its notes to aid comprehension, its chronology and detailed index, this book is a bargain. Buy it and start browsing. You may be intrigued.

Andrew Jameson

The Original Nutcracker Ballet – A Hidden Allegory

**By Margaret Fleming-Makarian
(privately printed, 2014, ISBN: 978-0-9929469-1-3)**

Long a Christmas favourite, Tchaikovsky's 1892 ballet *The Nutcracker* has enjoyed hundreds of productions, but the original is incompletely recorded though it is possible to infer additional details.

It is often seen as simply a fantastic (in both senses of the word) entertainment: a young girl's Christmas dream-journey with her Nutcracker-Prince to a mysterious Far Eastern palace.

But Fleming-Makarian looks deeper, seeing not simply a melding of Hoffman's 1816 tale and Dumas' 1845 translation-adaptation, but noting a symbolic meaning in almost everything. These include post-Enlightenment 'rationalisations' of the human body as automata, early attempts at dream interpretation and comparative religion's analysis of pagan, Christian and occult symbolism.

After being introduced to all these ideas, the reader may wonder if it is too ambitious to use the sometimes patchy evidence as the foundation for such a weighty edifice and start to ask: "What is the 'hidden allegory' of the title?"

In fact, the major theme is early nineteenth-century Napoleonic expansionism, and the resultant pan-European upheavals and changes in society and geopolitical power, particularly the German–French–Russian relationship.

There are moments of speculation: Fleming-Makarian accepts that the symbolism is sometimes ambiguous and the political implications might not always have been clear, even to audiences at the first performances when they would have been most topical. But that does not mean that they weren't added, consciously or unconsciously, by the ballet's creators.

The designs are described in detail, with several reproduced among the twenty-four monochrome plates. The 300-plus footnotes provide ample supporting documentation, though a number are germane and interesting enough to be worth promoting to the main text. Fleming-Makarian's focus on the narrative and visual elements leaves little room for Tchaikovsky's music beyond brief general descriptions, and while this aspect is covered by authors such as David Brown, it would have been interesting to see how it supports the book's thesis.

This relatively small book packs an incredible amount of information, providing a wealth of thought-provoking insights into this hugely popular ballet. On your next visit, it will be difficult not to see it with new eyes.

John Riley

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