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## Feature

### Yekaterinburg Nights

By Olga Zaikina

On 20 April 2012 the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation announced its ruling: the demolition in Yekaterinburg of the Passazh building – a significant early example of constructivism which dated from 1916–25 and had been listed since the 1950s – was illegal. The verdict came after the fact. Some six weeks earlier, at 1.00am on 8 March 2012, a fence had been thrown up around the building, as a prelude to the nocturnal cutting down of half of an adjoining park and the start of the demolition of the structure itself. Except the developer, Malysheva-73, who had acquired the building in 2010, claimed that their bulldozing activity was not a demolition but a ‘reconstruction’. The building was originally a commodity exchange, but was later converted to a shopping mall: all they were doing, they said, was reconstructing the mall – although their project was for a shopping

mall ten times larger than the historical building, with which it had nothing in common.

The Passazh building had long been important for Yekaterinburg – the capital of the Urals and Russia’s third largest political and economic centre – in that it was the first building in the city to be supported by a concrete frame and was the sole surviving progenitor of constructivism, an architectural style that once had a major presence in the city. Its designer, Konstantin Babykin, was also a native of Yekaterinburg. Without Passazh, constructivism might have appeared like an imported style, shipped in by architects from Moscow or St Petersburg.



Konstantin Babykin, Passazh building, 1916–25  
(©Yekaterinburg History Museum)

Its demolition, however, was not an isolated incident. An earlier representative of the city’s cultural heritage – the nineteenth-century Yarutin House – was also illegally bulldozed during the night of 26 April 2009. Several passers-by recorded the process on their mobile phones and cameras, but those responsible have never been officially identified. The developer of the site – once again, Malysheva-73 – has built in its place

the highest skyscraper in Russia (outside the centre of Moscow).

These illegal demolitions have also been accompanied by a less aggressive, but no less visible, deterioration of Yekaterinburg's historic urban fabric, principal among which is Che-Ka City ('Che-Ka' being an acronym for the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage, set up in 1917). This complex was built as an ideal functional form of communist dwelling, with a common cafeteria (no individual kitchens), a common laundry, a hospital and a kindergarten. No petty domestic concerns were to distract the Soviet worker from the project of constructing communism. Che-Ka City also included a communal apartment building for small families (later the Hotel Iset) and a cultural centre in the shape of the Soviet symbol – the hammer and sickle – around which the housing blocks are arrayed like flying pennants. Today the whole complex (wooden floors, ceilings, walls and utilities) is crumbling, although, once again, it is officially under government protection.



I Antonov, V Sokolov & A Tumbasov, communal apartment building, later Hotel Iset, Che-Ka City, 1929–36, photographed c 1950 (© Yekaterinburg History Museum)

Other Soviet-era landmarks in the city centre, if not destroyed entirely, sit buried under enormous, all-enveloping billboards. Among them are the Ural Workers' Printing Press, which was one of the key production centres for disseminating the politically controlled image of the USSR; the Central Post Office (architect: K Solomonov, 1934),

built in the shape of a tractor; as well as the Hotel Iset within the Che-Ka complex.



Spiral staircase in the Dzerzhinsky Club, Che-Ka City, 1929–36 (© Yekaterinburg History Museum)

To these acts of architectural aggression and passive deterioration one has to add the awkward collisions that occur, for example, in the city's central square, which is named after the 1905 Russian Revolution and has a monument to Lenin as its centrepiece. Today, the endlessly reproduced silhouette of this Marxist revolutionary, with his famously confident posture and searing gaze, welcomes all-comers to a shopping mall called 'Europe' – which looks not unlike the *Titanic* ploughing into the iceberg, with a glass addition (2009) set on top of the original base (a neo-classical / neo-gothic merchant's house from the 1820s).

To say that this abraded urban condition is solely the handiwork of uneducated and corrupt entrepreneurs of a free-market capitalism who have flourished since the 1990s would, however, be to ignore the role of Yekaterinburg's own civic authorities and the visual strategies that underpin the city's

metamorphosis. As part of this municipal redevelopment, and alongside the rapid new constructions of private businesses, the city recently gained a towering new landmark, a symbol of the forces that are reshaping its identity. But instead of laying claim, for example, to a proud constructivist tradition, Yekaterinburg is today memorialising itself as the place where Nicholas II, the last tsar of Russia, died. Central to this urge to commemorate its tsarist past, in 2003 a neo-Byzantine temple, combining the memorial Church on the Blood with the Church of All Saints Resplendent in the Russian Land, was built on the spot where the Tsar and his family were killed. Surrounding the raised temple is a vast esplanade – an anomaly in the densely packed urban surroundings – that extends towards the river [...]



The 'Europe' shopping mall, Yekaterinburg, 2009  
(*Photograph by Polina Nagareva*)

In 2000 the Russian Orthodox Church canonised all seven members of the Tsar's family as 'passion-bearers', which in Orthodox Christianity means those who face their martyrdom in a Christ-like manner [...]. The move provoked a wide response. Opponents pointed out that the Tsar – who earned the nickname 'Bloody Nicholas' – was hardly the most obvious candidate for sainthood [...]. The execution of the Romanovs – physically memorialised in [the] new monastery and [the] new church – has been shaped by contemporary political values into a modern myth. In this myth, suffering equates with sanctity [...]. The myth also gives us the faintly comic picture of an endless alternation between the counterfeit sanctity of the Romanovs and the cruelty of the redneck Bolsheviks, who come with the

full baggage of Soviet troubles – intellectual repression, labour camps, religious persecution, etc.



Ipatiev House, Yekaterinburg, c 1930 – demolished to make way for the Church on the Blood  
(© *Yekaterinburg History Museum*)

After the collapse of the USSR in 1991, an ideological vacuum threatened to block the development of the new system. To overcome this, the authorities resorted to a tried-and-tested recipe for overcoming perplexity: namely, implanting new meaning into a familiar concept in order to smooth the path to an experience wholly unknown to the Soviet people – capitalism. The result, it seems, was an idea of a new state that could be called 'Orthodox Russia'. The name has two important constituents. First, it reinforces the link with the past – the old history of Kiev Rus' and the Russian Empire. Second, it revives the suppressed religious tradition, together with its moral and spiritual values: since communist man believed only in a better communist tomorrow, instead of God, all the bloody episodes of Soviet history could be explained by a lack of Christian compassion and justice. Moreover, this religious revival, drawing on a well of hatred towards the Bolsheviks, is tied to a revival of admiration for Russia's monarchical past, going all the way back to the almost simultaneous genesis of the Russian state, with the first tsarist ruler in the second half of the ninth century, and the Christianisation of Kiev Rus' in 988. Since the revolutionary turn of 1991, the government of the new Russian capitalist state has used resentment towards the communist past and the newly invented tradition of sanctifying imperial history as a

way of reshaping the national identity of the Russian people and uniting them around the new system. It is worth noting that, from this perspective, the ideology of post-Soviet Russia is reminiscent of the dominant ideology of the Russian Empire – ‘Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationhood’ – which was promulgated from the early 1830s. Aimed at strengthening the power of the monarchy and the traditional love and devotion of the Russian people to their ‘Dear Father Tsar’, this doctrine defined three bases of the state: 1. Orthodox faith, 2. a strong vertical power structure, 3. the preservation of national identity and heritage.



Grigory Mazayev, Church on the Blood, 2003  
(Photograph by Polina Nagareva)

In Yekaterinburg, the icon of the imperial passion-bearers, the Church on the Blood and Ganina Yama monastery are among the most persuasive visual forms of this concept of ‘Orthodox Russia’. They radiate its message, sown through with professions of piety and compassion for the suffering of others [...]

As the French historian Pierre Nora has observed, institutionalised commemorative landmarks – what he calls *lieux de mémoire* – function as stable repositories of information, endlessly accumulating data. The Church on the Blood in Yekaterinburg indeed serves partly as a museum – and, unusually for an Orthodox church – its displays extend beyond the confines of the interior, to the enormous billboards outside that present detailed biographical information on the Romanov dynasty. *Lieux de mémoire* grow in a self-centred way, proliferating from their core – in this particular instance, the story of Nicholas II’s family. But here we can see what happens when the *lieu de mémoire* is taken over by myth and loses its purely archival character, turning into a hungry monster that devours the space around it. Thus in 2009 the church expanded its boundaries by changing the name of the adjacent block from ‘Tolmachev’ (commemorating a Soviet revolutionary) to ‘Sacred Precinct’. This conveniently provided more space for the annual ten-day public celebration of Orthodox culture, entitled *Tsar Days* – an imperial-themed extravaganza of exhibitions, concerts, lectures and other events with titles such as ‘God Save the Tsar!’, ‘For Faith, Tsar and Fatherland’, ‘Favourite Music of the Tsar’s Family’, and so on.

The festivities encompass another newly invented tradition, a nine-mile pilgrimage that traces, in reverse, the Romanovs’ final journey from the site of the Church on the Blood to the site of the Ganina Yama monastery. This five-hour religious procession takes place annually on the night of the execution [...]

In Yekaterinburg the visual representation of a ‘successful’ capitalist present plays an important part in the efforts of the state and the municipal authorities to gain acceptance for their policies. The city is effectively being redesigned, its landscape transformed into a battlefield where landmarks are assuming the role of aggressors or resisters [...] Less than two weeks after the demolition of the Passazh building had begun, two protest marches took place. One (on 22 March

2012) was organised by the developers Malysheva-73, the other (two days later) by the All-Russian Society for the Preservation of Historical and Cultural Monuments. Ironically, both shared the same stated aim: to support Passazh's reconstruction. The first attracted more than 5,000 people, the second a mere 300.

The motivation behind the first demonstration has not officially been made known. But aesthetic convictions do not appear to have been the main driver [...] There was no mention of saving the monument on the identical placards handed out by the organisers to the 5,000-strong crowd. Instead, the slogans were all about 'We Need a Thriving Contemporary City', 'New Passazh = New Jobs for Us', 'No Job – No Food', etc.

But more than the vapid slogans of free enterprise, it seems to be the ideology of the Orthodox Church and a creeping theocracy that increasingly provides the framework for an authoritarian Russian regime to keep its citizens in check. It is no coincidence, in this sense, that the feminist punk collective Pussy Riot chose Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour (lavishly rebuilt in recent years) as the setting to perform their anti-Kremlin protest song, 'Punk Prayer: Mother of God Drive Putin Away'. Their performance lasted less than one minute. Their punishment – after a bizarre one-sided trial that ignored the political nature of their protest – was a two-year jail sentence for 'hooliganism motivated by religious hatred'. A number of church-goers from all over Russia have piled further punishment on the band, individually lodging private lawsuits claiming monetary compensation for the 'moral outrage' they endured. And it is in this compound of an individual, litigious, materialist culture of personal outrage, mixed with a state-enforced insistence on spiritual authority that we find modern Russia, where political and sacred spaces have become entwined, and where the architecture that does exist is no longer defined by the buildings of its constructivist past but the gilded onion cupolas and glazed shopping malls of its present and future.

*Olga Zaikina is an art historian and critic based in Yekaterinburg, Russia, where she teaches courses in art history and theory at the Yekaterinburg Academy of Contemporary Art. Her research interests include the cultural landscape of twentieth-century Russia, with a particular focus on the intersection of art and politics, as well as issues surrounding landscape and memory in the work of various émigré artists.*

Note: This is an abridged version of an article first printed in the Architectural Association's *AA Files* (No 65, 2012, pp 135-137, ISBN 978-1-907896-23-1). The SCRSS is grateful for the kind co-operation of the author, Olga Zaikina, and Thomas Weaver, Editor of *AA Files*. For more information on Architectural Association publications, visit [www.aaschool.ac.uk](http://www.aaschool.ac.uk).

## **SCRSS News**

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### **SCRSS Exhibition for Loan**

Our exhibition *Arts of Russian and Soviet Modernists from the SCRSS Archive*, recently shown at the University of Sheffield and last year at the Society's premises, is available for loan. It includes high-quality reproductions of posters, photographs, theatre and architectural designs, book and record covers, book illustrations and children's books from the SCRSS's archive. The exhibits demonstrate the continual artistic influence of the Russian and Soviet modernists throughout the Soviet period. Please contact the SCRSS for further information.

### **Gagarin Monument Moves to Greenwich**

The monument to the world's first man in space, Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, unveiled in London in 2011, was moved from The Mall to the Royal Observatory in Greenwich on 7 March 2013. The monument, the Russian Space Agency's gift to the UK, was temporarily installed near the British Council headquarters on The Mall on 14 July 2011. It marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Gagarin's visit to London in July 1961,

three months after his legendary flight. The London monument is a copy of the monument to Gagarin in the town of Lyubertsy in the Moscow Region, where the future cosmonaut went to vocational school. The ceremony was attended by Gagarin's eldest daughter Yelena, director of the Moscow Kremlin museums, the Russian ambassador to the UK Alexander Yakovenko and Vitaly Davydov, deputy chief of Roscosmos, the Russian Federal Space Agency. "I would like to thank all people living in London for the support of the idea to place the statue in Greenwich Park", Yelena Gagarina said at the ceremony. *RIA Novosti press release.*

## UK–Russia Year of Culture 2014

On 13 March 2013 the UK and Russia signed a landmark agreement that will see a major series of arts and culture activities in both countries next year as part of a UK-Russia Year of Culture. At the signing Foreign Secretary William Hague and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov underlined the importance of cultural relations as a means of strengthening ties between individuals, organisations and governments, as well as building bilateral engagement and trust.

The Russian Embassy in London will be primarily responsible for Russian events in the UK, while in Russia the British Council will present a comprehensive programme of events and projects drawn from all four countries of the UK. In addition to events in the arts, the Cultural Year programme may include activities in such spheres as education, language learning, science (including space and innovative technologies), creative industries, sports and exchanges between young people. Both countries intend to encourage a wide representation of cultures of their countries in terms of geographical, ethnic and creative diversity. *Foreign & Commonwealth Office press release.*

Note: The SCRSS will be working with other sister organisations in the UK to contribute

to the UK-Russia Year of Culture with its own programme of activities.

## Next Events

**Saturday 18 May 12.30pm**

**Event: SCRSS Annual General Meeting**

12.30–2.30pm: Annual General Meeting  
2.30pm: A talk by the Hon Secretary Jean Turner on her 28 years at the Society. Accompanied by wine, soft drinks and nibbles. Note: The AGM is open to SCRSS members only.

**Friday 7 June 7pm**

**Lecture: John Riley on *Beyond the Rite's Riot***

2013 marks the centenary of Stravinsky's seminal ballet *The Rite of Spring*, written for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, with choreography by Nijinsky and designs by Roerich. Though the Paris premiere famously descended into a riot, it quickly became a regular part of the repertoire. Since that night there have been around 150 different productions and countless performances as a concert work. Using film and music examples, John Riley tells the story of the composition and its premiere, and puts the work into the context of Stravinsky's career and of 20<sup>th</sup>-century music. Normal admission fees apply.

*Events take place at the SCRSS, 320 Brixton Road, London SW9 6AB, unless otherwise stated. Admission fees for films and lectures: £3.00 (SCRSS members), £5.00 (non-members). Admission fees for other events: as indicated above.*

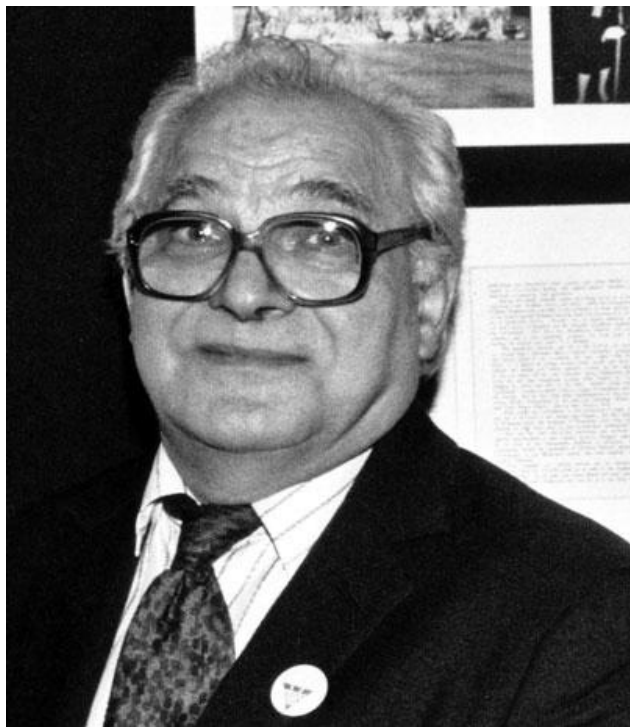
## Obituary

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### Stanley Forman (1921–2013)

For many of us at the SCRSS, Stanley was not only an active member but also a very good friend, and we shall miss him sorely.

Stanley was a member of the Society from 1957 and served on the Executive Committee from 1972–96. He was then elected Chair of the SCR (the Society for the Cultural Relations with the USSR – the former name of today’s SCRSS) and held that position until 2004, the following year assuming the more honorary position of Vice-President.



Through all that time he played an invaluable role in locating, importing and distributing films from Russia and the republics of the former Soviet Union. Stanley and his company ETV co-operated with the SCR in organising joint film shows in central London during the Cold War when anti-communism was at its height. For Stanley it was important to show the gains and advantages of the socialist system, for he was a convinced communist. But his was no blind faith. He knew of the failings, but his own early background, the Spanish Civil War and the fight against Fascism during World War II led him to take sides – and the side he chose was that of the common people.

To Stanley, the struggle in the Soviet Union to build a socially just society, where the *people* would be in charge, was the same struggle as that waged by people here who protested against the Vietnam War, who

went on the Aldermaston and other CND marches against nuclear weapons, and who fought for better wages and conditions at work. So his lifelong commitment to film was to witness and record all these seminal events in labour movement history here in Britain, as well as the development of socialism in the USSR and other socialist countries. He was also an effective media operator and excellent spokesperson for socialist film.

Stanley’s unfailing humanity, his exuberance, warmth and kindness, his willingness to help and advise, touched me on a number of occasions over the years. He always had time to give a helpful tip when needed, based on his long experience in the media. He seemed to always see the best, the most positive in people.

In Stanley’s NFT retrospective interview in 2000, he said: “All we know is that this capitalist system, which is based primarily on greed, profit, and what they now politely call ‘the market’, clearly has a role in the economy of our planet, but it is not the final answer.”

He spent his life fighting, through film, for a system of social justice without wars, believing, as most of us do, that a better world is possible.

*Kate Clark*

It is impossible to think of left-wing cinema without thinking of Stanley Forman. The huge number of films that he imported from all over the world form one of the most important collections of left-wing cinema; in addition, he supported and inspired numerous filmmakers.

Stanley became an avid cinephile as a child, and after the war aristocrat-communist and filmmaker Lord Ivor Montagu persuaded him to head a company importing and distributing left-wing films.

Plato Films’ varied catalogue included historical footage, condemnations of US imperialism, ecological films, studies of politics and the class struggle in Britain and



across the world, travelogues and teaching materials. It also held Montagu's invaluable Spanish Civil War films and his hilarious *Peace and Plenty* (1939) which mocked Chamberlain and his ubiquitous umbrella, using a doll made by Elsa Lanchester's mother.

There were commercial problems: footage of the Warsaw ghetto in *Du und Mancher Kammerad* (*The German Story*, 1956), a history of German militarism, made rentals hard to find.

But Stanley also had a number of clashes with authority – on both sides of the Iron Curtain – some of which bordered on the farcical.

The 'one or two cuts' that the BBFC requested to *Song of the Rivers*, Joris Ivens' documentary about the World Federation of Trades Unions, amounted to a third of the film. Eventually Forman managed to show it uncut.

Even worse, the BBFC banned *Holiday on Sylt* which accused a German mayor of being a former SS officer. *Operation Teutonic Sword* (*Unternehmen Teutonenschwert*, 1958) implicated Hans Speidel, NATO's European commander, in the assassinations of King Alexander of Yugoslavia and French Foreign Minister Barthou. Though the BBFC banned it, the LCC granted it a local certificate. Speidel sued for libel, forcing Stanley to start a new company ETV, though ultimately the film's withdrawal proved adequate.

But Stanley was not blind to problems from the other side. When the Soviets offered replacement copies of his films, he carefully snipped out the Trotsky footage, knowing that the 'replacements' would not include it. And ETV was cannily set up as a private company outside direct Party control.

In 1959 he helped re-launch the Leipzig International Documentary Film Festival, now one of the world's most important, and became a member of the Honorary Presidium.

Post-Stalin disillusion shrank Plato's traditional markets and Stanley began selling archive footage to film and television companies at commercial rates. Innumerable programmes drew on the holdings.

Stanley made a few films, mostly about one of his particular interests – Chile. Among his proudest achievements was *Compañero: Víctor Jara of Chile* about the charismatic activist-singer who was tortured and murdered under Pinochet. Made with Martin Smith and using footage smuggled out by Jara's widow, it garnered a BAFTA nomination.

In 2002 Stanley wound up ETV, dividing the collection between the National Film and Television Archive and the SCRSS. Two years previously the NFT ran a celebratory season which included Martin Smith's television profile of Stanley. Its title sums up his eternal optimism: *Life Can Be Wonderful*.

*John Riley*

## **Soviet Memorial Trust Fund News**

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### **Holocaust Memorial Day**

This year's HMD event on 27 January, organised jointly with Southwark Council, attracted over 150 people, including, for the first time, the Israeli Ambassador. The event began with an indoor programme at the Amigo Hall of St George's Cathedral, which included an address by Baroness Julia Neuberger, senior Rabbi of the West London Synagogue, and a description of his experiences by Holocaust survivor Avram Schaufeld. The participants then moved to the Soviet War Memorial and Southwark Council's Holocaust Memorial Tree which stands nearby. The traditional wreath-laying was preceded by brief contributions from the Russian Ambassador, HE Alexander



Yakovenko, local MP Simon Hughes and Baroness Neuberger. The Ambassador's address and photographs are at <http://www.rusemb.org.uk/activity/132>.

## Hurricanes to Murmansk

The SMTF was delighted to support the showing of *Hurricanes to Murmansk* at the London office of Rossotrudnichestvo on 28 January. The event was organised by Westminster Russia Forum to celebrate the announcement regarding the Arctic Star medal. Air Commodore Phil Wilkinson, RAF (rtd), Chair of the RAF Russia Association and an SMTF Trustee, introduced the film. Andrew Griffiths MP spoke of his family connection with the convoys. RIA Novosti provided a small photographic exhibition on RAF 151 Wing and its brief deployment in northern Russia in 1941, the subject of the documentary (see listings on page 16 for more information on the DVD). There are photographs of the event on Facebook, posted by Rossotrudnichestvo 'RSGovUK'.

## Arctic Star Awarded

The first award ceremony for the newly-minted Arctic Star medal took place at 10 Downing Street on 19 March. The Prime Minister, David Cameron, presented the medal to a group of Convoy veterans, including four members of the RAF 151 Wing which travelled aboard the first convoy in August 1941. The ceremony was followed by a reception on board HMS Belfast. There was extensive press coverage of the event.

## Stalingrad Remembered

The London office of Rossotrudnichestvo was again packed for the SMTF-organised event on 2 February to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Victory by the Soviet (Red) Army at the Battle of Stalingrad. The Russian Ambassador, HE Alexander Yakovenko, welcomed everyone and Professor Geoffrey Roberts gave a fascinating lecture, followed by Q&A, on *Stalingrad, Zhukov and the Great Patriotic*

*War*. A sculpture by Robert Truscott, *Defeat at Stalingrad*, was displayed, together with an extensive photographic exhibition from the archives of RIA Novosti. Photographs and videos from the event can be viewed at the Russian Embassy website at [www.rusemb.org.uk](http://www.rusemb.org.uk).

## Stanley Forman (1921–2013)

The SMTF was represented at the funeral of SMTF Trustee Stanley Forman, who died in January. Stanley was a very keen supporter of the Soviet War Memorial from the outset and made a substantial financial contribution towards its creation. Stanley was well known in the documentary film world and was a long-standing member of the SCRSS. Several national newspapers ran obituaries, including *The Times*, *The Independent*, *Morning Star* and *The Guardian*. (See SCRSS obituary on page 6.)

## Next Events

**Thursday 9 May, 11.00am**

### **Event: Victory Day**

An Act of Remembrance at the Soviet War Memorial (see location details below) to mark the 68<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Allied Victory over Fascism. Participants are kindly requested to be present at the Memorial by 10.45am. Please note that the Imperial War Museum is currently closed for renovation work. For further details, please contact the SMTF Hon Secretary, Ralph Gibson on 020-7370-3002 (at RIA Novosti) or email [smtf@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:smtf@hotmail.co.uk).

*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 which organises ceremonies at the Memorial on 27 January (Holocaust Memorial Day), 9 May (Victory*

Day) and Remembrance Sunday in November every year. Events are listed on the SCRSS website at [www.scrss.org.uk/cinemaevents.htm](http://www.scrss.org.uk/cinemaevents.htm), while information on the memorial's history is available at [www.scrss.org.uk/sovietmemorial.htm](http://www.scrss.org.uk/sovietmemorial.htm).

## Feature

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### Yuri Norstein – Animation, Poetry and Politics

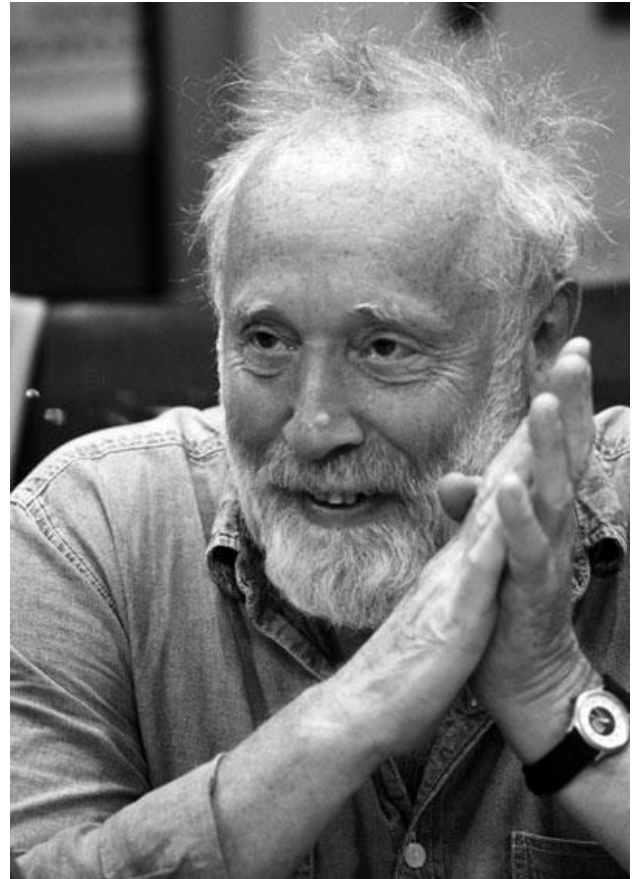
By Clare Kitson

For a man who has not delivered a complete film since 1979, Yuri Norstein has maintained an extraordinary prominence. Internationally, he has attained almost mythical status among animators – the revered *Tale of Tales* alone would have seen to that. In Russia he is far more broadly known and talked of on a par with any celebrated feature film director. Last year he was honoured with the Order of St Andrew the First-Called, whose august recipients include General Suvorov, the Duke of Wellington, Mikhail Gorbachev and Valery Gergiev.

Yet it was Norstein who, while presenting the *Svoya koleya* award at a Vladimir Vysotsky anniversary concert recently, commented on the whistle-blower Magnitsky's death in prison, allegedly due to 'heart failure'. The heart problem was not Magnitsky's alone, he was heard to say, but Putin's too... The thousands-strong audience erupted into applause and bravos and, though the incident was cut from TV reports of the event, a mobile phone video immediately went viral.

Norstein found himself in the animation business more or less by accident. He would have preferred fine arts but failed the art school entrance exams – for four different schools! So it was the Soyuzmultfilm training course instead. Yet he had no interest in the kind of animation then emanating from the studio – all for children and mostly looking like Disney. His

interests and aspirations were on a higher plane. On arriving there in 1961, he did not thrive. Given his feelings about the films on which he was an assistant animator and the quality of the directors he was assisting, as well as his forthrightness in expressing such feelings, he was an unpopular apprentice, and not given a chance to display his own talents. It was not until 1967 that some interesting films as co-director started coming his way.



Yuri Norstein, 2011 (courtesy of RIA Novosti)

Thanks to official disapproval of the first of these, *25th – The First Day*, it was a further six years before he got his first chance as solo director on a full-blown entertainment film, *The Fox and the Hare* (1973). Not much was expected on the basis of this well-known folk tale, yet the first-time director, using a decorative *lubok* style derived from folk art seen in the ethnographic museum, invested it with a totally unexpected freshness, humour and pathos. His second film, *The Heron and the Crane*, was a wistful, almost Chekhovian tragi-comedy about two lonely birds anxious to get together but unable to surmount their

prejudice against each other's differently shaped necks. This film was, in mood, a forerunner of *Tale of Tales*. It struck a chord with international animation audiences, taking prizes at the top animation festivals. But Norstein was not on hand to pick them up and, despite increasing popularity with international audiences, never would be until *perestroika*.

Alongside Norstein's talent as an artist, he is a remarkable technical innovator. By the time of the next work, *Hedgehog in the Fog* (1975), the tale of a philosophical hedgehog and his adventures on the way to visit his chum, a little bear, two major innovations were fully developed. Firstly, all his cut-out figures were now fashioned from celluloid rather than card, giving them more detail and delicacy. Secondly, he and his cameraman Alexander Zhukovsky had developed a multi-plane animation stand with a camera shooting down through cut-outs on sheets of glass at different levels, giving depth to the image. This delightful film became a great national favourite among both children and adults, and it too was a crucial forerunner of *Tale of Tales*, where the audacious technical advances would be exploited to the full.

Subject-wise, though, *Tale of Tales* (1979) was a real departure. It began life as a 20-minute, totally linear shooting script, approved by the authorities. It told of holiday-makers on a beach, 'New Russians' before their time. As each is touched by the power of poetry, his wildest dreams come true: for example, in one case a luxury car, in another a gorgeous naked girl floating by on a Botticelli-style scallop-shell. (OK, she is actually a gorgeous naked heifer – it's a long story.) But Norstein and his scriptwriter, the then semi-banned novelist and playwright Lyudmila Petrushevskaya, were unhappy with it. When shooting had already started – on the final scene, the only one Norstein was happy with – the rest of the story gradually mutated into an extraordinary fusion, with no distinguishable storyline, of memories of a Moscow childhood just post war, and musings on war and peace, on poetry and philistinism, and on the dangerous developments that

Norstein already saw in Russian society in the 1970s.

It bore no resemblance to the shooting script. Neither did it correspond to the tenets of Socialist Realism. And it was one third longer than agreed. So it was banned. However, due to a mixture of incompetence on the part of the authorities and williness on the part of Norstein's supporters, the authorities were manoeuvred into awarding Norstein the State Prize for the ensemble of his early works, the awards committee seemingly unaware that he was persona non grata and his latest work banned. So it had to be unbanned. The rest is animation history. The film went on to win all the international prizes going and, gradually, with increased openness in the years leading up to *glasnost*, Norstein and the film finally achieved eminence in his homeland.

After *Tale of Tales* Norstein started work on a version of Gogol's story, *The Overcoat*. Again planned as a 20-minute film, this one grew to feature length, again with a Petrushevskaya script. But the Soviet system, where money could be printed, where management was lax and could be outwitted by artists, was on its way out. It has been a constant struggle to keep *The Overcoat* inching forward (and even the studio alive). Sponsors have come and gone, but thanks to the major sponsor, a large bank, Norstein was able to publish his creative creed and experience in the form of a massive, lavishly illustrated two-volume work entitled *Sneg na trave* (*Snow on the Grass*). He has managed to supplement his income by selling the book himself, and by teaching. He also does occasional commercial work. Auteur-style animation has been infrequent but notable, the outstanding examples being his work with Andrei Khrzhanovsky on the latter's trilogy of animated films based on Pushkin's writings and diaries (1977–82), and his contribution to a remarkable Japanese portmanteau film *Winter Days* (2003) based on the work of the poet Matsuo Basho.

As for *The Overcoat*, it appears not to have progressed beyond the first of three half-hour sections. A recent planned, and

financed, period of concentrated work on the film failed to achieve much, since Norstein ripped an Achilles tendon and was immobilised throughout. Who knows how far he will get with it. But the first half-hour should be completed, at least, and from what I have seen, it is every bit as masterly as *Tale of Tales*.

Under the Soviet system, Norstein channelled his trouble-making instincts into his filmmaking. Perhaps today he sees worthier targets.

*Clare Kitson was commissioning editor for animation at Channel 4 Television 1989–99 and since then has written two books on animation subjects, notably 'Yuri Norstein and Tale of Tales: An Animator's Journey' (John Libbey Publishing 2005). These days she concentrates full time on what had been a part-time occupation, translation (contact [clare@clarekitson.co.uk](mailto:clare@clarekitson.co.uk)). Her debut on the Russian literary translation scene is a story for a Nadezhda Teffi collection, to be published by Pushkin Press in 2014.*

## Reports

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### 6<sup>th</sup> Russian Teachers' Group Conference, 2013 By Fiona Wright

The Russian Teachers' Group (RTG) held its annual conference on 16 March 2013 at Rossotrudnichestvo, London. We are very grateful to Arthur Matikyan and his team for hosting our latest event. About 50 delegates attended from all sectors of Russian teaching. The conference included a number of very interesting talks in both Russian and English. The morning session opened with Natasha Bogoslavskaya of Leeds University who described her method of teaching higher-level reading and writing: the trick is to build up phrases like lego blocks, so that pupils can build up sentences and paragraphs with minimal mistakes. This was followed by our first ever Beginners' Russian panel with John

Langran of Ruslan, Katya Solovyova of Oxford Girls High School and Galina Smithson of Leeds Metropolitan University. They each explained how they would begin to teach Russian and a lively discussion ensued. Methods included cartoons, games and use of newspapers from the start. Lunch allowed an opportunity to attend our exhibition of teaching materials, with stalls from European Schoolbooks, Ruslan and free books from Brian Lockett. The afternoon session began with the AGM of RTG and the appointment of a new Chairman: Joe Burrows of Eton College. A choice of talks followed: Natalia Tronenko on Verbs of Motion, Dr Rahima Abduvalieva on Chingiz Aitmatov's 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary and Marta Tomaszewski on new materials for beginners. Natalia shared some very useful ideas to make these tricky verbs accessible to students of Russian. Rahima's talk was full of her characteristic enthusiasm and energy, and I am sure many new readers were found for Aitmatov in both Russian and English. Marta explored both the books *Start* and *Marsh* which she has been involved in writing. Please contact us if you would like to join RTG (membership is free) and to find out about future events. Visit our website [www.thertg.co.uk](http://www.thertg.co.uk) or email the committee on [committee@thertg.co.uk](mailto:committee@thertg.co.uk).

## Book Reviews

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**Twentieth-Century Music and Politics: Essays in Memory of Neil Edmunds**  
**Edited by Pauline Fairclough (Ashgate, 2013, ISBN: 978-1-4094-0026-4, Hbk; also available in ebook ePUB and ebook PDF)**

Neil Edmunds was a pioneering historian, specialising in Russian and Soviet cultural matters, who launched his career with a re-evaluation of Soviet proletarian music. Unfortunately, his study of Sino-Soviet musical relations was cut short by his tragically early death in January 2008. These fifteen essays are a fitting tribute to his interest in roads less travelled. As

several relate quite directly to the SCRSS, I will concentrate on them.

The political commitment of composer and former SCR President Alan Bush brought problems in Britain but he was warmly embraced in East Germany. This has led some to dismiss his music as propaganda.

However, Joanna Bullivant shows how his opera *Wat Tyler* wrestled with tradition and modernity and their relevance to both Britain and the GDR, going some way to explaining those country's respective views of him.

The collection's editor, Pauline Fairclough, writes on *Anglo-Soviet Musical Exchanges in the Late Stalin Period*. Though the record is sometimes spotty, Fairclough shows the suspicion with which friendship societies – in particular the SCR – were officially regarded. She teases out details of the bureaucratic processes and points to some of the significant figures. Academic interest in the Society's history is growing and there is still much to be done, so hopefully Fairclough will continue this fascinating work.

Simo Mikkonen discusses Soviet music's role in the Cold War. SCRSS members will be surprised to learn that "cultural exchanges between the Soviet Union and the West had become practically non-existent from the 1930s onwards", but Mikkonen himself then goes on to outline cultural exchanges in that period. While the chapter has much valuable information, it is almost as if a position is being maintained in the teeth of contradictory evidence.

Unsurprisingly, Russian and Soviet music is an important strand. Jonathan Cross investigates the 'Russian-ness' of Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, while Shostakovich appears twice. Gerard McBurney introduces *Orango*, a recently discovered satirical sci-fi opera which he has orchestrated, and Joan Titus looks at his theories of film music.

Bogumila Mika traces the indirect politicisation of the Warsaw Autumn Festival of contemporary music, though 'socialist' compositions were not necessarily

guaranteed a warm reception and the Western avant-garde could equally be welcomed.

Edmunds' co-researcher Hon-Lun Yang presents their work on the importance of music to the interwar Shanghai Russian diaspora, and the importance of Russian classical and jazz musicians both to the city's cultural life and its internationalist aspirations.

In the other chapters, Britain is a particular focus (its attitude to foreign musicians, popular music and Irish nationalism, and London's wartime Hungarian cabaret scene). Two chapters focus on music during WWII in Belgrade and Nazi-occupied Poland, and there are chapters on Nazi musical films and the Spanish composer Rodrigo, not normally thought of as a political figure, though most of his career was spent under Franco.

Music historians will of course find the whole collection fascinating but individual chapters throw light on some little-explored areas, increasing its value.

*John Riley*

**Music and Soviet Power, 1917–32**  
**Edited and translated by Marina Frolova-Walker and Jonathan Walker (Boydell Press, 2012, ISBN 978 1 84383 703 9, Hbk)**

In recent years a huge amount of material has been released from Soviet archives, transforming our understanding of many aspects of the country's life. In the arts we have a better understanding of contradictory and rapidly changing Soviet cultural policies.

The years 1917–32 mark the period between the Revolution and the beginnings of Socialist Realism, one of the most tumultuous in the country's tumultuous history. *Music and Soviet Power* sheds a fascinating light on it by translating a host of documents from the time. As well as reviews and articles from the general and the specialist presses, and official documents,

the authors have dug deeper to include diary entries – particularly important as, being contemporary to the events, they are, perhaps, less tarnished by revisionism. In between, there are substantial essays that explain the background and introduce some of the less familiar figures.

With nearly 400 pages, there are endless revelations about Russian, Soviet and ‘foreign’ music.

The ‘revolutionary’ Beethoven of course is praised, though *Christus am Ölberg* is criticised as ‘alien to us’, rather than, more fairly, as a less than great work. The émigré Stravinsky is a regular topic and is often highly praised: Boris Asfiev thought *Les Noces* a work of genius, while others welcome *Petrushka* and the *Rite of Spring* as typically Russian pieces. Prokofiev is similarly fascinating but Rakhmaninov seems comparatively less interesting.

As far as foreign music is concerned, there are responses to Wagner (who retained his popularity after the Revolution) and, in the late 1920s, visits from various Western avant-garde composers (Krenek’s jazz opera *Jonny Spielt Auf* was a controversial hit).

Of course, the bulk of the discussions are about Soviet music and the struggles between organisations such as the Russian Association of Proletarian Music and the more avant-garde Association of Contemporary Music. But, while some of the rhetoric was fearsome, the divisions were sometimes less pronounced than have been made out in the past.

Still, there are diatribes about the evils of light music (the foxtrot was a particular target), debates about what constitutes a ‘proletarian’ opera and a description of one of the most audacious events of the time: 1922’s *Symphony of Sirens*, a Baku-wide performance on factory hooters, klaxons, bells and other such sound devices. There are also discussions of the role of music education and a fascinating entry where Davidenko explains how he developed his

song *They Wanted to Beat Us* from the initial idea to its final form.

After the fiery discussions the book ends (for those with foreknowledge) with a sense of impending doom. Two articles about Shostakovich’s opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* pre-date its denunciation, while Prokofiev prepares to return home, little expecting the problems he will encounter.

The book introduces many characters who would be unknown to all but specialists and some who may have eluded even them.

Few will penetrate the archives as comprehensively as the authors, and the riches they have brought back will help to change and deepen our understanding of early Soviet music.

*John Riley*

**Smashed in the USSR: Fear, Loathing and Vodka on the Steppes**  
**By Caroline Walton & Ivan Petrov**  
**(Old Street Publishing, May 2013,**  
**ISBN: 978-1-908699-22-0, Pbk,**  
**254pp, £9.99, illus Natalia Vetrova)**

I really enjoyed this book, despite the lower depths plumbed by Ivan Petrov in his life. I too have drunk spirit (with very respectable Russians), tasted *samogon* and even been offered record cleaner... However, I think the wider questions posed and not really answered by this book are: to what extent do we all in every society avoid reality by the use of narcotics?

In the former Soviet Union, as Ivan says, life outside the camps for many people was often not so different to that inside. Ivan’s home town of Chapaevsk, a particularly grim and polluted industrial city where the only jobs are in factories making dangerous chemicals and poison gas, is not really much better than the camps he gets sent to for vagrancy and drunkenness. Ironically, he probably survives as long as he does because in the camps he drinks smuggled-in *chafir* (very strong tea), instead of the noxious alcoholic brews he drinks outside.

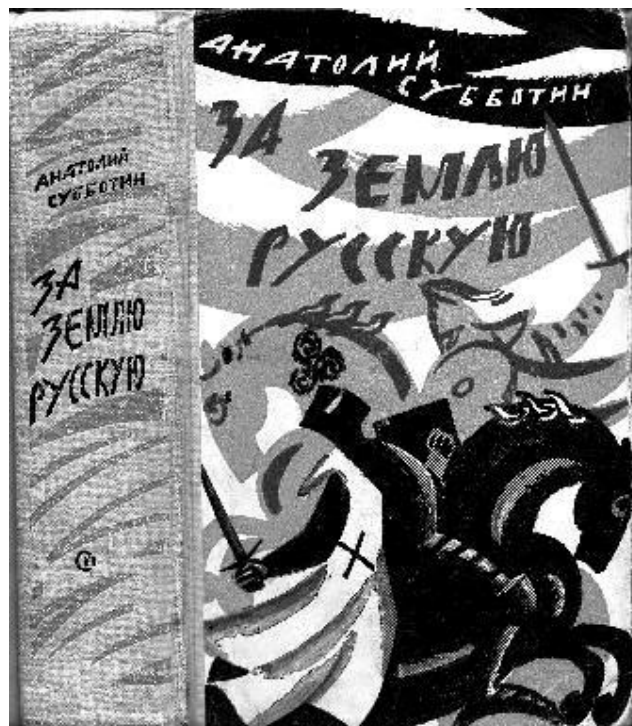
But it is not a depressing story. Ivan is a real survivor and leads an exciting, rumbustious life where, homeless and outside the system, he makes friends, works, begs and hitches rides in trains all over the USSR. And he survives to come to the UK and lead a mostly respectable life in London, meeting Caroline Walton here, who has written up his story.

This is a funny, moving and terrible story, but probably depicts a world which is mostly gone. At the end of the book one of Ivan's friends says: "It's much tougher now... he might have been murdered on the streets." The text is accompanied by some fine line drawings by Natalia Vetrova which really help you to get inside Ivan's head (a difficult place to be when he has the DTs). My favourite scene is where he and a group of other tramps march in the May Day parade under a banner *Zestafoni Tramps Salute the First of May!*, while the dignitaries shout back "A healthy mind in a healthy body!", expecting doctors to march past at this point. It sums up all the absurdity of life in the Soviet Union.

Fiona Wright

Note: *Smashed in the USSR* is available from Old Street Publishing, Trebinshun House, Brecon LD3 7PX, Tel: 01874-731222.

architects, sociologists, anthropologists, specialists in political science, cultural studies, and other disciplines. Deadline for proposal submission: 20 May 2013. Limited accommodation funds are available. For more information, please contact [constructivismworkshop@gmail.com](mailto:constructivismworkshop@gmail.com) or [msilchenko@mail.ru](mailto:msilchenko@mail.ru).



Book cover for Anatoly Subbotin's *Za zemlyu russkuyu* (SCRSS Library)

## Listings

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### Conferences

#### Yekaterinburg Academy of Contemporary Art and Goethe-Institut (Germany)

Call for Papers – International interdisciplinary workshop: *Architecture of Constructivism: Universal Forms in Local Socioeconomic and Cultural Contexts*, Yekaterinburg, Russia, 5 July 2013. The goal of the workshop is to provide an interdisciplinary approach to the Soviet and, particularly, Ural architectural school of constructivism and to analyse the legacies of the Bauhaus tradition in it. The organisers welcome submissions from historians,

### Culture

#### Calvert 22 Foundation

Calvert 22 Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to building cultural bridges between Russia, Eastern Europe, the former Soviet republics and the rest of the world. The Foundation was established by Nonna Materkova in May 2009 with the launch of Calvert 22, a gallery based in Shoreditch, London, and dedicated to contemporary art from these regions. The gallery supports emerging and more established artists, and seeks to shed light on their artistic practice by producing original, high-quality accompanying publications and holding talks and events

*The Calvert Journal* is a daily briefing on the culture and creativity of modern Russia (see



<http://calvertjournal.com/about>). Today, thanks to a rising generation of young artistic talent, Russia is in the midst of tremendous change. This is the inspiration for *The Calvert Journal*, a guide to creative Russia. It delivers a daily briefing on art, design, film, architecture and related cultural areas, through a mix of reportage, interviews, photography and design, and from a network of writers and contributors stationed across Russia's many regions and time zones.

In addition to *The Calvert Journal* and the Calvert 22 Gallery, the Foundation has developed a third initiative – Calvert Education, a cultural exchange and information programme. Calvert Education has teamed up with St Petersburg State University's Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences (Smolny College) and their partners Bard College, a world-renowned American liberal arts college.

## Documentary Film

### Hurricanes to Murmansk DVD

On 31 August 1941, the first Arctic Convoy docked at Archangel, Russia – a demonstration of British support for the USSR in its fight against Nazi Germany. The 500 men who stepped onto the quay were not sailors, but airmen of the British Royal Air Force (RAF). The two squadrons of 151 Wing were sent by Winston Churchill in response to a plea for help from Stalin, a positive signal that Britain was a reliable ally in the common fight against Fascism.

*Hurricanes to Murmansk* (50 minutes) is produced by UK independent company Atoll Productions and their Russian co-producer Elena Rubinova.

In 2005 a Russian crew filmed the ceremonial events in Murmansk on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Allied Victory in 1945. A few RAF veterans of 151 Wing joined the British naval survivors of the Arctic Convoys at these events. Accompanying them was Air Commodore Philip Wilkinson, Defence Attaché at the UK Embassy in Moscow 1993–96, who was

conscious of widespread ignorance of the presence of the RAF on the first Convoy.

Until their interviews for the film, veterans had never spoken publicly about the successful RAF operation on the Eastern Front: after 1945 Cold War politics ensured that the Anglo-Soviet wartime alliance was conveniently forgotten. This documentary film sets the record straight.

For more information about the DVD and to purchase a copy, contact Atoll Productions: Email: [atollprod@aol.com](mailto:atollprod@aol.com), Tel: 020-8540-0700, Web: [www.atollproductions.co.uk](http://www.atollproductions.co.uk).

## Theatre

### National Theatre

South Bank, London SE1 9PX, Box Office: 020 7452 3000

Until 14 July: *Children of the Sun* by Maxim Gorky, in a new version by Andrew Upton. Directed by Howard Davies. Maxim Gorky's darkly comic play is set in Russia as the country rolls towards revolution. It depicts the new middle-class, foolish yet likable, as they flounder about, philosophising and flirting, blind to their impending annihilation.

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**Printed and published by:**  
**SCRSS, 320 Brixton Road, London SW9 6AB**  
**Tel: 020 7274 2282, Fax: 020 7274 3230**  
**Email: [ruslibrary@scrss.org.uk](mailto:ruslibrary@scrss.org.uk)**  
**Website: [www.scrss.org.uk](http://www.scrss.org.uk)**  
**Registered Charity No 1104012**  
**Editor: Diana Turner**