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Feature

Architect of Disaster? Zhukov and 22 June 1941

By Geoffrey Roberts

Seventy years ago this summer the Red Army endured a series of defeats greater than that experienced by any other army in history. Within weeks of the launch of the German invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 the Red Army had suffered millions of casualties. Within months it had been forced to retreat to the gates of Leningrad and Moscow, and Hitler's plan to conquer Russia during the course of a single Blitzkrieg campaign was poised to succeed.

The German invasion of the Soviet Union began just before dawn. Leading the assault across a 1,000-mile front were 152 German divisions, supported by 14 Finnish divisions in the north and 14 Rumanian divisions in

the south. Later, the 3.5 million-strong invasion force would be joined by armies from Hungary and Italy, by the Spanish 'Blue Division', by contingents from Croatia and Slovakia, and by volunteer units recruited from every country in Nazi-occupied Europe.



Georgi Zhukov, Commander of the 1st Byelorussian Front, 1944 (SCRSS Photo Library)

Hitler's war against Russia was an ideological war against communism and a race war against the Jews and the Slavs. It was a *Vernichtungskrieg* – a war of destruction, of extermination. Not only the Red Army, but also the entire Soviet communist regime was to be destroyed – a goal that Hitler came close to achieving.

It is central to Zhukov's biography that when the disaster of 22 June befell the Red Army he was Chief of the General Staff (CGS) and bore primary responsibility for planning and preparing for the expected war with Germany. At the end of July 1941 Zhukov left the post of CGS and took charge of a Reserve Front – 50 divisions tasked to mount a counteroffensive against the Germans in the Smolensk area. Zhukov's 'Yel'nya offensive' of August–September 1941 was the first major victory of the Red Army over the Germans and delayed their advance on Moscow for several weeks.

Zhukov's conduct of the Yel'nya operation gave the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin the confidence to make him his trusted military troubleshooter. Zhukov's assignment to strengthen the defences of Leningrad soon followed and in October he was recalled to Moscow and entrusted with safeguarding the Soviet capital. In December 1941 Zhukov launched a great counteroffensive in front of Moscow that threw the *Wehrmacht* back 100 miles and ended Hitler's hopes of avoiding a war of attrition on the Eastern Front.

Notwithstanding his apparent failure as CGS, Zhukov emerged from the disaster of 22 June 1941 with both his status and his reputation enhanced. As the war progressed and the Soviets recovered their position, memory of the trauma of 22 June 1941 faded. Zhukov was appointed Stalin's Deputy Supreme Commander in August 1942 and he played a central role in the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in battles from Stalingrad to Kursk, from Minsk to Warsaw. It was Zhukov who led the Soviet assault on Berlin in April 1945 and it was he who signed the treaty accepting Germany's unconditional surrender on 9 May 1945. Not surprisingly, Zhukov was widely seen as the main architect of the Soviet triumph over Hitler.

After the war Zhukov fell from Stalin's favour and was banished to a regional military command, but there was no criticism of his role as CGS in 1941. After Stalin's death in 1953 a critical discussion of the disaster of 22 June 1941 developed in the Soviet

Union, but most criticism focused on Stalin's personal culpability in ignoring the many warnings about an imminent German invasion and for hindering the mobilisation of the Red Army to meet the coming attack. Zhukov, who by then had returned to Moscow from his regional military command to become Deputy and then Minister of Defence, did not emphasise that aspect of the critique of Stalin, preferring instead to concentrate his own fire on the damage caused by the Soviet dictator's pre-war purge of the Red Army. However, when he fell out with the new party leader, Nikita Khrushchev, in 1957, the Khrushchevite attack on Stalin was broadened to include Zhukov's role in the failure to anticipate or prepare adequately for the German 'surprise' attack.



Marshal Zhukov and Field Marshal Montgomery meeting in Berlin, 1945 (SCRSS Photo Library)

Zhukov was not able to respond publicly to that criticism until after Khrushchev's fall from power in 1964. In his memoirs, first published in 1969, Zhukov mounted a robust defence of his brief tenure as CGS, arguing that the Red Army was well prepared for war and substantially mobilised by the time of the German attack. There had been some mistakes, admitted Zhukov, notably the miscalculation of the main direction of the German attack. The Soviet High Command, and especially Stalin, believed this would be aimed at occupying the rich lands, raw materials and industrial resources of the Ukraine rather than, as turned out to be the case, the capture of Leningrad and Moscow. Stalin had also gravely miscalculated the

timing of the German attack. Stalin, said Zhukov, believed war could be delayed and was suspicious that reports of an imminent German attack were the work of British and American *agents provocateurs*. Stalin also feared that premature Soviet mobilisation could accelerate the outbreak of hostilities with Hitler. "Mobilisation means war," he told Zhukov, mindful of the precedent of the July Crisis of 1914 and the effect of Tsar Nicholas II's decision to mobilise the Russian Army.

The failure to mobilise fully, argued Zhukov, was a major factor in the short-term success of the German attack. But he was loath to scapegoat Stalin for the disaster, pointing out that the High Command should have done more to convince 'the boss' of the danger of an imminent German attack.

Zhukov's defence of Stalin tended to obscure a more important issue: why was he put in charge of the General Staff when he had little experience of staff work? The answer is that, when the Germans attacked, the Soviets planned to respond with a strategic counter-invasion of enemy territory and Zhukov was seen by Stalin as the man to direct such operations. Immediately before his appointment as CGS in January 1941 Zhukov had taken part in General Staff war games in which he had excelled as both attacker and defender.

The most important reason for Stalin's refusal to heed warnings of an imminent German attack was that he did not believe it mattered much if he miscalculated and Hitler caught him by surprise. Neither Stalin nor the General Staff believed the Germans would attack with massive military force from day one of the war. The Soviet expectation was that hostilities would begin with several days of relatively minor frontier battles. During this period the two sides would mobilise and then commit their main forces to battle. Zhukov and the Soviet General Staff expected their frontier defences to hold during this initial period of the war, thus buying time to complete the Red Army's mobilisation. This thinking meant the Red Army was ill-prepared to mount the deep and extended defence

required to fend off the massive German attack of 22 June 1941.



Marshal Zhukov at the parade of Allied troops in Berlin, 7 September 1945, in honour of the victory over Japan (SCRSS Photo Library)

The Red Army's offensivist doctrine and its preparations to wage an offensive war with Germany once hostilities began have misled some historians into thinking that Stalin and Zhukov intended to launch a pre-emptive strike against Hitler in summer 1941. According to this view, the untold story of the tragedy of 22 June 1941 is that the Red Army was caught unready by the German invasion not because it was surprised, but because it was in the middle of its own preparations for attack. There is, however, no evidence Stalin wanted or intended to start a war with Hitler in summer 1941. On the contrary, he strove to avoid war for as long as possible – indeed, for far too long in the opinion of many military analysts, including Zhukov.

Zhukov was not the only one of Stalin's generals to share his leader's illusions about the defensive capabilities of the Red Army. Nor was he unique in seeking, after the

event and after the dictator's death, to distance himself from the disastrous consequences of that fundamental miscalculation. But Zhukov was more honest than most in accepting a share of responsibility.

His frankest exposition of his and the High Command's failings is to be found in unpublished writings in his personal files in the Russian military history archive. As Zhukov noted in one manuscript: "Soviet military science in the pre-war period considered only that offensive action could destroy the enemy, that defence would play a purely auxiliary role in protecting offensive groupings striving to achieve designated goals." The result was that the Red Army neglected training for defence, especially at the operational-strategic level, and was unprepared for the defensive war it was forced to fight in 1941–42 – a "serious mistake", said Zhukov, that led to high casualties. The error was compounded by the failure to learn the lessons of the early years of the Second World War. The German victories in Poland, France and other countries showed that a sudden attack by concentrated armoured forces, backed by a strong air force, could "quickly overrun defences, swiftly cut off enemy lines of retreat and surround his basic groupings". Naturally, the General Staff had studied the Germans' tactics but, Zhukov admitted, the reality did not really dawn on them until the *Wehrmacht's* armoured forces pierced Soviet defences like giant battering rams. At the same time, he did not think the German invasion could have been halted at the frontier. Better defences could have reduced Soviet casualties and increased German losses, but the initial success of the surprise attack was primarily a function of the quantitative and qualitative superiority of the *Wehrmacht*.

In private Zhukov was not very complimentary about the Soviets' top military leaders. Kirill Meretskov, his predecessor as CGS, he described as experienced and knowledgeable but over-careful and with a tendency towards passivity, while Semyon Timoshenko, the

People's Commissar for Defence, was, Zhukov wrote, "no more than a dilettante" when it came to grand strategy and preparing the country for war. As to himself: "I say directly that I was not prepared for the role of Chief of the General Staff (and told Stalin so when he appointed me). In spite of all my hard work, by the beginning of the war I had still not mastered the principal question of the defence of the country and the operational-strategic preparedness of the armed forces for war with such a powerful and experienced enemy as fascist Germany."

When the German invasion began, Zhukov was dispatched to the Ukraine to oversee the Soviet counter-offensive in the southwest. It had little success and the same was true of Soviet counter-offensives in Byelorussia and the Baltic. If anything, the Red Army's counter-attacks made its position worse by making it vulnerable to German encirclement operations. To his credit, though, Zhukov did not lose his composure in the face of mounting defeats. He survived his baptism of fire, learned the lessons of defeat and went on to become the greatest Soviet general of the Second World War.

This is an edited extract from Geoffrey Roberts' biography of Zhukov, to be published by Random House in early 2012.

Professor Roberts is Head of the School of History at University College Cork, Ireland. His previous publications include 'The Unholy Alliance: Stalin's Pact with Hitler' (1989), 'The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Second World War' (1995) and 'Stalin's Wars: From World War to Cold War, 1939–1953' (Yale University Press, 2006).



Photo Exhibition and Talk at the Royal Albert Hall
Thursday 9 June - Monday 4 July

Free open days for exhibition

Saturday 25 June	11.00am - 3.00pm
Saturday 2 July	10.00am - 2.00pm
Sunday 3 July	11.00am - 3.00pm

The First Man in the Space...and the Man Who Put Him There

On Sunday 26 June at 6.30 pm there will be a talk by Piers Bizony, the author of Starman: The Truth Behind The Legend Of Yuri Gagarin. Tickets for this event are £10 and include a glass of wine.

For more information www.royalalberthall.com



RIANOVOSTI

SCIENCEphotoLIBRARY

SCRSS News

5th SCRSS Russian Language Seminar

This year's seminar on 13–14 April attracted 20 participants, including teachers, translators, interpreters, graduates and independent students of Russian. Taught by Professor Nikita Maslennikov of the St Petersburg School of Economics and Professor Natalia Rogozhina of the St Petersburg State University's Faculty of Philology, the response from both participants and lecturers was very positive. The seminar was organised in co-operation with our partners the St Petersburg Association for International Co-operation, St Petersburg State University and Rossotrudnichestvo (Russian Federal Agency for CIS, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Co-operation).

Annual General Meeting

The Society's AGM was held on Saturday 21 May 2011. At the meeting the following SCRSS members were elected to the Council for three years: Jill Cunningham (re-election) and Fiona Wright. The following Honorary Officer was elected for three years: Professor Jim Riordan (Vice-President). The Council is now as follows. Honorary Officers: Professor William Bowring (President), Robert Chandler, Professor Robert Davies, Stanley Forman, Dr Kate Hudson, Dr Rachel O'Higgins, Professor James Riordan and Robert Wareing (Vice-Presidents). Executive Committee: John Riley (Chair), Philip Matthews (Vice-Chair), Charles Stewart (Vice-Chair), Ralph Gibson (Hon Treasurer), Jean Turner (Hon Secretary), Victoria Nartova and Kate Clark. Council Members: Jill Cunningham, Barbara Ellis, Andrew Jameson, Christine Lindey, Diana Turner and Fiona Wright.

SCRSS Chair, John Riley, opened the meeting, saying the Society was blessed

with three major assets: its unrivalled library collections, the work of its staff and volunteers, and the support and generosity of its members. He expressed his gratitude to members and friends who had so far contributed £5,000 to the £50,000 Library Appeal launched in January 2011.

Hon Secretary, Jean Turner, highlighted three major events that had taken place over the previous year:

- *Anglo-Soviet Cultural Exchanges 1941–1948* exhibition, commemorating the 65th anniversary of the end of WWII. Following its launch in St Petersburg in April 2010, it had been shown at the Diplomatic Academy in Moscow in November 2010 and to members at a special event in December 2010 (see previous issues of the *SCRSS Information Digest* for details).
- 5th SCRSS Russian Language Seminar in April 2011.
- The *Gagarin at the SCR* exhibition, commemorating the first space flight by Yuri Gagarin on 12 April 1961 and his visit to Britain in July 1961, was launched at the SCRSS on 14 April 2011. The exhibition included photographs, posters, stamps and other artefacts from the SCRSS archives. At the launch a recording of Gagarin's transmission from space was played, accompanied by a photographic slideshow. Speakers included Bernard Kops, who read the poem *To Yuri Gagarin* which he had written and presented to Gagarin at the SCR on 13 July 1961, and Andrea Rose, Visual Art Director of the British Council.

The Society paid tribute to several longstanding SCRSS members who had died in the past year: Basil Becker, Sergei Bezkorvany, Pierre Mosyoni, Ronald Saunders and Albert Williams. The AGM was followed by a buffet and a well attended lecture by Professor Geoffrey Roberts of University College Cork on *Marshal Zhukov (see our main feature *Architect of Disaster? Zhukov and 22 June 1941* on page 1).*

If you are an SCRSS member who was unable to attend the AGM and wishes to receive a copy of the Annual Report, please request an electronic copy by email or send an A4 stamped addressed envelope for a hard copy.

SCRSS £50,000 Library Appeal

The SCRSS Library Appeal was launched in January 2011 to help support us in cataloguing and digitising our unique library collections, upgrading our equipment, and making essential improvements to the safety and security of our premises. The Appeal has so far raised £5,000, but we still have some way to go to meet our target. Please give generously and encourage others to do so too. Please send donations to SCRSS, 320 Brixton Road, London SW9 6AB (cheques made payable to "SCRSS"). You can download a copy of the Library Appeal leaflet, together with a Gift Aid form, from the SCRSS website home page at www.scrss.org.uk. Thank you!

SCRSS Facebook Group

In addition to our website at www.scrss.org.uk, the Society now has a Facebook group. Sign up at www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=120687063846 to keep in touch with activities.

Next Events

Saturday 25 June 2pm–5pm

Film: The Battle for Moscow, Part One: Aggression

To commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Nazi invasion of the USSR on 22 June 1941, we are showing the epic film *The Battle for Moscow* in two instalments on Saturday 25 June and Saturday 9 July. Based on documentary materials and produced on DVD by the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation and V/K Sovexportfilm, this two-part film records the great feat of the Soviet people in withstanding the first period of the Great Patriotic War in 1941 – on the frontline, in

encirclement, in the rear. Directed by Yuri Ozerov, Mosfilm, 1985. English subtitles. Total showing time, Part One: 2 hours 46 mins (with a short break at 1 hour 18 mins). *Note: Admission to this event is free (SCRSS members and non-members), but all tickets must be reserved at least one week in advance. Telephone the SCRSS on 020-7274-2282 to reserve a ticket. Doors open 1.30pm.*

Saturday 9 July 2pm–5pm

Film: The Battle for Moscow, Part Two: Typhoon

Part II of the epic two-part documentary (see details above). Directed by Yuri Ozerov, Mosfilm, 1985. English subtitles. Total showing time, Part Two: 2 hours 52 mins (with a short break at 1 hour 23 mins).

Note: Admission to this event is free (SCRSS members and non-members), but all tickets must be reserved at least one week in advance. Telephone the SCRSS on 020-7274-2282 to reserve a ticket. Doors open 1.30pm.

September (date TBC)

Film: The Brest Fortress

New war drama set during the Nazi invasion of the USSR in June 1941, when Soviet troops held onto the Brest Fortress in Belarus for nine days. Directed by Alexander Kott, Russia, 2010. Cast includes Pavel Derevyanko, Andrei Merzlikin, Alexander Korshunov. English sub-titles.

Note: Admission to this event is free (SCRSS members and non-members), but all tickets must be reserved at least one week in advance. Date to be confirmed - see the SCRSS website or next issue of the SCRSS Information Digest for details.

Friday 7 October 7pm

Lecture: Caroline Walton on *The Besieged – Surviving Catastrophe*

This year is the 70th anniversary of the start of the Siege of Leningrad. In her talk Caroline Walton focuses on what we can learn from the survivors of the Siege, what kept them alive and how creativity contributed to their survival. Caroline's new book *The Besieged* is published on 8 September 2011 by Biteback Books. Copies will be on sale at the SCRSS event.

Friday 28 October 7pm

Lecture: John Riley on *Film Society*

John Riley, film historian, talks on the UK's first film society established in London in 1925 by a group of left-wing intellectuals.

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

Soviet Memorial Trust Fund News

Victory Day 2011

Up to 450 people attended the Victory Day ceremony at the Soviet War Memorial on 9 May. It was the first Act of Remembrance to be attended by the new Russian Ambassador in London, HE Alexander Yakovenko, who made reference to his own family's participation in the fight against fascism. The Deputy Lieutenant of Southwark, Mrs Jenny Bianco, the Deputy Mayor of Southwark, Cllr Lorraine Lauder, and Rt Hon Simon Hughes MP joined diplomats from the CIS countries and the USA, British and Soviet veterans, and representatives of UK organisations in laying wreaths. The Drill Squad from the nearby London Nautical School attended and it is hoped that they will now participate on an annual basis. Once again the Russian Orthodox Church joined with a number of Russian community groups in marking this most significant anniversary for all peoples of the former USSR. Video footage of the ceremony can be found on the Russian Embassy website at www.rusemb.org.uk/video/60. There is also coverage on the local news website www.london-se1.co.uk.

Following the Act of Remembrance, on behalf of all the CIS embassies, the Russian

Ambassador invited all participants to an open-air reception in Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park, where veterans joined him in the traditional toast 'To Victory'. Later in the afternoon, in the Imperial War Museum cinema, Sir Rodric Lyne, former UK ambassador to Russia, introduced the documentary film *Hurricanes to Murmansk*. Made by Atoll Productions, it tells the gripping and little-known story of the RAF 151 Wing which was dispatched on the first Arctic Convoy in August 1941 to help protect the Russian northern ports from enemy attack. The RAF pilots and engineers spent several months training their Soviet colleagues before returning to the UK. Several thousand Hurricane fighter aircraft were eventually supplied to the USSR as part of the Allied war effort. The arrival of the Wing so soon after the Nazi German invasion was a timely signal of Britain's commitment to its new ally. There are more details about the film and purchase information at www.atollproductions.co.uk.

Federation Council Speaker

Sergei Mironov, former Speaker of the upper chamber of the Russian parliament, met with the Deputy Mayor of Southwark, Diane Lees, the Director General of the Imperial War Museum, Arctic Convoy veterans and Trustees of the SMTF during a brief visit to the Memorial in March. Mr Mironov laid a wreath and presented mementoes to the veterans. He was in London heading a delegation from the Federation Council to meet their counterparts in the House of Lords.

SMTF Honoured

To mark the continuing work of the SMTF in organising events connected with the Soviet War Memorial, the Russian Ambassador, HE Alexander Yakovenko, presented 65th Anniversary of Victory commemorative medals to Philip Matthews, Chairman of the SMTF, and Ralph Gibson, Hon Secretary, at a ceremony at the Russian Embassy in March.

Funeral of Mayor of Southwark

The SMTF was represented at the full civic funeral of the Mayor of Southwark, Cllr Tayo Situ, at Southwark Cathedral in May. Cllr Situ had attended both the Remembrance Sunday ceremony in 2010 and the Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony earlier this year. He had been ill for several weeks and passed away on 9 May.

Next Events

Sunday 13 November 12.30pm

Event: Remembrance Sunday

The SMTF will be organising its traditional Remembrance Sunday ceremony at the Memorial in November. Further details will be sent out in October. If you are not already on the SMTF mailing list, please send your details to: Hon Secretary, SMTF, c/o 320 Brixton Road, London SW9 6AB or email smtf@hotmail.co.uk. Information about the Soviet War Memorial and associated events are also available on the SCRSS website.

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

Feature

The Partisan War in Belarus 1941–44

By Russell Porter

The first line of the national anthem of the Republic of Belarus is “We Belarusians are a peaceful people” (“Мы, беларусы – мірныя людзі”). However, during the years 1941–44 peace was an unattainable ideal as Belarusians were forced into a struggle that placed the very existence of their nation in doubt. Some 2,230,000 Belarusian civilians perished during the Second World War. By its end as much as 40% of the pre-

war population – as defined by its present borders – had disappeared, either killed as a result of the fighting during the German invasion of 1941 and the subsequent battles of liberation in 1944, or lost through post-war border changes and population resettlement. However, irrefutably the greatest loss of life came as a direct result of the murderous policies of the Nazi occupation. This resulted in the almost total annihilation of the Jewish element of the population and condemned the remainder to having a value only in so far as they represented a useful pool of slave labour for the Nazi war effort.



Bobruisk Partisan Brigade HQ, Belarus
(SCRSS Photo Library)

The German attack on the Soviet Union began at dawn on 22 June 1941. Within four days the capital, Minsk, had fallen and by September all the territory of Belarus was under the Nazi yoke. The nucleus of the partisan movement sprang from small groups of surviving Red Army soldiers who had been cut off in the wake of these catastrophic defeats and had sought sanctuary in the remote forested areas of the country. Their initial achievement and priorities revolved around the simple act of survival, especially during the first terrible winter of the war as they hid out in the forest. However, hope was re-kindled with the German Army's first defeat outside Moscow in December 1941. In April 1942 a Central Partisan HQ was set up under PK Ponomarenko, First Secretary of the Byelorussian Communist Party, to operate as part of the Stavka (Soviet High Command). Its aim was to harness the

potential of the troops and able-bodied civilians who had been cut off or left behind in the retreat. Special courses were set up near the city of Vladimir, one of the famed cities of Russia's Golden Ring, to train operatives for parachuting behind enemy lines. There they would make contact with and co-ordinate the activities of these disparate groups, organise them into efficient military structures, arrange arms drops and try to put together a co-ordinated strategy for harassing the enemy as successfully as possible. However, the help that could be offered was initially limited. A pre-requisite for admission to most partisan units was to bring one's own weapon and, until late in the struggle, most units utilised clothing and weapons acquired from the enemy unless they still possessed old Soviet uniforms and weaponry.



Food arrives for Belorussian partisans lying in ambush, 1942 (SCRSS Photo Library)

By the end of 1942 anti-German resistance groups in Belarus had become well organised. The Germans were taken by surprise when they found themselves faced with small-scale attacks against railway tracks, roads, bridges, telephone lines and supply depots. These attacks grew in intensity throughout 1943 as more recruits poured in. During the battles at Kursk in July and the re-crossing of the Dnieper River later in the autumn, partisan activities rendered great service by hindering road and rail traffic bringing up German supplies and reinforcements. On 22 September 1943 Yelena Mazanik assassinated Wilhelm Kube, head of the German occupation authorities in Belarus, at his apartment in

Minsk. She was later made a Hero of the Soviet Union.

By mid-June 1944 the partisan forces had grown to some 150 brigades and 49 detachments, with a total strength of approximately 143,000. Their greatest contribution to the war effort was the co-ordinated attacks made on the enemy's lines of communication in advance of, and during, Operation Bagration, the Red Army's successful campaign to liberate Belarus which began on 22 June 1944. They were also active in subsequent operations to eliminate German troops left behind in the wake of the Red Army's advance.

In fact, the psychological effect on the Germans of the partisans' activities may have been of greater value than any physical damage caused, as no German soldier could ever feel totally safe in the occupied territories. Some 40,000–50,000 German troops were killed as a direct result of partisan actions. Their intelligence-gathering activities were also of inestimable value to the Soviet High Command, as they resulted in almost no operational secrecy for the Germans on the one hand and almost total operational secrecy for the Soviets on the other.

The bravery, selflessness, audacity and tenaciousness of the partisans are the stuff of legend, and their contribution to final victory invaluable. However, the partisan war also had its darker side.

While all the units that fought in the partisan movement had a common enemy and in Eastern Belarus the units were unquestionably pro-Soviet, in Western Belarus the situation was more complicated. As featured in the film *Defiance* (2008), starring Daniel Craig, a number of separate Jewish partisan groups existed, such as the Bielski Brigade. Western Belarus also had a large Polish population that had only been absorbed into the Soviet Union in 1939. As a result, clashes occurred between Polish, pro-Soviet or Belarusian nationalist units, while the smaller number of all-Jewish units were subject to a degree of discrimination from all sides. This friction occasionally took

on the form of a minor civil war within the general war.



Liberated Belarus: Vitebsk, 1944
(SCRSS Photo Library)

The population of Western Belarus had experienced German occupation before, during the First World War. At that time the German authorities had behaved relatively humanely, even allowing the formation of a quasi-independent Belarusian state in 1918 after the establishment of peace with Russia through the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. An element of the population was therefore prepared to co-operate actively with the Germans – at least initially. As a result, the partisans also fought a war against those fellow citizens whom they regarded as traitors and collaborators.

Partisan actions against the German occupiers resulted in harsh reprisals for the civilian population. Witness Khatin (Хатынь) outside Minsk where on 22 March 1943 villagers were assembled in a barn and burned to death as punishment for the shooting of a German officer nearby. The action at Khatin was the subject of a major feature film *Come and See (Иди и смотри)* directed by Elim Klimov in 1985. Today the site of the village is a national shrine, representing all those villages that suffered similar fates. Similar harsh reprisals were repeated everywhere and served to increase opposition to the German occupation. However, they also meant that, contrary to post-war myth, the partisans were not always regarded with unrefined joy by the local civilian population: not only were civilians obliged to share their meagre food reserves with the partisans or face the risk

of a charge of 'treason', they could be punished by the Germans for partisan actions.

Churchill's well-known exhortation to the Special Operations Executive, set up to organise resistance groups in Western Europe, to "set Europe ablaze" became the reality in Belarus and it was not pleasant. It is a sobering thought that not until the 1980s did the population of Belarus return to pre-war levels.

Russell Porter has been involved as a voluntary collaborator with the Brest Fortress Museum and Memorial Complex in Belarus for more than two years. He has arranged exhibitions for the Museum in both the UK and Holland, and is currently working with them on an English translation of their definitive Guide Book.

Reports

Yuri Gagarin 50th Anniversary Events

The 50th anniversary of Yuri Gagarin's historic orbit of the Earth on 12 April 1961 continues to be marked in the UK and around the world with ceremonies, books, articles, exhibitions, talks, and parties. In Russia, the traditional Cosmonautics Day events had a special feel as every monument to its achievements in space exploration attracted attention and flowers. Cosmonauts and astronauts from many countries, including the first Briton in space, Helen Sharman, attended a special gala event in the Moscow Kremlin, with Yuri's widow, Valentina, making a rare public appearance.

In the UK Chris Riley launched a very special documentary, *First Orbit*, which used filming from the International Space Station (ISS) to recreate as closely as possible the view of the Earth that Gagarin would have had, linking it with recordings of his own transmissions from space. The creation of

the film involved complex orbital calculations and co-operation from the occupants of the ISS. Almost 4 million people have watched the film on YouTube where it was premiered on 12 April. You can view the film and background information at www.firstorbit.org.

On 14 April the SCRSS itself marked the historic anniversary with the launch of an exhibition about Gagarin and, in particular, his visit in July 1961 to the premises of the Society, at that time based in Kensington Square. See SCRSS News on page 6 for more information about the launch event.



The statue of Yuri Gagarin, which will be unveiled in London in July, is photographed here in April before shipping to the UK (RIA Novosti photograph)

The Russian news agency RIA Novosti, in co-operation with Science Photo Library, is organising a photographic exhibition *Poekhali! Yuri Gagarin and the Dawn of Space Exploration*, comprising 50 images, at the Royal Albert Hall from 9 June to 4 July. The exhibition can be viewed when attending performances at the Royal Albert Hall or on three open days with free entry on 25 June, 2 and 3 July. On 26 June Gagarin

biographer Piers Bizony will also give a talk *The First Man in Space... and the Man Who Put Him There*. See the exhibition advertisement on page 5 for full details.

At the Waterside Arts Centre in Sale (www.watersideartscentre.co.uk/Exhibitions.asp) the *Gagarin: 50* exhibition run has been extended into July. The exhibition combines photography, fine art, video, memorabilia and oral histories to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first human space flight in 1961 and Gagarin's visit to Manchester and Trafford a few months later. It features a specially commissioned work from mural artist Walter Kershaw, along with images from the RIA Novosti press archive and video from NW Film Archive.

Finally, momentum is building towards 14 July when a statue of Yuri Gagarin will be unveiled outside the offices of the British Council near Admiralty Arch in central London. The date marks the 50th anniversary of Gagarin's visit to the UK at the invitation of the Foundry Workers' Union. The statue was donated to the UK by the Russian space agency, Roscosmos, and is a copy of a statue located outside the vocational school attended by Gagarin in Lyubertsy, near Moscow.

For more information on Yuri Gagarin and UK events see www.gagarin50.co.uk.

Ralph Gibson

Mikhail Gorbachev Eighty: Royal Albert Hall, 30 March 2011

It is, perhaps, a measure of his status within Russia that the main charity gala event marking Mikhail Gorbachev's 80th birthday should take place at the Royal Albert Hall in London, rather than the State Kremlin Palace in Moscow. The first – and last – President of the USSR was joined by members of his family, a large number of Russians who had flown in especially for the event, and a clutch of international political and entertainment figures.

The London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Valery Gergiev, accompanied a wide range of performers. The German rock group The Scorpions sang *Wind of Change* against a backdrop of images of the Berlin Wall coming down. Shirley Bassey and Paul Anka delivered show stoppers in keeping with the packed venue, but Bryan Ferry, and Mel C from the Spice Girls, seemed a little out of place, the latter expressing surprise at being invited. The hosts for the evening, Sharon Stone and Kevin Spacey, seemed bemused at times and had some difficulty with the names of the Russian performers. There were onstage tributes from Shimon Peres, Lech Walesa, Arnold Schwarzenegger and the current UK ambassador in Moscow, Anne Pringle. Bill Clinton, Bono and others sent video messages. Introduced into the proceedings were the *Mikhail Gorbachev: The Man Who Changed the World Awards*. These were tagged *Glasnost*, *Perestroika* and *Uskorenie* – words which have entered the international lexicon as a result of his policies of ‘openness’, ‘restructuring’ and ‘acceleration’. The first winners were Ted Turner, founder of CNN, Tim Berners-Lee, creator of the World Wide Web, and Evans Wadongo, the very young Kenyan inventor of a solar powered lamp. See amateur clips on YouTube or general information on the official website www.gorby80.com.

Ralph Gibson

Feature

SCRSS Music Collection

By Hamish Gallie

As a baritone, teacher and aspiring specialist in Russian vocal repertoire, the SCRSS Library’s collection of music recordings and scores has provided a useful resource for my professional work.

After completing my studies with world-class cellist Alexander Ivashkin and international soprano Nan Christie, I was very privileged

one day to come to the SCRSS library and discover a wealth of exquisite Soviet and post-Soviet recordings in the Music Collection.



Flyer for recital given by Sergei Prokofiev at the SCRSS on 28 January 1938 (SCRSS Archive)

I joined the Society, set to work in the collection and found an original 1950s Soviet LP with a rare recording of Prokofiev conducting *Cinderella* in the late 1940s. At that time I was completing a Masters Degree in Music (performance and research components) at Goldsmiths College, in conjunction with the Prokofiev Archive. I shall never forget the excitement and exhilaration I felt at taking this record, which had not been disturbed for many decades, out of its sleeve, quietly putting it on the antique sapphire turntable, and hearing a rich, generous and spirited performance of Prokofiev's *Cinderella Suite* conducted by the composer. What made it more exciting was that I was frequently going to and from Russia, and was booked in to study at the St Petersburg Conservatory for a month and a half that year.

There are over 3,000 records like this in the SCRSS archive and for researchers into

Russian music, in particular, it is a vital resource.

I was recently invited by the Great Britain–Russia Society to perform a concert of Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov songs and romances, supported by my accompanist Tamriko Sakvarelidze Black. Again I found myself buried in the SCRSS Library, listening to various Tchaikovsky and Arensky performances by rarities such as Georgi Nelep and Gidon Kremer in the pre-defection years. Here were so many jewels of interpretation from an empire that had passed within one young man's living memory. These recordings proved especially useful in attempting to feed an interpretation of rarer works, such as Arensky's *Song Cycle Op. 27 No's 1–6*, which formed the core of the concert programme.

The SCRSS Music Collection also houses a huge number of pre-Soviet and Soviet-era printed music scores. Many are fragile, printed as they are on cheaper paper that can disintegrate more rapidly. However, they include many interesting and valuable resources, for example 1930s piano reductions of *Boris Godunov*.

There is also an interesting collection of Soviet pedagogical materials on music that may assist aspiring teachers with piano skills.

With these things in mind, I would encourage all researchers and performers to stop off at the SCRSS and take advantage of its excellent music resource.

Hamish Gallie MMus PGCE is a vocal performer and music teacher who recently joined St Mary's Catholic High School in Croydon as a specialist music teacher (NQT) and organ player.

He would like to thank the SCRSS library for all its help over recent years, as well as Elena Alexandrovna Gatsenko of the St Petersburg Academy of Theatrical Arts for her invaluable help in translating and helping to interpret the recently premiered Arensky works.

Film Reviews

A Room and a Half

**Directed by Andrei Khrzhanovsky;
script by Khrzhanovsky & Yuri Arabov (DVD, 130 mins, PAL region 2, Yume 043)**

Andrei Khrzhanovsky is one of the world's great animators, revelling in what he feels are its limitless artistic and technological possibilities, and its ability to condense time.

When he read Josef Brodsky's autobiographical essay *A Room and a Half*, it reflected his own experiences so closely – they even had some mutual friends – that “an urge to respond to this came over me almost immediately”. As well as writing, Brodsky – inspired by his father – took photographs and used them in a pilot project *A Cat and a Half (Полтора коты, 2006)*.

Three years later, at the age of 70 and after a lifetime of making short animated films, Khrzhanovsky completed his first extraordinary live-action feature, *A Room and a Half (Полторы комнаты или сентиментальное путешествие на Родину)*. In it Brodsky is allowed an imaginary return journey to St Petersburg, interleaved with flashbacks to his childhood, his life as a '60s *stilyaga* and a posthumous meeting with his parents who died before being allowed to visit him in his American exile. The director matches the film's departure from reality with a series of dreamlike interludes.

The cast is uniformly outstanding: above all Grigori Dityatkovsky as the adult Brodsky, with great support from the hugely popular Alissa Freindlikh and Sergei Yursky as his parents.

The disc has a few extras: theatrical trailer; essay by Khrzhanovsky; Q&A with Khrzhanovsky and Freindlikh; BBC radio interview in Russian with Khrzhanovsky and Freindlikh. One of the best of these is the 'essay' by the director – actually an

interview in which he talks about the preparation for the film and shows some of the source materials that informed Dityatkovsky's extraordinary performance.

Anyone interested in Soviet art should see Khrzhanovsky's short films. However, this feature should widen his appeal with its touching story of a nostalgia that is not unique to Russians, told through piercing performances and charming animated interludes.

John Riley

How I Ended This Summer Directed by Alexei Popogrebsky

One of the biggest recent Russian art house successes was *How I Ended This Summer* (*Как я провёл этим летом*), which won prizes at festivals around the world, including London and Berlin. Director Alexei Popogrebsky had a hit in 2003 with *Roads to Koktobel* (*Коктебель*) and his new film has the same quiet drive.

Recent graduate Pavel is working with veteran Sergei at a remote meteorological station, but when the radio brings terrible news for Sergei, Pavel puts off passing it on. The procrastination becomes harder to break, raising the tension to unbearable levels, while the gentle echoes of Tarkovsky's *Stalker* enhance rather than detract.

A two-hander – the only other characters are radio voices – some have seen it as a parable of intergenerational Russia, but while there might be elements of that, at bottom it is about failing to take responsibility.

The translated title doesn't help, making it sound like a school essay (and missing the deliberate punning), but this is one of the most intense recent Russian films.

A DVD of the film will be released by New Wave Films in September 2011.

John Riley

Book Reviews

Afgantsy: The Russians in Afghanistan 1979–89 By Rodric Braithwaite (Profile Books, 2011, ISBN 978- 1846680540, Hbk, 417pp, £25.00)

As British Ambassador in Moscow at the time the USSR forces withdrew from Afghanistan, it is perhaps not surprising that Rodric Braithwaite has chosen to write this fascinating, detailed and timely account of the conflict. The author of *Moscow 1941: A City and its People at War* has once again focused on the stories of the ordinary participants – the *Afgantsy*, the Russian term for veterans of the war. Braithwaite's previous book shone a light on one of the greatest battles ever fought, which had received relatively little attention outside Russia; *Afgantsy* may well become the standard history of the war for Western readers.

Braithwaite explodes many of the myths surrounding the "limited military contingent", which he shows was intended as a defensive action to help restore order in a country on its border. The Soviet leadership, which had "slithered towards military intervention because they could not think of a better alternative", thought they would be able to withdraw the troops within a year. In the West it was portrayed as an invasion, a threat to world peace, and proved how Communism was intent on expansion. There were sanctions, including an extensive boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics, and an arms build-up in what became another dangerous phase of the Cold War.

The book deals extensively with the withdrawal of the Soviet forces. Announced publicly in February 1986, it took three years for the process to be completed. The contemporary resonances are everywhere – from the names of towns and areas of intense fighting to the arguments for and against withdrawal. It is to be hoped that this

book will be required reading for those responsible for the current intervention in Afghanistan.

Ralph Gibson



Soviet cameraman Roman Karmen at work on the Belarus front (SCRSS Photo Library)

A Russian Journal **By John Steinbeck, with** **photographs by Robert Capa** **(Penguin Classics, 2000, ISBN:** **0-14-118633-X, Pbk, £14.99)**

At the start of the Cold War, depressed by the news, a famous American writer and equally famous Hungarian photographer met in a bar in New York and decided to make – to quote the photographer – “an old-fashioned Don Quixote and Sancho Panza quest” behind Churchill’s ‘iron curtain’.

Without a political agenda, but out of curiosity to see how real Soviet people were living, John Steinbeck and Robert Capa set out in 1947 on a remarkable journey. They had to overcome bureaucratic obstacles, the suspicion of Russian officials who feared yet another denigration of their destroyed but victorious country, and primitive transport.

The result was first published in the USA in 1948 and this edition brings back to life the sad, funny, generous, invincible people they met in that war-torn land. Steinbeck’s vivid description of a young girl living in a hole in

the ruins of Stalingrad, living off scraps like a wild animal, driven mad by the bombardment, makes me wonder how many such sad wrecks now exist in modern theatres of war.

Because of its honesty the book satisfied neither what Steinbeck calls “the ecclesiastical Left nor the lumpen Right” but he found, unsurprisingly, that the Russian people were like all people: very nice, hated war, wanted peace and a good life.

Robert Capa’s pictures of the indomitable Soviet women who carried the burden of the post-war reconstruction remain famous, alongside his images of the Spanish Civil War.

We should be grateful for Penguin’s reprint of this classic.

Jean Turner

Note: The SCRSS Library contains a hardback edition of *A Russian Journal*, published by William Heinemann Ltd in 1949.

Direction – Space! **By Maria Gruzdeva (Dewi Lewis** **Publishing, January 2011, ISBN:** **978-1-907893-05-6, Hbk, £30.00)**

At the height of the Cold War, which limited scientific relations between the Soviet Union and capitalist countries, a world-shattering event took place. On 12 April 1961 the first man in space, Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, was heard broadcasting his message of peace as he orbited the earth in his space capsule *Vostok 1*.

Fifty years on this historic flight is being celebrated worldwide, with many innovative artistic and scientific events taking place.

In her new book Maria Gruzdeva, a fine art photographer, together with Matthew Shaul, Director of Departure Lounge Contemporary Art and Media, Luton, has assembled a touching visual record of the still functioning workshops and laboratories in Star City,

Moscow Region, and Baikonur, Kazakhstan, where all the preparations for and launches of the Soviet space programme took place.

Maria Gruzdeva visited these once secretly guarded sites last year to photograph them. “Reticence and insularity explain the unity of this world: people exist as a tight community, a family that works towards the same aim. It is a model of sincerity and faith, something which has been lost in our contemporary world,” she writes.

As if trapped in a Soviet era time warp, the slightly shabby buildings with their simple furnishings give a sense of conviction that space travel is not only possible but normal.

There is none of the NASA public relations razzmatazz of the US space programme. The idealism and iconography of the Soviet space programme speaks of serving humanity and a belief in a peaceful future. A huge mural on the Missile Assembly Building at Baikonur features the Soviet chief rocket engineer, SP Korolyov, and the slogan *The Road to the Stars is Open*.

The pride of the Soviet Union in its scientific achievement was expressed in mosaics, paintings, sculpture, posters, postage stamps, badges and widely circulated photographs of the cosmonauts. This book reminds us of the high standards of their design and their international impact.

As Matthew Shaul points out in his introduction: “[...] the space programme’s monuments, idealism and unity of purpose have not only survived the demise of the Soviet Union [...] but seem to be thriving [...] it freely collaborates with the European Space Agency [...] and is also currently the only way for American astronauts to reach the International Space Station, following the retirement of the Space Shuttle.”

This handsome book is a worthy record of this triumph.

Jean Turner

Note: This review was first published in the *Morning Star* on 13 April 2011.

From the Russian Press

Underage Drinking Crisis

The sale of alcohol and cigarettes to children under 18 years is illegal in Russia. However, as *Argumenty i Fakty* reported recently, the law is broken routinely across the country (‘Ne dayte detyam pit!’), No 10, 2011).

A draft law, aimed at increasing the penalties for selling alcohol to minors, passed its first reading in the Duma in December 2010. Under the law trading licences can be suspended and fines – or a year’s community service – imposed on individuals, while repeat offences will be subject to criminal prosecution.

Argumenty i Fakty welcomed the move, while expressing concern at how the law would be enforced. Its own undercover investigations had confirmed widespread flouting of the existing legislation. In Moscow a 15-year-old had been able to buy alcohol easily in three out of six shops checked, ranging from large supermarkets to corner stores. In Ulyanovsk, an investigation across the city had revealed that in one district alone 39 out of 55 outlets had sold beer, vodka and cigarettes to teenagers. The local authority had now banned the sale of alcohol and cigarettes from kiosks in the city centre, as well as the sale of spirits in all stores on certain public holidays such as the Day of the City. In Novosibirsk, eight out of nine teenagers had experimented with alcohol and cigarettes, according to official statistics. A children’s charity in Novosibirsk had called for the sale of alcohol to be limited to large supermarkets, with production of a passport a prerequisite.

Job Market Trends

Job vacancy data for April 2011, published by two online recruitment agencies, highlighted current trends in the Russian job market (‘Kem na Rusi byt’ khorosho?

Sekretar', kur'er i povar', *Pravda*, 12.5.11, www.pravda.ru).

At Joblist.ru blue-collar and service sector workers were in highest demand, with most vacancies concentrated in Moscow, St Petersburg and Kazan. There was stiff competition for secretary, electrician and driver positions in Moscow and Kazan, and for secretaries, electricians and couriers in St Petersburg. In all three cities chefs, cleaners and service engineers were likely to have the least problems in finding jobs. Salary scales, however, varied widely across Russia. Salaries in St Petersburg were on average 21% lower than in Moscow, but 75% higher than in Kazan. The monthly salary advertised for a security guard in Moscow (30,300 roubles) was four times higher than in Kazan, while a mechanic could expect to earn 39,400 roubles in Moscow but only 26,500 in Samara.

At SuperJob.ru professionals, skilled and manual workers all featured in its top 10 vacancy sectors. Sales managers were in first place (7.7% of vacancies), followed by skilled workers (6.9%). Engineers were in third place (5.9% of vacancies), raising concerns in government at the scarcity of qualified engineers. Next followed shop assistants, trade representatives and book-keepers (2.9%, 2.9% and 2.7%, respectively). Bringing up the rear were drivers and unskilled workers (2.5% each), as well as doctors (1.8%). Lawyers and economists fared even worse, being off the top 10 list in 15th (0.6%) and 20th (0.5%) places.

Health & Safety at Summer Camps

With preparations underway for the new season, children's summer camps came in for criticism from the Russian president's representative for children's rights ('Pavel Astakhov: Letniye detskiye lagerya opasny dlya zdorov'ya', *Komsomol'skaya Pravda*, 3.5.11, www.kp.ru). Mr Astakhov's figures for the 2010 season highlighted 75 accidents, including 25 fatalities – 18

children alone had drowned in reservoirs. Out of a total of 55,716 summer camps, 4,385 had no sewerage system, 4,077 no central water supply and 3,514 no central heating, while 328 needed major repairs.

A number of measures were planned to improve health and safety. Compulsory insurance cover for children would be extended to 61 regions this year, up from three in 2010. All summer camp staff would be required to complete a compulsory five-day training course. It was proposed to introduce a standard health and safety certification scheme for all summer camps, demonstrating compliance with fire, hygiene, food, building and childcare regulations, as well as reservoir safety. Finally, an official rating system was planned, based on official inspection data and feedback from children and parents, and available on the Internet.

Cheap Chicken Imports Flood Russian Market

Following significant investment in modernisation, poultry farming in Russia can now, in principle, fully meet local demand for good-quality meat. Nonetheless, foreign imports continue to have a negative impact on the market ('Kuritsa v opale', *Argumenty i Fakty*, No 6, 2011).

In early 2010 high numbers of chicken imports led to locally produced meat lying unsold on shop shelves. The situation had improved by June, only for the summer heat wave to push up the price of feed. In September the market was again flooded by imported chicken legs from America, pushing Russian wholesale prices down by 20% in two months. Most Russian poultry factories were now trading at a loss, unable to raise their wholesale prices as these were controlled by the state. Chicken feed had more than doubled in price over the year, while electricity tariffs and diesel prices had also increased. The government had promised to help poultry farmers by selling them grain from state reserves at cost price. However, progress was slow and the cost price was only 10–15% lower than the current retail price. Agricultural development

was dependent on state subsidy, but the Russian government only compensated chicken producers 3% of the cost price (2.5 roubles per kilo). In contrast, European and American farmers were protectionist of their own markets, better subsidised and able to compete unfairly on the Russian market, regularly flooding the latter with cheap meat.

The Vice-Chair of the Federation Council of Russia's Committee on Food and Agricultural Policies urged an investigation into unfair competition by importers, including EU subsidies on exports to the Russian Federation. He called for an increase in subsidies to Russian poultry farmers and cheaper grain from state reserves, the adoption of stricter regulation and labelling of meat products, and a reduction in poultry import quotas to 100,000 tonnes by 2012–2013.

Economic Gloom

Argumenty i Fakty reported the predictions for 2011 made by Vice-President and Economics Minister Valery Lazer ('Krisis posle krisisa', No 10, 2011). In his view, the job situation in the current "post-crisis period" would be far worse than in 2010. Society was more understanding at the height of a crisis, but even minimal economic growth led to unrealistic demands for increases in salaries and pensions. Only after six to nine months of sustained economic growth could Russians expect to see new jobs and salary increases. He predicted a rise in GDP of only 3–4% in 2011. The minister's predictions were reflected in petrol prices, which had increased six times in 2010, representing an overall rise of 25%. This process had continued from early 2011 with the cost of a litre of petrol rising by 3%. Increases were attributed to oil prices on the international market, as well as the double tax levied by the Russian government (customs duty and VAT). The head of the Centre for Strategic Research and Communications confirmed that gas and fuel price increases would be followed by a wave of price rises on other goods. Gas price increases would lead to higher tariffs for lighting, heating and water.

Petrol and diesel price increases would push up the cost of road haulage, with a knock-on effect on the cost of products and services, and cause headaches for farmers during the sowing season.

14 May 2011: National Tree-Planting Day

The Orekhovo-Zuyevsky district of Podmoskov'ye was one of many regions in Russia devastated by fire in 2010, losing thousands of hectares of forest. *Komsomol'skaya Pravda* reported that Saturday 14 May had been declared National Tree-Planting Day, with volunteers across the country taking part in a government-sponsored day of action ('V Rossii posadyat 500 millionov molodykh derev'yev, 14.5.11, www.kp.ru). In this part of Podmoskov'ye over 2,000 people had gathered with spades and saplings. They were joined by First Vice-Premier Victor Zubkov, representatives of the Russian Forestry Commission and Russian Geographical Society, as well as ecology activists. Mr Zubkov expressed hope that National Tree-Planting Day would become an annual event. It was expected that over 20 million new trees would be planted that day. Overall, the national forest restoration programme aimed to plant 500 million trees in 2011 and 3 billion roubles had been allocated for this purpose.

Nonetheless, it was more important to prevent fires, than deal with the consequences. It was essential, Mr Zubkov said, to develop a culture of responsible behaviour among the population towards Russia's forests. Cigarette butts and bonfires were the main cause of forest fires. Prevention of fires would save millions of roubles which could be spent instead on healthcare and education. Local authorities were planning to improve control of forest areas. In Podmoskov'ye, in particular, 320 heat-sensitive video-cameras were to be installed, linked to alarm systems. Testing was in progress.

Summarised and translated by Diana Turner

Listings

Ballet

Mariinsky Ballet at the Royal Opera House

Bow Street, Covent Garden, London WC2E 9DD, Box Office: 020 7304 4000, Email: onlinebooking@roh.org.uk, Web: www.roh.org.uk

25 July – 13 August: 50th Anniversary Season. The programme includes *Swan Lake*, *Homage to Fokine (Chopiniana, Scheherade, The Firebird)*, *Don Quixote*, *Balanchine / Robbins (Scotch Symphony, In the Night, Ballet Imperial)*, *Anna Karenina*, *La Bayadère*.

Film

BFI Southbank

Belvedere Road, London SE1, Box Office: 020 7928 3232, Web: www.bfi.org.uk

July – August: *Kosmos – A Soviet Space Odyssey*. The *Kosmos* season explores the impact of the Soviet space dream on Russian cinema from the 1950s–60s to the present, focusing on rarely seen science fiction feature films and documentaries, as well as Tarkovsky's classics *Solaris* and *Stalker*.

Soviet Film Classics on YouTube

Under an agreement between Mosfilm and YouTube, some 50 classics of Soviet cinema are now freely available on YouTube. The films are unabridged with sub-titles and include, among others, the 1973 comedy *Ivan Vasilevich Changes Occupation*, a Soviet 'Eastern' *White Sun of the Desert* from 1969, the 1930s musical comedy *Volga Volga*, and Andrei Tarkovsky's *Mirror* (1975). Mosfilm plans to add a further five films per week, so that by the end of 2011 a library of 200 films will be available in high definition. The Mosfilm channel is available on YouTube at www.youtube.com/mosfilm.

Music

Music Request

Joseph Spooner is doing a project on the Russian composer Iosif Genishta (1795–1853) and has not been able to locate his *Variations* (or possibly *Fantasy Variations*, op. 5) for piano and cello. Neither the Moscow Conservatoire nor the National Library of Russia appears to hold this work in its printed holdings. Can anyone help? Please contact Joseph via his website, www.josephspooner.net, where there is also information on his other Russian projects.

Theatre

Young Vic

66 The Cut, Waterloo, London SE1 8LZ, Box Office: 020 7922 2922, Email: boxoffice@youngvic.org, Web: www.youngvic.org/

3 June – 9 July: *Government Inspector* by Nikolai Gogol. Comic actors Julian Barratt and Doon Mackichan lead in this new production of Gogol's satire.

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