Russian Roulette?
Christopher Barlow, journalist and former news editor at Channel Four, looks at a new bill passing through the Duma that will radically change the system of social benefits in Russia.

Western travellers to Russia and the former Soviet Union were often surprised and even impressed by the scale of benefits in various forms received by many classes of people. Wages and salaries were low, but this was partly compensated for by cheap – in some cases virtually free – housing, transport, food, medical care, even telephones. Of course, there were some who fell through this system of social welfare. It could be unfair. A pensioner living in a remote Siberian village without a telephone or public transport was clearly disadvantaged compared to a privileged Muscovite.

But all this is about to change. A bill is passing through the Duma that by 2006 at the latest will eliminate benefits in kind and replace them with cash pay-outs ranging from £15-70 a month. It is a massive undertaking and not surprisingly has caused a widespread debate in the population and a good deal of opposition. Every conceivable pressure group and lobby with a vested interest in the status quo has been up in arms. For example, the Russian Society for the Disabled claims that only one third of the country’s 10 million disabled will be compensated adequately for the loss of their existing benefits in kind. There have been street demonstrations in many cities, especially the Far East, often sponsored by the Communist Party, while thousands of pensioners paraded in Moscow carrying banners reading ‘Hitler took our youth: Yeltsin and Putin are taking our old age’.

The categories of those affected are indeed wide ranging. They include veterans of WWII and of wars in Afghanistan and Chechnya, survivors of the Leningrad siege, and former Chernobyl workers. But it is not only pensioners who will have to face a harsher economic future. Civil servants, judges and – not least – members of the armed forces will find that they cannot longer travel for free or pay only half their telephone bills. In all, it is estimated that between one half and a third of the adult population receives benefits in kind. Their value has been calculated at the astronomical figure of two trillion roubles.

So why is the Russian Government committing itself to this colossal upheaval in the social welfare system? When the Finance Ministry launched the plan in May, President Putin himself said, “People, including myself, wonder why the switch-over is needed at all”. The answer, said Deputy Premier Zhukov, was simple. “The major drawback of the (present) system is that it is not fair”. But an even more telling reason for the change is that it forms a crucial part of the President’s declared aim of halving the number of poor in Russia within three years, a number he himself put at 30 million. The current official baseline is 2,143 roubles (about £40) a month. Below that, you are poor even if you are a working professional. Elena Kalashnikova, for instance, is assistant professor of chemistry in the east Siberian town of Ulan-Ude: she gets just 2,000 roubles a month.

170 billion roubles (£4 billion) is earmarked in the 2005 federal budget for the scheme, with another 70 billion roubles (£1.4 billion) provided by 89 autonomous regions – many of which are themselves poor. Many voices have expressed fears that this method of funding the scheme paves the way for corruption. The immediate task for the Russian Government is to identify all those receiving assorted benefits in kind and evaluate their worth in cash per individual – an enormous task.

Nevertheless, the die has been cast. Two thirds of the Duma back the proposals, as do virtually all economic bodies. Mr Zubarov, Minister for Health and Social Development, who has the unequivocal job of steering the project through, is adamant. Whilst admitting that the proposals have “met with distrust”, he says that he is prepared to listen to any suggestions, save one – “keeping the old system intact”.

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SCRSS News

Charity Fundraising

As previously notified, the SCRSS attained charity status in May 2004 (Registered Charity No 1104012). The SCRSS is now preparing to launch a fundraising appeal to businesses, charities and other organisations to raise funds for the development of the Society, its library and premises. Currently, it is hoped that the launch will take place in central London in November.

As part of our fundraising drive, a Gift Aid declaration form is also enclosed with this edition of the Digest. We urge all members who have already made a donation since April 2004, are planning to make a donation in the future, or can make a donation with the Gift Aid form, to complete the form and return to the Society as soon as possible. The Gift Aid forms will allow us to apply to the Inland Revenue for a tax rebate on all donations from April 2004 onwards.

Library

Mitropolit Surozhsky Antoniy: Trudy
Moscow, Izdatel'sky dom Praktika, 2002, 1080pp
ISBN: 5989160337

The library has received a copy of this important volume of the works of Metropolitan Antony, the late head of the Russian Orthodox Church in the UK. This Russian language edition represents the most comprehensive collection to date of the Metropolitan's works and includes a significant number of previously unpublished texts. The volume comprises discussions, sermons and dialogues, supplemented by numerous commentaries, a bibliography, photographs, indices, and a detailed introduction. The book is available for reference in the library.

Serial publications received on a regular basis by the library include newspapers LondonInfo, London Courier and Golos Kommunista (all Russian language), magazine Russia Profile (English language), and the monthly journal of the Canadian-Soviet Society, Northstar Compass.

Events

22 October 2004, 7pm
Film: Mussorgsky

5 November 2004, 7pm
Film: Battleship Potemkin
Directed by Eisenstein and Aleksev, camera Eduard Tisse, Goskino, 1925. This classic Soviet silent film is set in Odessa at the time of the 1905 Revolution and the mutiny of the Black Sea Fleet. Russian and English sub-titles.

19 November 2004, 7pm
Lecture: Folk Music of the Non-Russian Republics of the Former USSR
Barbara Ellis continues her popular series of lectures on folk music.

3 December 2004, 7pm
Lecture: Dmitri Shostakovich - A Life in Film
John Riley of the British Universities Film and Video Council will speak on his new book due for publication by I.B. Tauris in late November. Copies of the book will be available at a discount to SCRSS members on the night.

All lectures and film shows take place at the SCRSS premises in Brixton. Admission: £3.00 (members), £5.00 (non-members). Tea and coffee are available beforehand.

Soviet Memorial Trust Fund News

Events

14 November 2004, 11.30am
Remembrance Sunday
A wreath-laying ceremony will take place at the Soviet Memorial in the presence of the Mayor of Southwark, the Russian Ambassador and Ambassadors of the CIS countries, WWII veterans, and others. All welcome.

27 January 2005
Holocaust Memorial Day
A wreath-laying ceremony will take place at the Soviet Memorial, followed by a lecture in the Imperial War Museum by a survivor of Auschwitz, which was liberated by the Red Army on 27 January 1945. Details of the event will be available in December from Jean Turner, 020 7274 2282.

9 May 2005
60th Anniversary of VE-Day
The Soviet Memorial Trust Fund is planning a major ceremony at the memorial to commemorate this anniversary. Special guests will be invited from Russia and other CIS countries, and a number of exhibitions are also planned at various venues. Details will be announced in due course.

The Soviet Memorial, which honours the Soviet dead of WWII, is situated in Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park, Lambeth Road, Southwark, adjacent to the Imperial War Museum.
Book Reviews

The Dictators: Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia
By Richard Overy (Allen Lane, 2004, 651 pp)

Professor Overy's book is carefully titled. This is not (yet another) comparative biography of the 20th century's two greatest tyrants - which was the most ruthless, the bloodiest, the maddest. The purpose of the book is to set each one within the context of each nation - in other words to give a straightforward narrative history of two systems and to answer the question of how each in its own way won the broad support of the mass of its population, for in neither case was it simply by fear. In seeking an answer, Professor Overy takes the reader thematically through the years from the rise of Nazism to its blood-soaked collapse. Thus we see every aspect of life through these years, passing through the arts, science, industry and the bureaucracy (surprisingly ramshackle in the Soviet Union compared with smooth German efficiency). The end was inevitable - a horrendous collision between the two. Hitler - aggressive, Stalin - to the last defensive.

So the essence of this book is not the similarities but the differences between the two monoliths. Valentin Berezkhov, sent to Berlin in 1940 on a government mission, expressed these very succinctly. There were similarities, he observed, between the two countries. But whereas Stalin wanted to construct a socialist future where all people were 'equal and happy', Hitler sought to create a master race built on the carnage of war. Hitler's aim was a greater Reich - for Stalin, Soviet communism was an instrument for human progress.

The book is a masterpiece of research - one quarter alone is devoted to a bibliography. But it is also anecdotal and readable. Not perhaps a book for bedside reading, but one for the bookshelf.

Reviewed by Chris Barlow

The Voice of Leningrad: The Story of a Siege

Despite my initial preconceptions of a romance in an historical setting, The Voice of Leningrad proved a captivating read from the very first pages.

The novel's heroine, Zinaida, is an elderly woman who leaves behind a comfortable life in the West to return to her birthplace, where she had survived the horrors of the 900-day blockade of the city during WWII. Having gained the affection of the city's citizens, who dub her the voice of Leningrad for her morale-boosting singing as a young entertainer during the siege, the story twists abruptly as she falls into political disfavour.

What strikes the reader throughout this novel is CS Walton's in-depth research of the setting. Conditions during the blockade are described in vivid detail, drawn from the memories of siege survivors, and the reader is transported back with the main character as she remembers her past. Contemporary St Petersburg is illustrated with the same thoroughness, as the author manages a credible shift of focus with Zinaida now viewing the city through the eyes of an outsider as she searches among old acquaintances for clues to the unsolved questions of her past.

To the very end, the reader is gripped by the story, waiting to find out whether Zinaida will discover the fate of her war-time mentor and finally lay to rest the ghosts that have haunted her throughout her adult life.

Available from the author for £10, including p&p (csw@Claudia.demon.co.uk).

Reviewed by Wendy Ansley

Paul Robeson: Artist and Activist on Records, Radio and Television, 3rd Edition

During its long history, the SCRSS has been privileged to have many distinguished vice-presidents. Amongst these, one of the most outstanding personalities was the singer, actor, outspoken fighter for freedom, and friend of the Soviet Union, Paul Robeson.

Allan Lord Thompson, a long-standing member of our Society, has produced a meticulous review of the whole of Robeson's oeuvre. All conceivable questions about the songs Robeson performed, or the film and stage productions in which he appeared, are covered in this labour of love, now in its third edition. The attention to detail is remarkable, making this volume one that all admirers of Robeson's life and work should find space for on their bookshelves.
Thompson also includes material that helps readers to experience the warmth of Robeson's personality. He provides the text of Robeson's speech at the time of the Spanish Civil War in which he called on the artist to take sides. A selection of photographs, including two from the SCRASS collection, show Robeson in the Soviet Union, the country where he felt that he could 'breathe' for the first time.

Thompson's book is an outstanding contribution to the work on Paul Robeson. It is detailed, meticulous and imbued with the warmth of the writer's admiration for his subject.

Available from the author for £15.00 + p&p, 14 Masefield Close, Wellingborough, Northants, NN8 3RH.

Reviewed by Jane Rosen

The Taste of Dreams: An Obsession with Russia and Caviar

Vanora Bennett, Times correspondent in Russia in the early 1990s, has produced a fast-moving account of her lifelong love affair with Russia and caviar. The latter delicacy provides an interesting 'hook' on which to view the dramatic developments that took place in Russia and the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s. The history of the gathering, sale and eating of caviar is an excellent example of the extraordinary resourcefulness and resilience of the Russian people. From eating lumpfish (a poor person's substitute for the real thing) as a child she developed a craving to taste the real thing. "Caviar meant Russia to me, and Russia meant escape."

The book is packed with fascinating portraits of the characters she meets on her travels through Russia and, especially, the shores of the Caspian. She investigates family ties with pre-revolutionary Russia and Weightly recalls the way things were when she meets up with two old friends in a banya in the 'new Russia' era. "There was only one teaspoon of caviar each. We licked the spoon clean." Her friend Galya says, "This is how feasts used to be in the good old days of stagnation, before the world went mad. A nice bit of caviar, a nice bit of wine, not too much of anything (except good company), not a worry in the world." Her toast: "Things were better before" – "Ranshe bylic luchshe".

Reviewed by Ralph Gibson

Russian Cinema
By David Gillespie (Pearson, 2003)

There are many books about Russian and Soviet cinema. Some are structured chronologically, either giving an overview or concentrating on briefer periods, while others look at particular themes, directors or films. Few take David Gillespie's approach of having a single author write a series of essays on a range of topics applicable to the whole history of Russian and Soviet cinema.

The subjects Gillespie discusses are: cinema's relationship to literature; comedies; cinematic retellings of history; women; ideology; war; and private and public morality. The thematic approach allows Gillespie to compare films from different periods more naturally than in rigidly chronological studies, though equally some films crop up (not necessarily cross-referenced) in more than one chapter. However, with over 300 films under discussion, some receive less than a paragraph, allowing the author just enough time to sketch their relevance to his argument before moving on. Finally, there is a chapter on the best known recent director, Tarkovsky, whose films cover the themes of the foregoing chapters.

This is a useful introduction to the subject, with good filmographies and bibliographies that include some useful websites. It reads as a series of free-standing essays rather than as a unified book, reducing its cumulative effect but making it easy to dip into, especially as it is written so accessibly.

Reviewed by John Riley

From the Russian Press

Russian Vodka

Argumenty i Fakty (No 30, July 2004) examined three key sources of state revenue from vodka production – tax, dividends and trade name licensing. Tax, comprising excise duty and VAT, amounted to some 50% of the cost of a 50-rouble bottle of vodka. In addition, the state possessed controlling shares in 137 out of some 450 vodka factories in the Russian Federation. State shares were managed through Rossspirtprom, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Agriculture, whose staff headed up the facotries' boards of directors and determined policy. In 2001 Sovuzspirtprom, also a subsidiary of the Ministry of Agriculture, had acquired control of 17 popular trade names, including Moskovskaya, Pertsovka and Stolovaya vodka. Valued at US $8 million per annum, the state had expected to recoup this figure each year through licensing the trade names to individual vodka factories.

However, little revenue from any of these sources appeared to be reaching the Treasury. According to Russia's Audit Office, the involvement of four different ministries in the vodka production industry meant that none was prepared to take overall responsibility for revenue collection. Bonded warehouses, through which all vodka had to be sold, appeared and disappeared overnight, and sometimes failed to forward excise duty to the Treasury. Rossspirtprom claimed that the majority of its
enterprises were loss-making, although following a recent inspection by the Audit Office it had been forced to pay the Treasury 47 million roubles in back dividends. Other irregularities had been noted at Kristall, one of the biggest vodka factories in Russia in which the state held majority shares. In 2003 Kristall had sold its trade name Gzhelka to a private firm for 131 million roubles, despite valuation by experts at US $300 million. Kristall continued to produce Gzhelka vodka, but now had to pay 100 million roubles per annum for use of the trade name. Finally, Soyuzplodimport’s hopes of earning millions of dollars from trade name licensing had resulted in only US $833,000 to date. Income from trade name licensing was paid on a royalty basis of 2% on average – less than half the standard international rate. However, even this small income failed to reach the Treasury, being retained by Soyuzplodimport to cover internal costs.

In response to widespread concern about the impact of the legislation, the Government had proposed an interim benefits package to phase in the new system over a year. Rossiiskaya Gazeta (No 153, 20.7.04) explained that, while payment of benefits in cash would begin in 2005, a package (sotspaket) of three ‘socially sensitive’ benefits in kind would be retained – free suburban rail travel, prescriptions and sanatorium treatment. The sotspaket was valued at 440 roubles per month and this sum would be deducted automatically from cash payments. At the end of 2005, all those on benefit could decide for themselves whether they preferred to retain the sotspaket or receive all their benefit in cash. Rossiiskaya Gazeta (No 156, 23.7.04) published a table showing how the change to cash compensation would improve pensioners’ incomes. Among others, Heroes of the Soviet Union would see an increase of 74%, WWII veterans 44%, and Leningrad Blockade survivors 53%.

Supporters of the bill claimed that it would be a fairer system of benefit distribution, particularly for people in rural areas who often could not benefit from free rail travel or access to sanatoria. This argument was articulated by Valery Bogomolov, General Secretary of the pro-government party Yedinaya Rossiya, in Moskovsky Komsomol (27.7.04). “The majority of people in the provinces want cash payments instead of mythical benefits in kind that no-one there can use. I have personally travelled across two regions. Veterans there constantly told me, ‘Stop them hoodwinking us, stop them stealing our money and make sure it actually reaches us.’ The only ones shouting are people living in Moscow and St Petersburg who get to use these benefits in kind.”

However, several thousand opponents of the bill took to the streets of central Moscow on 30 July. Nezavisimaya Gazeta (No 158, 31.7.04) remarked on the wide range of political views represented at the protest rally – from the Communist Party to Yabloko, from a particularly large group of Chernobyl veterans to the civil rights organisation Memorial, with only Yedinaya Rossiya notable by its absence. Oleg Shein, a deputy in the Duma representing the Rodina party, called the proposed change “social genocide, an anti-constitutional coup and the total humiliation of Russia” – a view echoed by other protesters quoted in the paper.

Another area of concern was the ability of the regions to take on responsibility for payment of cash benefits. Quoted in Nezavisimaya Gazeta (op. cit.), Viktor Zavarzin, head of the Duma defence committee, said that more than half the regions were currently bankrupt and, if the source of funding were not made clear, pensioners and invalids would have nowhere to turn once the law was adopted.
Russia's Elite Anti-Terrorist 'Alpha' Brigade

Argumenty i Fakty (No 30, July 2004) reported on the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Alpha ('A') Brigade, Russia's elite counter-terrorist unit. Over the past 30 years the Alpha Brigade had carried out over 30 military operations to free hostages and taken part in more than 1,000 special operations. It now formed part of the FSB (Federal Security Service). Yuri Andropov's decision to create the Alpha Brigade in 1974 was initially known only to the upper echelons of the KGB. The first recruits had come primarily from the ranks of the KGB. They had had to pass a rigorous training and selection programme that included mastering Soviet and imported weaponry and learning to defuse bombs and drive tanks. The Alpha Brigade's first operation had come three years later in Zürich when they had provided security during the exchange of the Soviet dissident Vladimir Bukovsky for the general secretary of the Chilean Communist Party, Luis Corvalan. However, it had received its baptism of fire in Afghanistan in December 1979 when, together with other Soviet special forces, it had stormed the presidential palace in Kabul and assassinated President Hafizullah Amin. Following the collapse of the USSR, the Alpha Brigade's focus had changed to fighting terrorism. In particular, since 1995 it had been involved in ongoing special operations in the northern Caucasus and was now on round-the-clock alert. One of its major recent operations had been the freeing of theatregoers taken hostage by Chechen terrorists in the 'Nord-Ost' siege in Moscow in 2002. However, the Alpha Brigade was angry at criticism of its tactics during that operation, arguing that there had been no alternative to storming the building, given the number of suicide bombers amongst the 1,000-odd hostages. It believed that its actions had been justified by its success in bringing out over 800 hostages within the first hour after storming the building. The article concluded that the Alpha Brigade's job was a dangerous one – over the past 30 years it had lost 19 servicemen in action. Nonetheless, there was never a shortage of young officers ready to join up as the older generation retired.

No one could have predicted that the Alpha Brigade would be called into action again just over a month later during the school siege in Beslan, Northern Ossetia. Argumenty i Fakty ran a special issue on the hostage-taking (No 38, 8.9.04, www.aif.ru – online version) in which it accepted that the special forces had been forced into storming the school by circumstances rather than plan. Kommersant-Vlast (No 36 [588], 13.9.04, www.kommersant.ru/k-vlast/ – online version) set the number of special forces dead at 10, of which three from the Alpha Brigade. It was more critical of the actions of the special forces, interviewing a reservist in the security service who identified four key errors in the operation: no clear understanding of the terrorists' motives; no single coordinating centre to assess potential scenarios and determine the appropriate actions to be taken by the special forces; failure to maintain a dialogue with the terrorists to undermine their determination; and poor information provision through lack of co-ordination across the intelligence services.

Foreign Adoption

Kommersant-Vlast (No 23 [578], 14.6.04, www.kommersant.ru/k-vlast/ – online version) reported that the State Duma had tabled a question to Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov on the issue of strengthening state control over the adoption of Russian children by foreign nationals. The move had been prompted by the murder of a Russian boy by his adoptive American mother the previous December, taking to 12 the number of adopted Russian children murdered in the USA since 1995. The parliamentary question noted that in 2003, for the first time in the country's history, more Russian children were adopted by foreign nationals than by Russian citizens. Deputies called for the signing of bilateral agreements with foreign countries to guarantee the legal rights of adoptive Russian children, although the Government had claimed that this would be an impossible task with federal countries such as the USA, where each individual state had its own laws on adoption. In particular, the parliamentary question criticised the activities of foreign adoption agencies on Russian territory. It claimed that there was evidence of collusion between foreign agencies and charities working in the orphanage sector, with the latter illegally assisting in the provision of information on and selection of orphans for adoption. Kommersant-Vlast reported that 30 foreign adoption agencies were currently licensed to operate in Russia, including 48 American agencies. 70% of all foreign adoptions were arranged through these official channels, with the remainder organised independently by foreign nationals with the help of local solicitors. Over the past 12 years the number of adoptions in Russia had remained at 14,000 – 15,000 per annum. However, the number of foreign adoptions among these had increased year on year – from 676 in 1992 to 7,852 in 2003. Numbers had increased significantly in the second half of the 1990s as foreign agencies opened local offices in Russia, simplifying the adoption process and reducing the associated costs. Under Russian law foreign nationals had the same right to adopt Russian children as Russian citizens, provided that local adoptive parents had not been found. As a result, foreign nationals were more likely to adopt sick children who tended to be rejected by Russians (94% of adoptions of sick children in 2003 were by foreigners). Kommersant-Vlast concluded that, whilst there had been evidence of abuse by foreign adopters, there were no comparative statistics on murders by Russian adoptive parents. However, figures released by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1994 indicated that on average 2,000 Russian children every year were murdered within the family home.

Articles selected, summarised and translated by Diana Turner
LISTINGS

Art

Hermitage Art Gallery
7a, York Street, Liverpool, L1, Tel: 0151 708 8876
Beyond the Reality. Paintings by Georgian artist Mikhail Makharadze.

The Hermitage Rooms
Somerset House, The Strand, London, WC2

Dance

Fairfield Halls Croydon
Park Lane, Surrey, Box Office: 020 8088 9291
23 November, 8pm: Russian Cossack State Dancers.

Rambert Dance Company
Tel: 020 630 0600 (tour details)
Autumn tour includes Five Brahms Waltzes in the manner of Isadora Duncan, one-time wife of the Soviet poet Yesenin, choreographed by Sir Frederick Ashton.

History

The National Archives
Kew, Surrey, TW9, Tel: 020 8876 3444
To 31 October: The Secret State. Top secret documents reveal the British Government’s preparations for a perceived nuclear attack from the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

Lectures and Conferences

The BEARR Trust
The Charity Centre, 24 Stephenson Way, London, NW1, Tel: 020 7735 7608
Friday 19 November: Annual Conference with theme Health, Social Care and Human Rights in Russia and the Region. Admission by application form: £35 / £30 (Friends of BEARR).

Goldsmiths College
Centre for Russian Music, Goldsmiths College, University of London, London, SE14
Until December: CRM International Series 2004-05 (for full details of events, see under Music below).

Music

Barbican
Silk Street, London, EC2, Box Office: 0845 120 7592

Fairfield Halls Croydon
Park Lane, Surrey, Box Office: 020 8688 9291
10 November, 8pm: St Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Alexander Dmitriev.

South Bank Centre
Purcell Room and Voice Box, South Bank, London, SE1, Tel: 0870 382 8000
23 – 30 October: Poetry International Festival with top contemporary poets invited to celebrate the work of Anna Akhmatova.

22 October, 7pm: Daniel Saibstein on Nikita Khrushchev (1953-1964): An Evaluation 40 Years On

26 November, 7pm: Margaret Willis on Russian Ballet, followed by Russian Winter Party.

14 January 2005, 7pm: Bob Dommott on The Battle of Borodino and the Retreat from Moscow.

SCOLA Russian Circle
St Nicholas Way, Sutton, Tel: 01403 256593
Shostakovich, Kristian Hibberd – Late Shostakovich and Mikhail Bakhtin. Recitals: Alissa Firsova and friends play piano music by Shostakovich.


30 November: 6pm – talk by Elena Pridanova, Glinka State Conservatoire, Russia, on Wedding Ritual in Russian Music. 7.30pm – recital, the State Quartet of Tartarestan, Kazan, Russia, plays Rachmaninov's String Quartet No 1 (unfinished), Tchaikovsky's Andante Cantabile (from String Quartet No 1), Borodin's Nocturne (from String Quartet No 2), Gubaidulina's String Quartet No 3, Folk-Suite Music of Russia.

London Coliseum
St Martin's Lane, London, WC2, Box Office: 020 7632 8300
7 November, 7.30pm: Basian, A Concert for the Future. The orchestra and soloists of the Mariinsky Theatre, conducted by Valery Gergiev, will perform a concert in aid of the Beslan Life Appeal and the Mariinsky Theatre's new cultural outreach programme in the Caucasus. The concert will include Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 6, The Pathetique. English National Opera has invited the Mariinsky and is providing the Collieries free. Tickets £6 - £125. All proceeds to the charities above.

South Bank Centre
South Bank, London, SE1, Box Office 0870 382 8000
24 October: Vermeer Quartet perform Haydn, Beethoven and Shostakovitch's String Quartet No 5 (QE).

29 October: Vassily Sinaisky conducts the London Philharmonic Orchestra, with Jean-Efflam Bavouzet, piano, in Stravinsky's Scharzo Fantastique, Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No 3, and Rimsky-Korsakov's Sheherazade (RFH).

11 November: Lunchtime Recital Series, Aviv String Quartet perform Shostakovitch's String Quartet No 7 and Schubert's String Quartet In D minor, Death and the Maiden (Purcell Room).

30 November, 7.30pm: Philharmonia Orchestra, conducted by Alexander Lazarev with Zoltan Kocsis, piano, perform Tchaikovsky's Romeo and Juliet, Rachmaninov's Concerto No 2 and Prokofiev's Symphony No 5 (RFH).

Wigmore Hall
30 Wigmore Street, London, W1, Box Office: 020 7935 2141
31 October, 5pm: concert by Mstislav Rostropovich Charitable Foundation, with Varia Ivanova, harp, Gleb Ivanov, piano, Olga Volkova, violin, and Filipp Kopachevsky, piano.

Publications

Imperial War Museum
Mail Order, Imperial War Museum, Duxford, Cambs, CB2 4QR, Tel: 01223 499345
Never Again: A History of the Holocaust by Martin Gilbert (Harper Collins, 2000, mail order no BK8870, £14.99)
Holocaust (Imperial War Museum, 2000. mail order no MB0204, £20.00)

Russia Profile
English-language journal published by Independent Media for RIA Novosti. Available free from Russia Profile, 4 Zubovsky Boulevard, Moscow, 119021, Russia, Tel: (007 095) 981 64 86, Fax: (007 095) 201 3071, Email: info@russiaprofile.org

Russian Military Review

Russian Language

The Language Show
Olympia, London
5 – 7 November: free entrance tickets available to SCRSS members on a first come, first serve basis. Send an SAE to Head Office.

Theatre

A Cloud in Trousers

Members’ Requests

The Russian Cultural Centre
10 King St, Merchant City, Glasgow G1 5QX
This charitable organisation has launched an appeal for life-saving equipment to send to children from the Beslan tragedy being treated in a children's hospital in Rostov-on-Don (Glasgow's twin city). Make cheques payable to The Russian Cultural Centre (Beslan Appeal).

The SCRSS cannot accept responsibility for incorrect information or unsatisfactory products. Always check with the organisation concerned before sending money. Reviews and articles are the opinions of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the SCRSS. © SCRSS 2004

Printed and published by:
SCRSS, 320 Brixton Road, London, SW9 6AB
Tel: 020 7727 2282, Fax: 020 7727 3230
Email: suslibrary@scrss.org.uk
Website: www.scrss.org.uk
Registered Charity No 1104012
Editor: Diana Turner