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Feature

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 can no 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 unenviable 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".

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 Antony: Trudy
Moscow, Izdatel'sky dom Praktika, 2002, 1080pp
ISBN: 5898160337

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 Kommunist* (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

Directed by G. Roshal, Lenfilm, 1950. Music and musical direction by D. Kabalevsky. The film is a recreation of the life and times of Mussorgsky and his contemporaries Borodin, Dargomyzhsky, Glinka and Stasov. English sub-titles.

5 November 2004, 7pm

Film: Battleship Potemkin

Directed by Eisenstein and Aleksandrov, 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 Hamsworth 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, 651pp)

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 Berezhkov, 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 **By CS Walton (Garrett County Press, 2003, ISBN: 1891053825)**

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

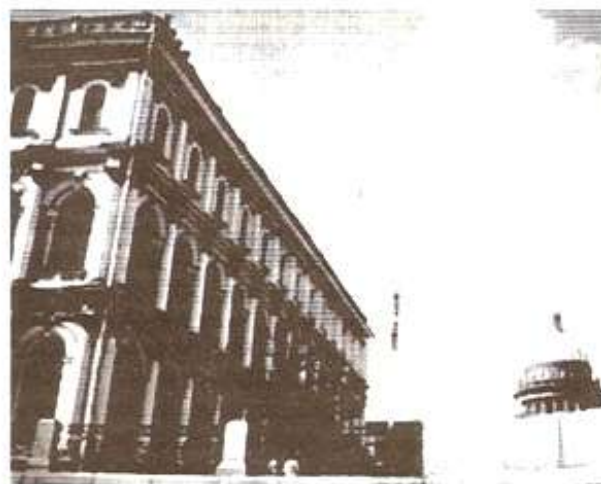
The novel's heroine, Zinaida, is an elderly woman who leaves behind a comfortable life in the West to return to her birthplace, where she had survived the horrors of the 900-day blockade of the city during WWII. Having gained the affection of the city's citizens, who dub her the voice of Leningrad for 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



St Isaac's Cathedral, St Petersburg, 2003

Paul Robeson: Artist and Activist on Records, Radio and Television, 3rd Edition **By Allan Lord Thompson (Allan Lord Thompson, 2004, ISBN: 0953495124)**

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 SCRSS 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

By Vanora Bennett (Review – an imprint of Headline Book Publishing, 2003, 276pp, £14.99, ISBN 0755300637)

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 wistfully 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 bylo 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 60-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 Rosspirtprom, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Agriculture, whose staff headed up the factories' boards of directors and determined policy. In 2001 Soyuzplodimport, 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 \$6 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. Rosspirtprom 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 Gzheika to a private firm for 131 million roubles, despite valuation by experts at US \$300 million. Kristall continued to produce Gzheika 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.



The Izvestiya building, Moscow, 2004

Social Benefits Reform

Throughout July there was wide coverage in the Russian press of the Government's draft bill to modernise the benefits system [see 'Russian Roulette' feature article by Chris Barlow, page 1]. Amendments to the bill were under discussion as it prepared for its second reading in August. The bill would replace the current generous system of benefits in kind by one of cash payments, whilst also restricting access to certain benefits and shifting responsibility for paying benefits from the federal centre to the regions. A huge number of Russians on benefit would be affected by the change, including

pensioners, invalids, WWII veterans, Heroes of the Soviet Union, veterans of the Chernobyl disaster, and victims of the repressions.

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 Komsomolets* (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 600 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 36, 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 [589], 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 co-ordinating 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 [576], 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 1996. 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 80 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 678 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 706 6676
Beyond the Reality. Paintings by Georgian artist Mikhail Makharadze.

The Hermitage Rooms

Somerset House, The Strand, London, WC2
18 November 2004 – 31 July 2005: *Circling the Square, Avant-Garde Porcelain from Revolutionary Russia*. Post-1917 porcelain from the Lomonosov Porcelain Factory in Leningrad (St Petersburg).

Dance

Fairfield Halls Croydon

Park Lane, Surrey, Box Office: 020 8688 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).

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.

SCOLA Russian Circle

St Nicholas Way, Sutton, Tel: 01403 256593

22 October, 7pm: Daniel Salbstein 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 Dommett on *The Battle of Borodino and the Retreat from Moscow*.



Concert poster, Moscow, 2004

Music

Barbican

Silk Street, London, EC2, Box Office: 0845 120 7592
3 – 4 November: *The Russians* series. Mstislav Rostropovich conducts the London Symphony Orchestra in Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmilla*. Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No 2 with Nikolaj Znaider, violin, and Shostakovich's Symphony No 8.

Fairfield Halls Croydon

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

Goldsmiths College

Centre for Russian Music, Goldsmiths College, University of London, London, SE14, Tel: 020 7919 7646 (Professor Alexander Ivashkin), Email: a.ivashkin@gold.ac.uk
Until December: *CRM International Series 2004-05*.

26 October: 6pm – talk by Dr Evgeniya Lianskaya, Glinka State Conservatoire, Russia, on *Russian Musical Post-Modernism: Theory and Practice*. 7.30pm – recital, Andrew Zolinsky plays piano music by Valentin Silvestrov, Tigran Mansurian, Arvo Part and Peteris Vasks.

6 November: *Shostakovich Study Day* (CRM in collaboration with the Shostakovich Society UK). Key-note address by Professor David Fanning. Talks by Professor Alexander Ivashkin – *Shostakovich: The First Russian Minimalist*, Dmitri Smirnov – *My Shostakovich*, Tanya Ursova – *Shostakovich's Polyphonic Cycles*, John Riley – *The Film Music of*

Shostakovich, Kristian Hibberd – *Late Shostakovich and Mikhail Bakhtin*. Recitals: Alissa Firsova and friends play piano music by Shostakovich.

18 November: *Glinka Celebration (1804-2004)*. 6pm – talk by Stuart Campbell on *Glinka and Opera*. 8pm – recital, Glinka Trio Pathétique, Stephen Cottrell, clarinet, Alexander Ivashkin, cello, Vicky Yannoula, piano.

30 November: 6pm – talk by Elena Pridanova, Glinka State Conservatoire, Russia, on *Wedding Ritual in Russian Music*. 7.30pm – recital, the State Quartet of Tartarstan, Kazan, Russia, plays Rakhmaninov'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: *Beslan, 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 Pathétique*. English National Opera has invited the Mariinsky and is providing the Coliseum 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 Shostakovich's String Quartet No 5 (QEH).

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

11 November: Lunchtime Recital Series, Aviv String Quartet perform Shostakovich'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

36 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 BK8670, £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

Monthly journal of the Defence Ministry of the Russian Federation and the Russian Information Agency – Novosti. Tel: 020 7370 3002.

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

October: York. November: London. Mayakovsky play. Details from www.ensemble-online.com/a-cloud-in-trousers.html

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

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