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## Feature

### Vera Mukhina: Queen of Soviet Sculpture

By Christine Lindey

Born in Riga to a hemp merchant and his wife, Vera Mukhina (1889–1953) was destined to become one of the most eminent Soviet sculptors. She created many monuments and busts of Russian and Soviet artists and intellectuals, including Maxim Gorky and Pyotr Tchaikovsky, but her greatest work was her 24-metre monument *The Worker and the Collective Farm Woman* for the Soviet pavilion at the 1937 Paris World Fair.

Mukhina was no stranger to Paris. After first studying art with several artists in Moscow, including Konstantin Yuon, Nina Sinitsyna and Ilya Maskov, in 1912 she set off for Paris, then the mecca of contemporary art, where she studied for two years under the

eminent sculptor Émile-Antoine Bourdelle. But her heart remained in Russia and in the first years after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution she submitted designs for several sculpture competitions for Lenin's plan for monumental propaganda.



Vera Mukhina in her studio (SCRSS Photo Library)

She acknowledged that she learned much from the recent modernist innovations of 'formalist art', partly guided by one its pioneers, her friend Lyubov Popova. But as Mukhina said: "I became convinced that the essence and 'spirit' of a subject was what mattered most in art."

In 1927 her imposing *Peasant Woman* commemorated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October Revolution. Modelled in clay and cast in bronze, the 190-centimetre figure is taller than life size. Bare feet confidently planted slightly apart, arms folded defiantly

across her chest, she brooks no argument. No simpering, submissive tsarist peasant girl, she symbolises the proud new Soviet woman, conscious of her important social value.

In 1935, by now in mid-career, Mukhina felt honoured to win the commission for a monumental sculpture to top Boris Iofan's Soviet pavilion for the 1937 Paris World Fair. And it was Iofan who decided the subject of worker and collective farm woman. Her intention was for "the figures to express the young and forceful spirit of our country, to be light, rushing forward, full of movement and determination. They had to be joyous, yet powerful in their forward stride".



*Peasant Woman*, bronze, 1923, by Vera Mukhina  
(image courtesy of Sputnik)

Mukhina's commitment to the social function of art and, therefore, to the importance of accessibility to the masses chimed with the recently formulated theory of Socialist Realism. Yet her interpretation of realism was far from academic or backward looking. Her brave decision to build the monument

from stainless steel plates asserted its modernity.



*Worker and Collective Farm Woman*, 1937, by Vera Mukhina. Now outside VDNKh, Moscow  
(image courtesy of Sputnik)

Although already used by modernist architects, this enduring material was new to art: it broke with sculpture's traditional methods and materials of carved stone or modelled clay cast in bronze. This was a brilliant compromise between Mukhina's desire to be of her times and yet to impart clear meanings to all, regardless of their social and aesthetic backgrounds.

The process of construction was equally revolutionary – it was collective, collaborative and factory made. Working from a 1/15<sup>th</sup> scale model, the sculpture was built from massive wooden moulds by engineers and craftspeople in the factory of the Central Research Machine-Building Institute. Mukhina remarked: "These moulds were truly gigantic: the cross-section of the arm at the shoulder served as an entrance for a whole crew of carpenters working inside the female torso..."

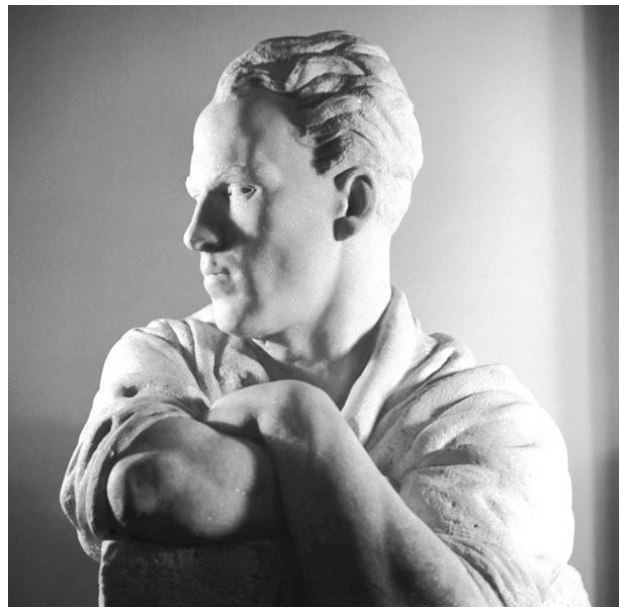


The steel plates were transported to Paris where a gigantic armature was built and a team of twenty Soviet fitters, welders and tinsmiths, and four engineers, assembled and supervised the sculpture on top of its 34-metre pedestal. Mukhina recalled with pride: “The psychological impact of the figures silhouetted against the Paris sky once again proved the great power of Art. I shall never forget the sight of French workers stopping before the giant heads, which were still on the ground, and saluting them – for an artist’s greatest aspiration is to be understood...” (This may also have been inspired by the great respect with which many of the French working class regarded the young Soviet Union.) Once assembled, the gigantic figures shone and glinted in sunlight or electric light against the changing Parisian skies.



*Harvest*, model of a composition for the Moskvoretsky Bridge, Moscow, 1939, by Vera Mukhina (image courtesy of Sputnik)

The French organisers of the Paris exhibition deliberately confronted the Soviet and German pavilions across the main entrance to the Trocadero site, so symbolising the current political tensions created by Nazi belligerence. My Parisian mother recalled a shudder of fear as she walked between them as a child. Mukhina’s dynamic and defiant youthful figures proudly holding a hammer and a sickle outshone the gigantic ponderous swastika that topped Nazi Germany’s pavilion.



*The Builder*, marble bust of architect Sergei Zamkov, 1934, by Vera Mukhina (image courtesy of Sputnik)

Mukhina continued to experiment with unusual materials by venturing into glass figures, modernist vases and sculptures of eminent Soviet people, including Maxim Gorky. But her most memorable work remains *The Worker and the Collective Farm Woman*. It has inspired many other works, especially in graphic design, and remains a testament of the enduring power of Soviet Socialist Realism at its best.



Vase, glass, 1939, by Vera Mukhina (SCRSS Library)

*Christine Lindey is an art historian with a special interest in Soviet and Socialist art. She has taught art history at Birkbeck College, University of London, and at the University of the Arts, London. Her latest book 'Art for All: British Socially Committed Art from the 1930s to the Cold War' (2018) is published by Artery Publications.*

#### Principal Sources

Mukhina V, 'A Sculptor's Thoughts' (1952) in Voronova O, *Vera Ignatevna Mukhina: Criticism and Interpretation*, Moscow, Foreign Language Publishing House, 1976

Ades D, Benton T et al, *Art and Power: Europe under the Dictators, 1930–1945*, London, Thames & Hudson Ltd, 1995 (Hayward Gallery exhibition catalogue)

## Modern Art Should Seek to Create the Heroic Portrait

By Vera Mukhina

*This is an abridged reprint of an article from the 'Anglo-Soviet Journal' (ASJ), Vol. VIII, No. 1, Spring 1947, pages 16–17. The ASJ was published by the Society between 1940–92.*

In the war waged by the progressive nations of the world one could not read of the unprecedented feats of valour achieved by our soldiers without experiencing a feeling of awe at the daring of the men who sacrificed their lives for the good of their country and people. And it seemed to me that our task, the task of contemporary artists, was to perpetuate the figures of men who had fought for the freedom of the world against the dark forces of Nazism.

That is why, amidst the great diversity of themes which our times offer to the artist, I have always been interested in people.

In my work on sculptural portraiture, to which I devoted most of my time during the war, I have tried to give not only individual portraits of my outstanding contemporaries, but to create generalised features of the people of our times.

During these years I have done portraits of soldier heroes, of airwomen and of famous surgeons. But the heroes are not only those who fought in actual battle and risked their lives for the cause of victory. Deep in the rear working men and scientists, musicians, writers, engineers gave all their efforts, talent and knowledge for the same cause...



Vera Mukhina (SCRSS Photo Library)

The artist who attempts to create a 'heroic portrait' – and that, I believe, should be the aim of modern art – is confronted with an intricate problem in trying to bring out in a face that is sometimes plain the depth and beauty of man's spiritual world...

What is important is for posterity to perceive in the portraits of our day a character... that would touch an emotional chord. Hence I believe that the artist need not slavishly copy nature when creating a character. The artist has the right to use his imagination.

There are different ways of presenting a heroic monumental character. Only a

character that is intrinsically monumental can be thus portrayed, since it is the content that dictates the plastic form.

The fundamental problem of our sculpture today is to create a memorial monument – an exceedingly responsible task. True monumentality, in my belief, is possible only when the artist uses as a basis for his character such concrete facts and phenomena of life as are near to the progressive ideas of the people and reflect its ideals.

The character of monumental sculpture is necessarily of a generalizing and poetical nature. Monumental art can not be prosaic and commonplace, for it is an art of great, lofty, heroic feelings and broad character. It should be the quintessence of the most typical features of our times and our people as envisaged by the artist.

I have always been keenly interested in the problems of monumental sculpture.

In 1943, in co-operation with the architect Lebedev, I made a design for a monument to the heroic defence of Sevastopol during the Great Patriotic War.

This design represents a gigantic beacon-tower rising up from the sea. The tower is entered by boat... [At the top] stand a sculptural group, consisting of the figures of four sailors standing up close together... and defending themselves against the enemy with their bayonets. Over the entrance to the tower are engraved the words of Maxim Gorky from his *Song of the Falcon* – “Glory we sing to the reckless brave”. In this monument I aim to reveal the selfless heroism and unforgettable valour displayed by the defenders of Sevastopol...

The functions of a monument are not only that of immortalising the memory of a hero or an event, but also an appeal to future generations. Lenin urged Soviet sculptors in his time to create “memorials of monumental propaganda”, and this is precisely what I am pursuing in my work.

I was not interested merely in heroic images during the war, however. The splendid showing the Russian people made in this war has its roots in the history of the nation, its centuries-old cultural development and its national conscience. The portrayal of the great men and women of our nation who lived in the past is a subject that seizes the imagination of the artist.

At present I have finished the design of a monument to the great Russian composer Chaikovsky. In this monument, which is to be erected in Moscow in front of the Chaikovsky State Conservatory, I strove to create a realistic image of this wonderful musician, at the same time revealing his calling without recourse to symbolical means or allegory. This task was a very difficult one to solve...

I have portrayed Chaikovsky in a moment of creative inspiration. The composer is, as it were, listening to the sounds of a Russian folk tune... I have tried to communicate to his aspect, his pose and gesture the inspiration and inner concentration of the great artist.

In the dismal but heroic days which humanity has recently lived through, numerous images filled the mind of the artist and demanded plastic embodiment. It has been difficult to keep up with the inflow of inspiring images and do justice to the magnificent examples all around.

## **SCRSS News**

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*Latest news by Ralph Gibson, Honorary Secretary, SCRSS*

### **AGM 2022**

Notice is hereby given that the SCRSS Annual General Meeting will take place at the SCRSS premises on Saturday 21 May 2022, starting at 11.00. The meeting is open to SCRSS members only. Following a lunch break, art historian Christine Lindey will give

a talk at 14.00 on *Representation of Workers in Soviet Art*. The AGM is an excellent opportunity to visit the centre, review the activities of the Society and its Trustees, as well as consider ideas for future development. The deadline for motions and nominations of members for election to the next SCRSS Council is Friday 22 April 2022. All motions and nominations must be seconded by another SCRSS member. The Agenda will be available from early May.

## SCRSS Rules Update

You will find enclosed with this mailing a copy of the draft updated Rules for the Society. As part of the Strategy 100 programme ahead of the Society's centenary, the SCRSS Council proposes various changes to the existing Rules to bring them up to date. The new Rules will be discussed and voted on at the AGM on 21 May 2022 (see above).

## SCRSS Library Catalogue

Elsewhere in this issue, Mel Bach, our Honorary Librarian, has written about the launch of the Soutron library management system and its implications for the Society. On behalf of the Society, I would like to express thanks to Mel for the huge amount of volunteer time and effort she has applied to this project. Without her efforts (and the financial support of the donor of the initial annual subscription) the long-cherished dream of an online catalogue for the SCRSS collections would not have been possible. Now all we need are more volunteers to help input the information. Get in touch if you are at all interested!

## Centre Openings

Although the September–December 2021 openings each Tuesday did not attract many visitors, they did allow for good progress on library work by our growing band of library volunteers. My thanks to the Trustees and 'guardians' who made these openings

possible. The Society intends to continue opening the premises every Tuesday and on the first Saturday of each month for the remainder of 2022. If you are interested in becoming a guardian (i.e. welcoming visitors, dealing with book loans, etc) by volunteering your time no more than one day per month, then do please email us on [ruslibrary@scrss.org.uk](mailto:ruslibrary@scrss.org.uk). The more volunteer guardians we have, the less days per year each one has to commit to.

## Events

Following the successful launch of online events using the Zoom platform from autumn 2020, the Society will continue to host such events in the future. In due course, in-person events at the centre will resume. The hope is to purchase and install equipment that will eventually allow 'hybrid' events – that is, you will be able to attend in person or via Zoom. The very latest information regarding events can be found on the SCRSS website or in our regular e-newsletter to members. If you are not receiving the e-news, email [ruslibrary@scrss.org.uk](mailto:ruslibrary@scrss.org.uk). We do seem to experience problems sending emails via certain providers (e.g. me.com). You may need to add the Society's email address to your contacts or safe senders list.

## Membership Renewals

Reminders are enclosed for all memberships due now and in the period up to 30 June 2022. This saves the Society on postage costs and administration time – important since we receive no external funding and are run entirely by volunteers. Please help us by responding as soon as possible, even if your membership is not due for some time. To avoid any lapse in membership, please consider setting up a standing order to pay automatically each year. Simply request the SCRSS bank details via email. As we approach the centenary of the Society in 2024, retaining our existing members and recruiting new ones to support our work and unique collections is vitally important.





**THE  
RUSSIAN  
BOOKSHOP**

THE LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE OF RUSSIA

## New Year, New Beginning!

New Year is traditionally a time for new beginnings; whether it's a new job, learning a new language or skill, making a lifestyle change or generally broadening your horizons.

To set you on the path in 2022, we have selected a range of Russian books to help you achieve your goals.



Browse Russian books for **A Happier, Healthier You**  
on our **[www.russianbookshop.co.uk](http://www.russianbookshop.co.uk)** website  
and in our London showroom until 14th February 2022

Email: [russian@esb.co.uk](mailto:russian@esb.co.uk)

Telephone: 01242 245252

## Next Events

*Please note that the 2022 library openings every Tuesday and on the first Saturday of the month are not listed below. For full and up-to-date details of all events, visit the SCRSS website at [www.scrss.org.uk](http://www.scrss.org.uk). From January 2022, normal ticket prices apply (£3.00 SCRSS members, £5.00 non-members) for both online and in-person events, unless otherwise indicated.*

**From Thursday 27 January 2022 for 10 weeks, 18.00-20.00**

**Zoom Online Evening Class: Russian Language for Intermediate Level**

Rolling 10-week Zoom evening class, taught by Christine Barnard. Friendly, informal and non-competitive group. One hour conversation practice, one hour reading – current book *Шанка* by Vladimir Voinovich. Fee for 10 weeks: £40.00 (SCRSS members only.)

**Tuesday 15 February 2022, 19.00**

**Zoom Online Lecture: Andrew Jameson on Navigating Russian Conversations**

Professional translator and retired lecturer in Russian Andrew Jameson continues his series on the history of the Russian language. Book via Eventbrite. Normal ticket prices apply.

**Tuesday 15 March 2022, 19.00**

**Zoom Online Lecture: Andrew Jameson on Tall Tales about Russian Etymologies**

Professional translator and retired lecturer in Russian Andrew Jameson continues his series on the history of the Russian language. Book via Eventbrite. Normal ticket prices apply.

**Tuesday 12 April 2022, 19.00**

**Zoom Online Lecture: Colin Turbett on Soviets in Space – The People of the USSR and the Race to the Moon**

Colin Turbett discusses his new book of the same name, published in November 2021 by Pen & Sword Books. 2021 was the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Yuri Gagarin's first manned flight in space. The Soviets were great pioneers of the race to space in the Cold War era, it was a source of great pride and encouraged the notion that ordinary Soviet people from working-class backgrounds could

excel. Colin's book charts the story with the Soviet people at the heart of that innovation. Book via Eventbrite. Normal ticket prices apply.

**Tuesday 26 April 2022, 19.00**

**Lecture: Matthias Neumann on Peace and Friendship: Overcoming the Cold War in the Artek Pioneer Camp**

Dr Matthias Neumann is Senior Lecturer in Modern Russian History at the University of East Anglia. He has published widely on the history of childhood and youth in revolutionary Russia. He is also the President of the British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies (BASEES). Event held at SCRSS premises. Normal ticket prices apply. Booking details to follow.

**Saturday 21 May 2022, 11.00**

**Event: SCRSS AGM**

*SCRSS members only.* Event held at SCRSS premises.

**Saturday 21 May 2022, 14.00**

**Lecture: Christine Lindey on Representation of Workers in Soviet Art**

Illustrated talk. Christine Lindey is an art historian with a special interest in Soviet and Socialist art. See *Christine's biography on page 4 of this issue*. Event held at SCRSS premises. Free entry to SCRSS members who attend the AGM, otherwise normal ticket prices apply.

## Soviet War Memorial Trust News

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*Latest news by Ralph Gibson, Honorary Secretary, SWMT*

## Remembrance Sunday 2021

Following disruption to events due to Covid, the SWMT was pleased to be able to organise an Act of Remembrance at the Soviet War Memorial as usual on Remembrance Sunday in November 2021.



# Holocaust Memorial Day 2022

At the time of writing, the SWMT is preparing to host a ceremony to mark Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January 2022. The Mayor of Southwark, veterans, diplomats and a number of political and community organisations are committed to taking part.

## Next Events

**Monday 9 May 2022, 11.00**

### Event: Victory Day

With the expected general lifting of Covid-related restrictions, the SWMT will be organising a full-scale ceremony to mark Victory Day 2022. If you are interested in volunteering to help out on the day, please contact [sovietwarmemorialtrust@gmail.com](mailto:sovietwarmemorialtrust@gmail.com).

*The Soviet War Memorial, dedicated to the 27 million Soviet men and women who lost their lives in the fight against Fascism in 1941–45, is located in Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park, Southwark, London SE1 (adjacent to the Imperial War Museum). The Memorial was unveiled in 1999 on the initiative of the SCRSS and the Society has been supporting the work of the SWMT since its foundation. See [www.sovietwarmemorialtrust.com](http://www.sovietwarmemorialtrust.com) for more information.*

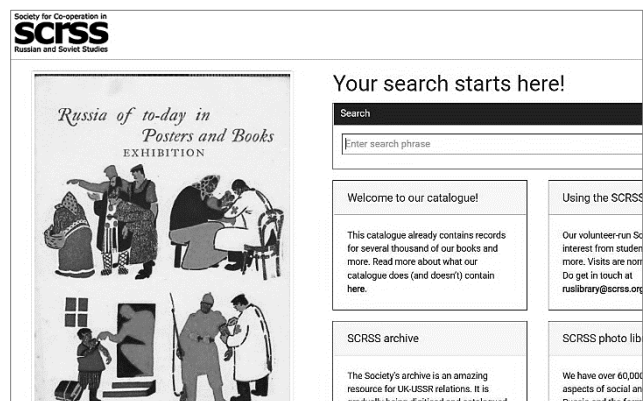
## Feature

### A New Catalogue for the SCRSS

By Mel Bach, SCRSS Honorary Librarian

The Library and Archive are the great treasures of our Society, and a huge new step towards getting their contents better known has been achieved in the last year. As SCRSS Honorary Librarian, I am delighted to announce that our new online catalogue will go live from Monday 7

February 2022 – linked from the Library & Archive page on our website at [www.scrss.org.uk/library.htm](http://www.scrss.org.uk/library.htm) or accessible directly at <https://scrss.soutron.net/Portal/>.



Screenshot of the new SCRSS Library Catalogue home page on Soutron (detail)

Many generations of SCRSS staff and volunteers have undertaken heroic efforts to list and catalogue the SCRSS collections. We have several card catalogues but these are sadly unreliable: they do not reflect changes to our collections, and it can be nigh impossible to reconcile with what is now on the shelves.

More recently, the work has, of course, turned to computers. Twenty years ago, I had the delight of spending two weeks of my library MA course at the SCRSS, on a formal placement, typing in cataloguing entries under the supervision of Jane Rosen (then SCRSS Librarian) and her colleague John Cunningham.

The latest in-house iteration of a catalogue of sorts was an Access database. It was a step forward, providing a more formal structure, but by that point the Society lacked a librarian to inform its gargantuan architecture and arrange its contents. Access itself was also frustrating to use, confounded by the great mysteries of John himself, who guarded the database's secrets jealously. I was never able to work out how to remove the images in the database which caused great headaches over the years. I like to think that the late lamented John is still delighting in my foiled attempts to undo his technological superglue.

Our extraordinary library volunteers faithfully fed data into the Access database over the years, chief among them Claire Weiss. When I first joined the SCRSS Council in the mid-2010s, I worked with John, Claire, and Claire's fellow catalogue volunteer of the time, Bethany Aylward (now a Council member), together with input from others on the Council, to overhaul the database. The clunky database – confined to one computer – remained, but it now had a slightly clearer structure and was better organised in terms of data input, with guidance about what data to enter, in what form, and with dropdown menus for subject headings.

For many years the aim of the SCRSS Council, supported by library projects, plans, and reviews, had been to acquire proper library cataloguing software. Amazingly, the last two years saw the necessary pieces come together. First and foremost, a great friend of the SCRSS generously committed to a number of years' worth of funding (library management systems involve annual payments, not a one-off fee) and has helped with other costs too. Jane (now a Council member), our Honorary Secretary Ralph and I looked into options, and the Council agreed that we should go with Soutron, a system used by the Wiener Holocaust Library and Marx Memorial Library, among many, many others.

So far, effort has chiefly gone into getting our existing data into Soutron. The nearly 5,000 Access records bear witness to the huge efforts of Claire, Bethany, and other volunteers. The earlier years of the database left quite a tangled legacy of records, reflecting changes in transliteration and the occasional human error over the years. I therefore spent a rather enjoyable few days making approximately 10,000 alterations to data in the title and author fields. That number sounds large but there were only serious problems to fix in a small minority of records, while a great deal of changes involved minor tweaks to allow data to be browsed more easily in the catalogue.

Lack of time for the project meant that I couldn't apply my efforts to all the data

fields, but the title and author fields are among the most important, and further clean-up can continue gently in the background.

So, what are the benefits of Soutron?

For readers and potential readers, Soutron provides a proper online catalogue. That alone is an extraordinary and vital change. The catalogue allows for keyword and advanced searches and it is updated immediately when new additions are made.

For SCRSS volunteers, Soutron gives us a far clearer structure for adding entries for our material. We can use templates for certain types of material (our amazing pamphlet collection, for example). We can import records for books also held by other libraries, speeding up the cataloguing process. Soutron is web-based, so we are freed from the Access days of a single computer, and can have multiple users adding or editing data at the same time. For Jane, Ralph, and me, as the SCRSS admin account-holders, we can call on Soutron to help us with problems, and we can rely on them to keep the catalogue safe and working.

At the time of writing, I am planning training for Claire and other volunteers interested in cataloguing. We are all keen to get going with cataloguing again and to add more and more entries to Soutron. If anyone reading this is interested in volunteering, do get in touch with the SCRSS Honorary Secretary. No library experience is needed, and there are plenty of other jobs to help with in the library if you are less keen on the idea of cataloguing!

The pandemic has held up work on our collections in many practical ways, with visits by volunteers to help sort, move, catalogue, classify and label material on hold for much of the last two years. So, it is particularly amazing in this context that such a fantastic new step has been taken in the form of the new catalogue. In Soutron we finally have the chance to share the riches of the SCRSS collections with the world. Do have a look at <https://scrss.soutron.net/Portal/>.

*Mel Bach is SCRSS Honorary Librarian. Her 'day job' is Head of Collections & Academic Liaison and Slavonic Specialist at Cambridge University Library. She is also Secretary of COSEELIS (UK Slavonic library network) and Co-editor of the Slavic Cataloging Manual.*

## Feature

### Survival and Renewal: The SCR / SCRSS 1991–93

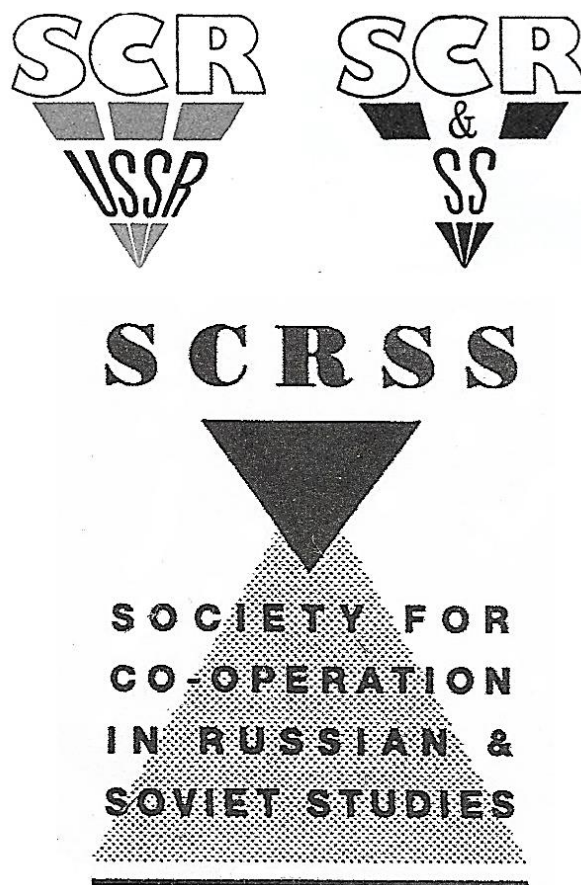
By Jean Turner, SCRSS Treasurer and Former SCR / SCRSS Secretary

Just over thirty years ago, on 26 December 1991, the USSR was dissolved. This momentous change called into question the very existence of our Society, then known as the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR (SCR).

Any organisation known as a 'friendship society' needs a partner with whom to be friendly. The term usually relates to friendship between similar organisations and people in two countries.

The SCR, a friendship society, was founded in London in 1924. It grew out of the desire of people in Britain and the British Commonwealth to form co-operative relations with the USSR – an entirely new form of socialist society. The Society's founding members were key British and Soviet artists and intellectuals who wished to share information on cultural developments in both countries. Successful joint activities took place throughout the 1920s–30s and expanded widely during World War II (WWII) when the USSR and Great Britain were allies. But after Winston Churchill's 1946 'Iron Curtain' speech at Fulton, Missouri, Anglo-Soviet relations deteriorated. Nonetheless, the SCR continued in its role as a cultural intermediary between the two countries from the 1950s through to the Gorbachev era in the late 1980s.

However, what happens to a friendship society when one of the two partner countries ceases to exist? This was the situation in which the SCR found itself in late 1991.



Metamorphosis of the Society's logo. *From left to right, top to bottom:* 1991; June 1992; October 1992 (SCRSS Archive)

The SCR had been watching the fast-moving political events in the USSR from early 1991. First a referendum in March, in which 80 per cent of voters in nine of the fifteen union republics voted to preserve the USSR. Then Boris Yeltsin's inauguration as President of the Russian Republic in July, following a democratic election – with Mikhail Gorbachev continuing as *Soviet* President (to which new post he had been elected by the Congress of People's Deputies in March 1990) and General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Finally, the failed coup by CPSU hardliners in August that triggered Gorbachev's resignation as General Secretary, followed by a cascade of legislative changes and secessions of union republics through to November 1991.



What was the SCR to do? Initially, the SCR's elected Council chose to carry on with its usual joint activities, wherever possible. Later, seeing the rise of nationalism in a number of the union republics, the SCR called a Special General Meeting of the Society on 9 November 1991 at Lambeth Town Hall in London to consult members on whether to continue as a friendship society. Around 100 members attended the meeting to hear the views of Bill Bowring (SCR Chair), the Council and myself, as General Secretary. The overwhelming decision of those present was to continue as a cultural relations organisation, working with both the central Soviet administration and those friendship societies in the newly independent states that still wished to co-operate.

However, on 8 December 1991 the leaders of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus signed the Belovezha Accords, recognising each other's independence and creating the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). This effectively ended the USSR. On 25 December 1991, after Gorbachev's resignation, the Soviet flag was lowered on the Kremlin and the following day the USSR was dissolved.



Letterhead of the USSR–Great Britain Friendship Society, Kalinin Prospect, Moscow, late 1980s (SCRSS Archive)

Until this point, the SCR had worked closely with the Union of Soviet Friendship Societies (ССОД / SSOD), a central Soviet organisation based in the Morozov mansion on Kalinin Prospect, Moscow, and headed up in 1991 by the former Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova. The SCR and SSOD signed bi-annual Agreements of Cultural Co-operation that encompassed cultural and Russian-language activities, exchanges and

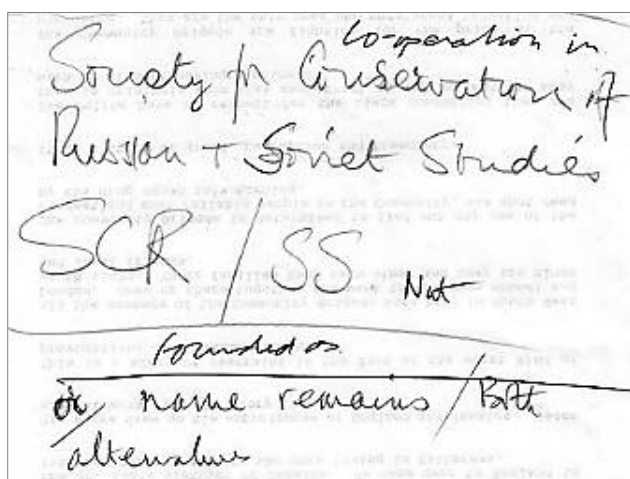
scholarships. Under SSOD's umbrella were grouped thousands of Soviet academic, cultural and other organisations, including friendship societies that worked with their counterparts in individual foreign countries worldwide (in our case, the USSR–Great Britain Society). If the SCR was now wondering about its continued viability, what was the situation for SSOD?

On 4 April 1992, SSOD was disbanded and replaced by the Russian Association for International Co-operation (PAMC / RAMS). Under Tereshkova's continued leadership, RAMS continued much of SSOD's former work, but lost all its state funding. In Moscow, more than 100 organisations, including friendship societies with foreign countries, joined RAMS as affiliates. In St Petersburg, the former Leningrad Branch of SSOD affiliated as the St Petersburg Association for International Co-operation (SPAIC), a self-financing non-governmental organisation, and continued its proactive programme of town-twinning exchanges, educational and cultural contacts with foreign countries, including with the SCR.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the uncertainty of early 1992, the SCR managed to keep in touch with like-minded activists in local friendship societies in the newly independent republics and continue joint plans. The Society even managed to run its annual SCR Intensive Russian Language Course in London, from 8–17 April 1992. The event was opened by Valentina Tereshkova, now head of RAMS, and taught by fourteen teachers brought over for the course from Russia and a number of other CIS republics.

The next key event in the SCR's adaptation to these changed circumstances was the Annual General Meeting held in May 1992. As Chair Bill Bowring noted, "the survival of the SCR seemed very much in doubt" at the time. However, the AGM voted overwhelmingly for a new beginning with a new name and a new set of Rules, but – crucially – without changing the Society's original purpose. The SCR Council's proposed new name, 'The Society for Co-operation in Russia and Soviet Studies' (SCRSS), was adopted by unanimous vote.

SCRSS Council member Jane Rosen, who is researching a history of the Society for our centenary in 2024, recently discovered the original “written scrawl” made by myself and Bill Bowring when we were looking at naming suggestions in 1992. The new name embodied the Society’s original acronym SCR, but (as the *Members’ Newsletter* in June–July 1992 explained) “reflects a change in emphasis towards encouraging use of our unique Library as an archive and resource centre for students and researchers into the history of the Soviet Union and pre- and post-revolutionary affairs, including the States now roughly grouped in the Commonwealth of Independent States and those who have chosen to remain free of this. It also reflects our continued assistance in spreading the study of the Russian language”.



The original ‘scrawl’, written on the back of another document, in which Jean Turner and Bill Bowring experimented with new versions of the Society’s name in 1992 (SCRSS Archive)

It is worth noting that, unlike the SCR, many other friendship societies worldwide did not survive the collapse of the USSR. Here in the UK, for example, the British-Soviet Friendship Society (BSFS) was dissolved in 1991.

The transition from SCR to SCRSS necessitated other internal changes. The pre-1992 logo appeared in modified form in the June–July 1992 *Members’ Newsletter* and was replaced in the October–November 1992 issue of the *Information Digest* by a brand-new logo incorporating the new

acronym and full name (see illustration on page 11).

The high costs of producing the Society’s prestigious *Anglo-Soviet Journal* (ASJ), which had been in continuous print since 1940, were already causing financial problems by 1990. After the Spring 1991 issue (Vol. 51, No. 1), the next two issues that year were postponed several times and only appeared – combined – in Summer 1992 (Vol. 51, Nos. 2 & 3) as the final issue. Having been delayed at the printer for over a year, the issue therefore makes no reference either to the dissolution of the USSR or to the Society’s change of name. The ASJ was replaced in October 1992 by the *Information Digest*, a much cheaper information sheet produced three times a year and alternating with the *Members’ Newsletter*.

Externally, the SCR’s longstanding arrangements with SSOD on the generous free-of-charge provision of library materials and student scholarships were adversely affected by its successor RAMS’ lack of funds. Until early 1992, the SCR received a wide range of periodicals from SSOD and operated a Permanent Loan Scheme to six university libraries. Similarly, the SCR Visual Aids Library received regular batches of photographic prints from SSOD. However, by 1993 the supply of both had been discontinued. One of the Society’s biggest draws for students of Russian language had been its scholarships to study in Moscow, in particular its two 5-month placements each year at the Pushkin Institute of Russian Language. These went ahead as normal in 1990 and 1991, then ceased in 1992. In 1993 the SCRSS was offered some heavily subsidised fee-paying placements at the Pushkin Institute, but these disappeared for good in 1994, after which the SCRSS continued to operate only as an agent for commercially run courses at the MADI Institute, in conjunction with Regent Holidays (UK) Ltd.

Nonetheless, despite the upheavals of 1991–92, activities and co-operation with partners in the CIS continued. Bill Bowring’s regular group tours of lawyers and law

students to Russia took place again in 1992 and 1993; I visited Moscow in January 1993 as a guest of RAMS to discuss joint projects on Russian language study and architecture / town-planning; in 1993 then SCRSS Librarian Jane Rosen welcomed two librarians from the National Library of Russia and the Lenin Library to the Society's premises, followed by a return visit to St Petersburg through SPAIC to progress an agreement on 'book aid' to our library; the SCRSS Intensive Russian Language Seminar in London also ran again in 1993.

Our Society has survived, through all these changes, since 1924. We became a registered educational charity in 2004 and are now looking ahead to our centenary in 2024. Operating as a voluntary organisation without any external funding, we still play an important role in British-Russian relations. It was on the SCRSS's initiative that the Soviet War Memorial, commemorating the sacrifice of 27 million lives by the citizens and armed forces of the USSR in the fight against Fascism in WWII, was unveiled in London in 1999, and we are active in ongoing educational and commemorative events there. We continue to protect and develop access to the SCRSS Soviet Collections, our historic Library and Archive of the arts, humanities and social sciences of the Soviet Union – with our first online library catalogue launching in February 2022. We promote Russian language learning through our annual Advanced Russian Language Seminar, organised in partnership with SPAIC, and our evening classes for members – both are now delivered online via Zoom. And we engage and co-operate actively with other partner organisations in Russia (in particular SPAIC) and this country, to promote Russian and Soviet studies, cultural relations and the Russian language. All this is good news – and a validation of the judgement made by the members and Council of the SCR at our AGM back in May 1992.

#### Footnote

1 Today, the St Petersburg Association for International Co-operation (SPAIC) comprises thirty

friendship societies and associations, with around eighty affiliated organisations in the city. Its members are engaged actively in support of peace and mutual understanding ('people's diplomacy'). Many of its projects are sponsored by the City of St Petersburg External Relations Committee, which also provides SPAIC with its office accommodation free of charge. SPAIC is the SCRSS's primary partner in Russia for its Russian-language seminars and many other joint cultural projects. In 2021, Margarita Mudrak, Chair of SPAIC, celebrated fifty years of working for the organisation.

#### Acknowledgments

Thanks to Diana Turner and Jane Rosen for additional material from the SCRSS Archive, and to Margarita Mudrak, Chair of SPAIC, for her perspective on SSOD and RAMS.

## Obituary

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### John Barber (1944–2021)

By David Lane



John Barber who died on 26 May 2021 was a longstanding member of the SCR / SCRSS and an active member of its Council from 1970 until 1986.

John won a scholarship from St Alban's School to Christ's College, Cambridge,



where he studied history as an undergraduate. He contemplated research on the communist revolution in China, but decided against it, as learning Chinese was an even greater challenge than learning Russian. China's loss was Russia's gain and, after the award of a research fellowship at Jesus College, Cambridge, in 1967 he settled on Soviet history with a proposed research topic on 'Soviet Historians in Crisis'. In 1969–70, supported by a British Council award, he studied in Moscow where he lived in MGU (Moscow State University) and occupied a desk, like other foreign students, in Zal No. 1 in the Lenin Library. He accepted an appointment as University Lecturer in History in 1974 and concurrently became Director of Studies at King's College. In 1976 he joined the Centre for Russian and East European Studies (CREES) at Birmingham University as a Research Fellow, where he was an active member of the team under RW Davies studying the industrialisation of the USSR. He returned to Cambridge in 1980 as Lecturer in the Politics of Russia and the USSR in the newly formed Social and Political Sciences Tripos. He remained a Life Fellow at King's College where he held the roles of Lay Dean, Vice-Provost and Acting Provost. In recognition of his contribution to a European Union funded Tempus programme on sustainable urban development, he was awarded the title of Honoured Professor by Kharkiv National University in 2015.

His major works were *Soviet Historians in Crisis, 1928–1932* (1981), *Defended to Death* (1983), *The Soviet Home Front 1941–1945* (with M Harrison, 1991), *The Soviet Defence Industry Complex from Lenin to Khrushchev* (with M Harrison, 2000) and a major study *Life and Death in Besieged Leningrad* (edited with Andrei Dzeniskevich, 2005). The latter, based on declassified documents and interviews with survivors, is the most informed account of the siege and its impact on the lives of the people of Leningrad. He contributed many reviews, including some for the SCR's *Anglo-Soviet Journal*. John was a popular and inspiring lecturer who enlivened his lectures with vivid clips illustrating Soviet

life. As a member of the Council of the SCR he always made positive contributions.

John was also a talented musician. He was a member of King's Voices and the College's mixed choir. He was also a determined and formidable runner known for his regular Sunday runs. He was a supportive, popular and active colleague in the Social and Political Sciences Tripos. He had a wide range of friends. He was modest, always had a welcoming smile and cheerful greeting, as well as possessing a lively sense of humour. At our last meeting, just before his death, he enquired after my health. I replied, jokingly: "OK but, unlike Stalin, I think I have a lack of iron." "Never mind", he said, "I'm sure that you, like Stalin, have other qualities."

He is survived by his daughter, Catharine.

## Feature

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### Russian Film Week Returns in Person

By Donald Gasper



*The Russian Film Week returned to cinemas in London and across the UK on 28 November 2021 after being forced to go virtual in 2020 because of the pandemic. Donald Gasper talked with Filip Perkon of Perkon Productions, Swedish-born founder and General Director of the event.*

**Q: Can you tell me how long the Russian Film Week has been running? How did it start?**

A: We have been running since 2016, when we founded the Russian Film Week as part

of the UK–Russia Year of Language and Literature. As we didn't have any Russian films being screened in London, it was an open niche that I strongly believed would attract both Russian-speaking and international audiences.

**Q: What are the goals of the event and how many people generally attend?**

A: The goals of the Russian Film Week are to build bridges between Europe and Russia, between our peoples, and to foster cultural connections and mutual understanding. That translates into promoting Russian films from all genres abroad and giving Russian filmmakers the opportunity to be seen on the big screen in the UK.

We have steadily grown from a few thousand attendees in 2016 to our record-breaking audience number of 13,000 in 2019. In 2020 we were online and now, in 2021, we are recovering in a much less mobile and restricted world, so numbers were slightly lower.

**Q: What happened last year when the Covid crisis broke? Were you still able to screen any films?**

A: We had to go online, make a video-on-demand platform for films, Zoom for masterclasses and talks, and BEEM for live screenings with Q&A. Although this was a temporary fix, we realise that the online version of our festival doesn't really work, apart from for short films. Audience numbers were only 50 per cent of what we are used to, as online event fatigue kicked in. And the event was free.

The Russian Film Week is so much more than the content that we screen. It is the discussions, the debates, the red-carpet photos, the people you meet and connect with at the festival. That can't be replicated online.

**Q: Who are the sponsors of the event? Do any Russian official bodies give support?**

A: We have mostly corporate sponsorship and grants from private foundations: Synergy Corporation, Gazprom Marketing

and Trading, Kaspersky, as well as the Blavatnik Family Foundation.

We also get some marketing financing from Roskino to promote our films to a wider audience.

**Q: Who selects which films will be shown?**

A: We have a nomination committee of ten individuals from across Europe, all experts in culture, film and art, who view all of our submissions and vote to come up with a list of films.

**Q: What were the main offerings this year? Do you have any personal favourites?**

A: The main ones were, of course, *The Petrov Flu*, *Captain Volkonogov Escapes*, *Sin* and *The Three*. I have also seen *Jetlag*, which I really enjoyed, as well as a few others, but I don't want to be biased. All of our films deserve attention.

**Q: How is the Russian film industry managing to survive?**

A: Actually, it's a paradox, but the Russian film industry has had a very strong two years, producing a record number of films and has been represented at all the major film festivals in the world, with many titles. I guess when you cease travel and confine creative people to their homes, they react by creating.

**Q: Did any film stars or other VIPs attend?**

Yes, although the Sputnik vaccine is not recognised in the UK yet, and many could not come due to quarantine requirements, we still had a few VIPs attending. People like Danila Kozlovsky, Oksana Akinshina, Ilya Stewart, Boris Grebenshikov, Alexander Tsytkin, Dmitry Glukhovsky, Lily Idov, Michael Idov and others.

See the Russian Film Week website at <https://www.russianfilmweek.org/> for more information.

**Acknowledgement**

Thanks to Russian Film Week for use of their logo.

## Feature

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### Highlights from the SCRSS Archive: Purrystroika

By Jane Rosen

It is well known that the SCRSS has members, currently and in the past, with an interest in education, theatre, ballet, chess and science. It is perhaps less well known for having those interested in cats.



Lenin with his pet cat in Gorky, 1922  
(SCRSS Photo Library)

In 1988 the SCR\* was approached by the Fauna Moscow Cat Club who wanted to arrange a visit to the UK to meet similar organisations involved in caring for felines. Both the Librarian and the General Secretary of the SCR embraced the idea and arranged the trip in 1989, co-hosted with the Cats Protection League.

Sadly, the President of the Fauna Club was unable to come, having broken a leg whilst avoiding stepping on a kitten. Initially visas were withheld because the British Embassy

did not believe that the visit was legitimate. Luckily, the Embassy's cat lover allowed the visas to stand. The Soviet visitors took part in a programme that included visits to various Cat Protection League facilities in London, Sussex and Devon. The visit gained a lot of press publicity, ranging from the nationals to local press, and garnered some dreadful punning headlines. These included the *Morning Star's* 'Purrystroika for Moscow Moggies' and the *Exeter Express's* 'From Moggyscow with Love to Devon'. The story even made it as far as Belfast where a headline proclaimed: 'Pere-puss-stroikes!' Perhaps the best comment is the one added to the compliment slip that the SCR's Vice-Chair sent in with a cheque for expenses: "For meaningful relations between British & Soviet cats." Yes, the SCRSS definitely appreciates cats!

\* Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR, as the SCRSS was known at the time.

*Jane Rosen is a member of the SCRSS Council and former SCRSS Librarian. She is currently researching a history of the Society ahead of our centenary in 2024.*

## Book Reviews

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### Other Worlds: Peasants, Pilgrims, Spirits, Saints

By Teffi (edited and with a foreword by Robert Chandler, Pushkin Press, August 2021, ISBN: 978-1-78227-561-9, Pbk, 282pp, £10.99)

To read this book in one session is inadvisable – you will be left with a sense of terror, mystery, religious fanaticism, superstition, primitive cruelty and violence to women and children. Although classified as light entertainment, this is the overall impression of the stories, compiled from magazine articles and previous collections of Teffi's work.

Teffi – a popular writer in pre-revolutionary Russia – was unique in being a successful female author both in Russia and, later, as



an émigré in Paris. Her works were liked by both Tsar Nicholas II and Lenin. Born in 1872 into a prominent St Petersburg family, she emigrated from Bolshevik Russia in 1919, eventually settling in Paris where she lived until her death in 1952.

She was not well known in the UK until recently. One reason may be that she used common dialects in her stories, which were considered almost untranslatable into English. However, Robert and Elizabeth Chandler, Maria Bloshteyn, Anne Marie Jackson, Sabrina Jaszi, Sara Jolly and Nicolas Pasternak Slater have set about systematically translating her stories into colloquial English – with some success. Their attempts to use a Yorkshire dialect can be irritating, a generic ‘peasant’ dialect seems to be most successful.

Teffi records the dialects of the servants and peasants, their fears and ancient beliefs, that she absorbed as a child on her family’s country estate in Ukraine. Many of her stories reflect her experiences as an observant and sensitive child in her travels across the huge expanses of Western Russia.

Like the children of the landed gentry in Britain, Russian children were sent to their country estates to spend the summer in the care of servants. In many cases the only love they experienced from babyhood to six years was from their *nyanya* (nursemaid), after which they were handed over to a governess or tutor who educated them up to finishing school or university age. Again, as in Britain, children were regarded as negotiable possessions to be married off to increase the family’s fortune. This applied especially to girls and was one of the causes of violence in marriage and families. This provides a common thread through many of the stories.

Another recurrent theme is the belief in house spirits (*domovoy*s) who may be both malignant and helpful, depending on the individual concerned. Some are akin to what we would call poltergeists, terrifying a whole household or institution from the educated to the illiterate.

Teffi was a practising member of the Russian Orthodox Church. In her tales of pilgrimages, penances or first confessions, she describes the fear among all classes of going to hell or receiving dire punishment for sin – unaided by the worldliness of an indifferent priest. In her stories of witchcraft, an ancient belief amongst Russian people thrives alongside other more rational beliefs and explanations. The gods of the forest, for example, are dealt with in detail.

A final theme is the habit of both women and men in throwing off their education and comfortable lives, disappearing into the vast spaces of the steppes and forests for weeks or months – even years – before returning to their families. Is this Teffi’s explanation for revolutionaries going into hiding, or being captured and exiled by the tsarist police? Although not mentioned directly, politics and sympathy with the common people may be at the bottom of many of her stories.

*Jean Turner*

### **The Russian Cold: Histories of Ice, Frost and Snow**

**Edited by Julia Herzberg, Andreas Renner and Ingrid Schierle (Berghahn, New York & Oxford, 2021, ISBN: 978-1-80073 127-1, Hbk, vii + 261pp, £107.00; ISBN: 978-1-80073 128-8, e-book, \$34.95; 20 illus, notes & bibliography for each article, conclusion, index)**

Series (what *is* the plural of ‘series’?) generate books that can often refresh thinking and bring together themes not dealt with in the mainstream. They can result in trivialities, but *The Russian Cold* covers a number of aspects and throws a new light on something that is ever present in Russia, but not discussed. Here are some of the themes that are adumbrated in this volume.

The existence of climate-weather-temperature resulted in the emergence of the scientific study of weather in Russia in the eighteenth century as applied to many areas: farming, construction, housing, means of heating and, ultimately, architecture. The study of cold was a major

area of research for the new Academy of Sciences. It produced the Ice Palace, major studies of the properties of water and ice, the measuring of temperature, whether mercury could be made to freeze or not, and whether there was an absolute zero.

One chapter discusses the Russian Antarctic Expedition of 1819–21 by Bellingshausen, during the worldwide rush to explore those regions. Later used by the Soviet government to prove that Russia was the first to see Antarctica and had rights in the area, it now seems clear that he was 'that close' but did not, in fact, see land.

The central section of the book is called *Images and Narratives*, and discusses the image of Siberia, starting from the nineteenth century. For liberals at that time, this was an area to be exploited, a place of punishment and exile. In conservative minds, Siberia was a land of abundance with future prospects. In fact, both were right. As railways expanded, southern Siberia became a major supplier of butter, no need for refrigerated wagons! The optimists won the debate in the Soviet period, resulting, among much else, in the Virgin Lands campaign. But anyone who visits Siberia now cannot but be impressed by the vigour of the great Siberian cities.

Russian and Soviet cinema is one of the greatest and most innovative traditions in world cinema. An important article here discusses the iconography of snow and ice: death and life, the transient and the everlasting, fragile beauty. In Soviet times cold was interpreted as conflict, to be overcome, and it fed into the agenda of modernisation and the creation of the new Soviet identity for men and women. In the war period, cold appeared both as an executioner and an ally. And post-Stalin, the winter gave way to the Thaw.

The article also points out how difficult it was to film in the cold: black and white images only, film becomes brittle in the cold, and, for the dazzling white of sunlit snow, filters are needed. In a final irony, the battle on the ice in the film *Alexander Nevsky* was filmed on the back lot at Mosfilm in the

Lenin Hills in midsummer – with chalk for snow.

As space is scarce, this reviewer will just mention three remaining chapters in the final section *Pain and Pleasure*: 'The Wehrmacht and the Russian Winter', detailing how unprepared German soldiers were; 'Winter Tourism and Skiing in the Soviet Union', covering the development of this national pastime; and 'Heroes of the Ice', describing the polar explorer and the ice hockey champion as examples of the Soviet masculine identity.

This book, costing over £100, will be available in the SCRSS Library soon. Alternatively, you can purchase the e-book from the Berghahn website at [www.berghahnbooks.com](http://www.berghahnbooks.com).

*Andrew Jameson*

**The Future of the Soviet Past: The Politics of History in Putin's Russia**  
**Edited by Anton Weiss-Wendt and Nanci Adler (Indiana University Press, 2021, ISBN: 978-0-253-05759-4, Hbk, 258pp; ISBN: 978-0-253-05762-4, Pbk; ISBN: 978-0-253-05761-7, e-book; intro, articles with endnotes, index, photo illus)**

Just as the long process of vilification of the European Union finally led to the 'successful' conclusion of Brexit, in Russia the long process of de-legitimisation of those who fought against Stalin's tyranny has now borne fruit in the closure of Memorial, the best-known institution for celebrating those who died in the purges. The process is examined and documented in *The Future of the Soviet Past*. The closure of Memorial came after this book went to press.

As Russian history often tends to be, this is a complex and many-faceted business. The methods by which history is being re-written in Russia are much more sophisticated than those of the Euro-warriors. As the rich details of this campaign can only be fully savoured by consulting the book itself, I shall be content to choose one aspect, 'proxy groups', that demonstrates the

creativity and the absurdity of Russian politics today.

Each chapter in this book is written by a different author. In the chapter 'Secondhand History' by Anton Weiss-Wendt, he explains how the campaign works. He starts by pointing out how useful proxy groups are for authoritarian regimes: they intimidate critics, create a false sense of unity, undermine democratic processes and generate noise that diverts attention. Out of the many mentioned by Anton, I have singled out two: the RVIO (Russian Military Historical Society) and the Night Wolves Biker Club.

One of the RVIO's list of objectives is "countering falsification of history". It works closely with the Ministry of Culture, which is convenient because the same man heads up both – Vladimir Medinskii. For him, history is an instrumental project, and RVIO is not propagandistic, but "serves to promote our military and historical achievements". (Eh?) At the premiere of the play *Sedition 1609–1611* on 10 May 2018 at the State Maly Theatre, the author of the historical novel, on which the play is based, appeared on stage to receive a huge bouquet of flowers. Vladimir Medinskii, for it was he, said: "This is the story of the high-minded Russians battling morally corrupt Europe. The defence of Smolensk is cooler than Stalingrad, the siege of Leningrad, and the Brest fortress rolled into one." One veteran character pronounces the immortal words: "We'll relentlessly pursue the bastards... If we catch them in the outhouse, we'll finish them there all the same." (Remind you of anyone?)

This is fine for older folk, but how to catch the attention of younger people? Step forward the patriotic bikers known as the Night Wolves. They are formally registered as an 'autonomous youth NGO', but are mostly men in their 40s. Their leader, Alexander Zaldostanov (nickname 'The Surgeon'), sported Confederate flags and specialised in petty crime in the late 1980s. Russia's first biker club has now grown into a paramilitary force with substantial business interests. It has chapters in all the big towns and many of its members have

firearms licenses. Putin first met Zaldostanov and rode with him in 2009 during a biker festival in Sevastopol, which (by the way) had the blessing of Patriarch Kirill. Putin and Zaldostanov share their evaluation of the role of Stalin in Russian history: the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany eclipses mass deportations and the Gulag.

This is real, and it is happening today. Where are you, Fedor Mikhailovich?

*Andrew Jameson*

### **Note from the Editor**

A new numbering scheme has been applied to the *SCRSS Digest* from this issue in the format "SD-1", "SD-2", etc, incrementing by 1 for each issue. The scheme has been applied retrospectively from the Spring 2014 issue (issue number SD-1), when the name of our journal changed from *SCRSS Information Digest* to *SCRSS Digest*. This issue is therefore SD-25.

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