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Feature

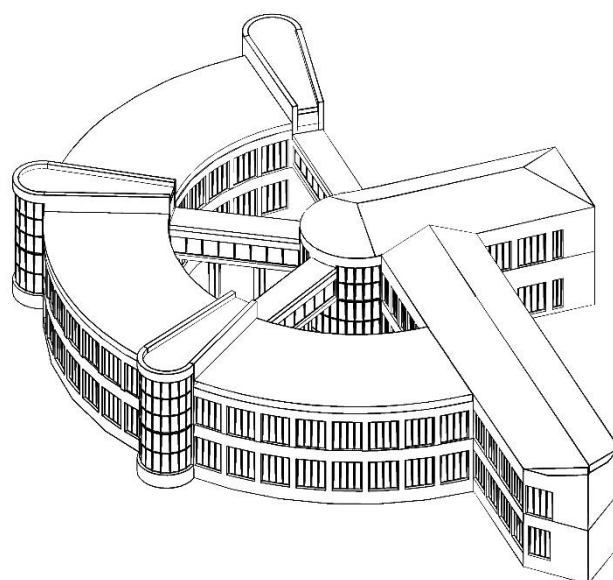
Saving Samara's Hammer and Sickle Factory-Kitchen

By Olga Sidenkova

As a child in the 1980s visiting the snack bar and delicatessen (*кулинария*) in our local 'factory-kitchen' (*фабрика-кухня*) in my native Samara, I never thought much about this shabby building plastered and painted in a shade of pale green. Neither did many other people passing by or going in to eat in one of the canteens or to buy ready meals to take home. Yet this building was unique, a masterpiece of Constructivist architecture in the shape of a hammer and sickle.

It all started in the 1920s when the new Soviet Government began its programme of industrialisation. An organisation 'Public Catering' (*Народное питание* or *Нарпит*) was set up in 1923 to develop a network of work canteens. The new reality demanded the consolidation and rationalisation of production, affordable healthy meals for

workers, and also the liberation of women from home cooking to give them time for work, education and self-expression. Hence the idea of the factory-kitchen was born – a catering giant where all processes were highly mechanised.



The Samara factory-kitchen (drawing by Rosa Turner Wood, based on the original 1930s design)

Building factory-kitchens around the Soviet Union would not only provide inexpensive and healthy food for people to eat on the premises or take home as ready meals, but also be a place for cultural and leisure activities. These new purpose-built factory-kitchens would normally house libraries, gymnasiums or sports halls, so that workers could socialise away from home with other workers; sometimes they included department stores and post offices.

The idea of the factory-kitchen was so popular at that time that some residential housing was built without proper kitchens, having only a small kitchenette with a sink and a stove to warm up ready meals.



The Samara factory-kitchen during the renovation works in 2022, showing the curve of the 'sickle' section (photograph by Sergey Salamatin)

Typically, the buildings were a few storeys high with a basement. Most had large windows or ribbon glazing to save on electricity and give visitors the chance to dine in natural light. The roofs were flat so that visitors could sit outside in the summer months. The catering was highly mechanised with lifts and electric dishwashers, bread and vegetable cutters, potato peelers and other equipment bought abroad. They were able to produce from 600 to a few thousand meals a day. Some factory-kitchens were municipal, while others were built by factories or plants.

At first factory-kitchens were a great success as they were able to produce lunches and dinners at low cost, saving workers money while allowing them to enjoy their meals in bright dining rooms. But by the early 1930s the programme was coming to an end, since the huge buildings and expensive equipment were not cost effective. In addition, factories had started to open in-house canteens where fresh meals were cooked and served on the spot, instead of being transported from a centralised factory-kitchen. Nonetheless, many factory-kitchens survived until the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, with privatisation in the 1990s, they were sold into private hands or adapted for other purposes.

The factory-kitchen in Samara, opened on 1 January 1932, was one of the last built under this programme and has many unique

features. It was designed by Ekaterina Maximova, one of the first Soviet female architects, who already had experience in designing similar projects as a member of Public Catering. She created a Constructivist building in the shape of a hammer and sickle – the symbol of the union of workers and peasants, and the only building of its kind in the world. The 'hammer' section of the building was designed to house the kitchen and technical facilities, the 'sickle' section included three canteens (one for children, one for workers and one for factory-kitchen employees) and a cloakroom. The 'hammer handle' section also included a shop and post office. The food prepared in the hammer would arrive in the canteens in the sickle via conveyor belt – an example of how advanced the technology was for its time. In its heyday the Samara factory-kitchen produced 9,000 meals per day and supplied the workers canteens at the Maslennikov Defence Plant.



Olga Sidenkova outside the restored Samara factory-kitchen, on a summer evening in 2022 (photograph by Tatiana Zhestkova)

It remained in use until the mid-1990s, when the plant was closed, and in 1998 the building was sold to a private owner who opened a bar and nightclub in the sickle section. Later it was converted into a shopping centre and the internal walls covered with plastic. In 2008 the building was sold again and the new owner threatened to demolish and replace it by a 30-storey residential and shopping complex.

Years of neglect followed, with the building falling into disrepair.

However, in 2008 a campaign to save the building was launched by local activists under the leadership of Samara architect Vitaly Stadnikov. Russian and foreign media supported the campaign, as well as Alexander Khinstein, the State Duma Deputy for Samara, and Vladimir Medinsky, Russia's Minister of Culture at the time. The Minister had been invited by Mr Khinstein to visit the Samara Region in 2013, following which this treasured building, a gem of avant-garde architecture, was returned to regional ownership the same year. Three years later, in 2016, it transferred to federal ownership and was designated a 'Federal Monument' protected by law.

Finally, in 2018 plans were developed to convert it into the Volga Region branch of the Tretyakov Gallery to exhibit modern art. Vitaly Samogorov led the team of architects responsible for the careful restoration. This work was helped by his postgraduate student Aleksandr Isakov, who discovered the building's original design and plans in the local archive. The building has now been restored to its former glory and will open its doors to the public as a culture hub in 2023.

Olga Sidenkova is a member of the SCRSS. She was born in Samara, located in southwestern Russia at the confluence of the Volga and Samara rivers. She now lives in London, but returns regularly to her native city. Her interests are history, literature, art and travel.

SCRSS News

Latest news by Ralph Gibson, Honorary Secretary, SCRSS

The Society Needs You

Whatever our personal views about the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, I hope that we

can all continue to come together to support a Society founded in 1924 to increasing knowledge and understanding between "the Peoples of the British Commonwealth and the USSR". Our important collections of books, pamphlets, photographs, posters and other material, which have grown over the last 100 years to fill our building here in Brixton, are very much focused on the period 1917–91. They provide a basis for us to continue our work as an independent educational charity that receives no governmental financial support.

I think everyone who visits or volunteers at the SCRSS centre recognises the incredible cultural riches to be found in its collections and the importance of maintaining and developing them, and our educational activities, for the benefit of current and future generations. If you want to know more about volunteering or supporting the Society financially, please contact me (Ralph Gibson, Honorary Secretary) at ruslibrary@scrss.org.uk.

AGM, 13 May 2023

Notice is hereby given that the SCRSS Annual General Meeting will take place at the SCRSS premises on Saturday 13 May 2023, starting at 11.00. The meeting is open to SCRSS members only. Following a lunch break, Jane Rosen will give an insight into her ongoing work on the SCRSS Archive and the history of the Society, for a book she is preparing for the centenary in 2024. Further details will be listed on the website closer to the date, and in the regular e-newsletter to members.

Following a very challenging year, the AGM will be a good opportunity to take stock and discuss plans for the future. We will review the activities and finances of the Society in 2022, 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 31 March 2023. All motions and nominations must be seconded by another SCRSS member. The Agenda will be available from early May.

Library Update

Thanks to our library volunteers, progress continues to be made on cataloguing and sorting the SCRSS collections of books and pamphlets. The focus in recent years has been various specialised sections in the basement. Thus, the Education section has been completely catalogued, classmarked and sorted on the shelves. The History section is almost complete, and work on the Theatre section is well advanced. Our fantastic collection of books relating to the Second World War has had an initial sort and various topics are now much more accessible. Our Travel and Ballet sections have also been worked on over the past few months. The sorting out of the Art and Visual Aids room on the first floor continues to uncover more of the huge variety of artefacts and ephemera the Society has acquired over the years. And on the top floor, our huge collection of pamphlets is gradually being sorted and boxed up in proper archive boxes. If you have never visited the library, do please try and visit during one of the first-Saturday-of-the-month openings and see the collections for yourselves! Please note that while the collections are being sorted, most books are reference only. However, members can borrow books from our Literature and Quick Loan sections in the basement. The former provides a vast range of material in Russian and in English, and includes translations into Russian of books from around the world. The Quick Loan section includes books reviewed in the *SCRSS Digest*, as well as an interesting selection of new and old books covering a variety of subjects. See the website for more information about the library and the other collections housed at the SCRSS centre.

Strategy 100

Preparing for the Society's centenary in 2024, the SCRSS Council (i.e. the Charity Trustees) set itself a number of aims to be accomplished by the end of that year (see the Centenary Club appeal enclosed with this *SCRSS Digest*). It is clear that in the

current circumstances, many of the ambitious plans we had will not be possible to accomplish. However, the Council and regular volunteers are determined to carry on and to develop ideas to secure the long-term future of the Society. As a membership organisation, we hope all members will join us in that endeavour.

Centre Openings

Access to the centre and its collections for members and researchers is dependent on volunteers. Currently, we can only offer this on the first Saturday of each month, from 11.00 to 16.00. If you are in a position to help out, then do get in touch to discuss possibilities.

Maintenance

As you can guess, maintaining a 200-year-old Grade II listed building is not easy with very limited financial resources. However, recent visitors will have noticed that the main path leading to the front door has been cleared of grass and fresh concrete laid to create a much better approach. Further work is planned this year when the weather improves. Our thanks go to Len Weiss (one of our Charity Trustees) for his efforts on this and many of the other day-to-day bits of maintenance around the building.

Membership Renewals

Reminders are enclosed for all memberships due now and in the period up to 30 June 2023. This saves on ever-increasing postage costs and administration time. It is very helpful if you can respond 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 its work and unique collections is vitally important.

Keeping in Touch

In addition to the *SCRSS Digest*, members receive a regular e-newsletter with information about events, member offers and other news. If you are not receiving it, please make sure we have your current email address. Email ruslibrary@scrss.org.uk with 'Update' as the subject.

Next Events

Our first-Saturday-of-the-month library openings re-commence on 4 February 2023. See the website for more details.

February 2023 (provisional, date TBC)
Zoom Online Lecture: Andrew Jameson on Navigating Russian Conversation
Details to follow.

March 2023 (provisional, date TBC)
Zoom Online Lecture: Assiya Issemberdiyeva on British Representation of Central Asian Ethnicities During WWII
Ms Issemberdiyeva is researching aspects of UK cultural support for the USSR during WWII, based on materials in the SCRSS Archive, among others. Details to follow.

Saturday 13 May 2023, 11.00–13.00
Event: SCRSS Annual General Meeting
In-person event at the SCRSS premises. SCRSS members only.

Saturday 13 May 2023, 14.00
Lecture: Jane Rosen on 100 Years of the SCRSS – Researching in the Archive
Jane Rosen, SCRSS Honorary Archivist, discusses her current research in the SCRSS Archive on the history of our Society, as she prepares a new book for our centenary in 2024. In-person lecture at the SCRSS premises.

Further events are currently being planned. For full and up-to-date details of all events, visit the SCRSS website at www.scrss.org.uk. Normal ticket prices apply (£3.00 SCRSS members, £5.00 non-members) for both online and in-person events, unless otherwise indicated.

Feature

The Gorbachov Years: What Went Wrong?

By Kate Clark

Mikhail Gorbachov, the Soviet Union's last leader from 1981–91, died on 30 August 2022. In her article, Kate Clark reflects on her years as a Moscow correspondent during the 'perestroika' period initiated by Gorbachov.



Mikhail Gorbachov (SCRSS Photo Library)

In all the fulsome media tributes to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov¹, as the statesman who ended the Cold War, there was one thing missing: there were two sides in that decades-long war.

Gorbachov did his bit, withdrawing troops from Eastern Europe and Afghanistan, disbanding the Warsaw Pact – and what did the West do in return? Nothing. In February 1991, when the Warsaw Pact ceased to exist, did NATO disband? No. NATO started its expansion eastwards in 1999, and by 2004 all the former Warsaw Pact countries were in NATO.

I arrived in Moscow, together with my family, on 19 February 1985, to take up my post as the *Morning Star's* Moscow correspondent. I had barely had time to unpack our suitcases and go shopping for winter coats and boots for our three children, when elderly Soviet leader Konstantin Chernenko died. The following day, Mikhail Gorbachov became General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), nominated by the country's well respected Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko.

For me, it was a true baptism of fire. The new well-educated leader, son of peasants from the agricultural region of Stavropol, started on his path of reform, or *perestroika*, and soon all of us Moscow correspondents were struggling to keep up with the avalanche of changes initiated by the new leadership.

On a first visit to Leningrad, Gorbachov was like a breath of fresh air, seen on TV surrounded by eager happy faces, as Soviet people welcomed his friendly and approachable demeanour, so different from previous leaders.

At first talk was of 'accelerating' the economy, not restructuring. *Perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness) would begin the following year. First there would be the anti-alcohol campaign, when vodka and most wines disappeared from shops. Russians soon cleared the shops of sugar as they made their own moonshine. Much later, Gorbachov admitted the campaign had been an unmitigated disaster – tax revenue to the state coffers plummeted, resentment grew, ancient vineyards were destroyed, to the anger of Georgian and Moldovan winemakers.

After decades when the Soviet centralised economy had stagnated, there was widespread recognition of the need for reform among the Party leadership. The centralised planning system had been effective during World War II, under a war economy, but by now the shortcomings were there for all to see – shortages in the shops, apathy and low productivity at work, poor-quality consumer goods and an

increasing distrust of the Communist Party leadership as people saw the gap between what was said and what was done in practice.

So, reform was needed. In my first years in Moscow I travelled to several republics and regions of this vast multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual nation, and everywhere I found enthusiasm and goodwill towards the new leadership.

People sensed that here was someone who was not out to feather his own nest – as he pointed out on one early walkabout, as CPSU General Secretary, he was, in 1985, all-powerful. And the people, who bore the brunt of the shortages and inadequate housing (many still lived in *kommunalki*, sharing bathroom and kitchen with others) welcomed the prospect of change.

What went wrong? Why, after such positive beginnings, did everything start to fall apart, ending with the destruction of the USSR itself and its leading Communist Party?

Gorbachov and the reform-minded economists around him were well aware of how the last significant reform attempt under Nikita Khrushchov had ended in 1964, when he was ousted. During the previous ten years, Khrushchov had denounced Stalinist crimes, released political prisoners, loosened censorship and opened the USSR up to the rest of Europe.

For this reason, Gorbachov was convinced that he had to act quickly and decisively to replace anti-reform people in the Central Committee, and in the top echelons of the fifteen constituent republics and main regions of the country. Thus began a process of bringing reform-minded people into those positions, which meant sacking leaders who had sometimes been in situ for decades. This caused resentment among those who had been removed and the gradual emergence of an anti-reform bloc within the CPSU.

At the same time, media editors were replaced and the policy of *glasnost* revealed the many problems, mistakes, corruption,

nepotism and thievery prevalent in the country.

When I read the telexes I sent daily to the *Morning Star* (all of which I have kept), I see that over the next five years I was becoming increasingly unhappy at the extent and tone of many of these articles and TV reports. I wrote that it sometimes seemed to me that editors had thrown all caution to the winds and seemed to be competing among themselves as to who could publish the most sensational stuff. I talk of the lack of balance and the possible destabilising effect of so much negative reporting.

After all, there was much that was positive in Soviet socialism: a well-educated populace, free healthcare and education, very cheap rents, heating and telephone charges, theatres, cinemas, libraries, universities and colleges throughout the country, even in remote areas; high levels of bilingualism in this nation of over 130 languages and ethnicities; and many other positive achievements.

There were also Gorbachov's peace initiatives, the moratorium on nuclear weapons testing (not reciprocated by the US), the US-Soviet summits of Geneva and Reykjavik, and the visionary proposal made in January 1986 for the step-by-step elimination of all nuclear weapons arsenals by the year 2000.

From 1987 onwards the avalanche of proposals for new political structures increased. It began to smack of desperation, especially since there had been no visible improvements to people's standard of living.

Since the early 1980s some important economic experiments had been introduced at a number of big industrial plants, like one in Sumy in Ukraine. These plants had to be run as profitable enterprises, and were allowed to use their profits for the benefit of the workforce and for investment. The results had been positive, and productivity had greatly increased.

One of the main problems in the economy was that a huge number of enterprises were

loss-making and were propped up by funds being taken away from the profitable enterprises.

Increasingly it seemed to me that what was needed was to greatly extend experiments like that at Sumy, rather than concentrating on political reforms. People needed to see improvements in food and consumer goods soon, otherwise no amount of political reform would suffice.

If this had been done, people would have started to see tangible economic results. Only then, I think, should political changes have been gradually introduced.

More gradualism was needed, and more balance. Whilst *glasnost* was welcomed, Gorbachov should have intervened when he saw that media editors were losing all balance and concentrating exclusively on negative phenomena.

Gorbachov's intentions may have been good, but any leader, especially a leader of the sole ruling party as was the CPSU, had to keep a steady hand on the helm and know when to be firm. Instead of which, he lost control of the processes he had unleashed.

Unbridled *glasnost* allowed hitherto suppressed nationalistic tendencies to be given voice – hugely dangerous in such a multi-ethnic country. What other country would allow one of its parts – Lithuania – to simply announce it was leaving the Union, and do nothing to stop that?

Yet in March 1991 the vast majority of the Soviet people voted for the USSR to be preserved – nearly 78 per cent. Whilst the small republics of Armenia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Georgia and Moldova did not take part, Ukraine voted 71 per cent for, with 83 per cent turnout, and Kazakhstan 95 per cent for, with 88 per cent turnout.

This result was ignored and nine months later the leaders of Ukraine, Belarus and Russia declared the USSR defunct, by which time Gorbachov was powerless to prevent it.

No wonder Gorbachov is largely blamed for the end of the USSR – the world's first attempt to build socialism in one country.

Footnote

¹ The surname is often transliterated from the Russian as 'Gorbachev', which unfortunately results in English speakers pronouncing the surname wrongly. The [ë] letter in the name's last syllable is pronounced [yo] in Russian, and is stressed, so it is better to use [o] to help non-Russian speakers pronounce the name more accurately. The *Morning Star* and *The Times* adopted this pronunciation convention during the 1980s. I have also used this convention for the spelling of Khrushchov.

Acknowledgement

This article was originally published in the *Morning Star*, Saturday / Sunday 3–4 September 2022, page 12.

Kate Clark was Moscow correspondent for the 'Morning Star' from 1985–90 and 'The Scotsman' from 1989–90, she was also Deputy Features Editor of the BBC Russian Service from 1993–96. Now retired, she is a member of the SCRSS Council. She has recently finished her new memoir about her years in Moscow, which she hopes to publish in 2023. Her earlier book 'Chile in My Heart: A Memoir of Love and Revolution' was published in 2013.

Feature

Directions of Change in Soviet Education in the 1980s

By Claire Weiss

Reforms in Soviet education in the 1980s were part of, and were shaped by, the policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. My visit to the USSR in January 1990, two years before the end of the USSR, focused on the teaching and learning in post-school education and the impact of financial reforms. Unknowingly at the time, I was witnessing what would be the final phases of Gorbachev's attempts to create semi-free market conditions within that sector. They were intended to solve the Soviet Union's

existing shortcomings in production, science and advanced technology at a time when, globally, the scientific and technical revolution was opening up new prospects for economic and social progress.



Claire Weiss (left) and colleagues view an evening art class at the Zhil Car Factory Palace of Culture, January 1990 (photograph by Karl Weiss)

Interacting directly with teachers and students in newly configured settings in Moscow and Leningrad, I undertook in-depth face-to-face interviews with six Soviet educationists and conducted a postal questionnaire to which twenty-six individuals responded. Overall, the results gave the firm message that the *perestroika*-based attempts to devolve finances to institutions were running into difficulties. Practical obstacles included the procedural incapacity to make financial transactions with third parties. This left institutions with funding shortages on top of historical disadvantages in which the finance for education had long been organised on a 'residual funding' basis.

This formula, through prioritising the needs of productive industry and defence in getting the first cut from the overall state budget, left education – as a non-productive sector – to receive proportions of the remainder. This had effectively consigned education resourcing to a low budgetary priority.

The result of both this residual funding and the economy's overall economic stagnation

– described by Gorbachev in his Leningrad speech of May 1985 – had given rise to major education funding crises. The share of the annual state budget spent on education had peaked in 1965 at 17.2 per cent, falling to 14.9 per cent in 1976 and six per cent in 1987.¹ Politburo member EK Likhachev, addressing the higher education funding crisis, advocated in 1988 that the system of public education should be “provided with resources as a branch of the national economy”.²

Two years after Likhachev was urging this, I was asking educationists for their views about the organisational and funding upheavals. A respondent to my research questions pointed to a huge fear that Soviet pedagogical capacity was not professionally ready in the post-school institutions for the challenges placed before it. During this time, educational planning of vocational, higher and adult education had abandoned the top-down approach, and ministries had stopped commissioning from colleges and universities the stipulated quotas of qualified graduates of various specialisms which, until then, had been the standard basis for calculating individual institutional budgets. I found that these systemic changes were destabilising financially but were also prompting significant curriculum and pedagogical changes.

Another respondent commented that, whereas the Soviet education system since the late 1920s had been designed to produce specialists, the new rebuilding of the economy (*perestroika*) would require not only better trained specialists but citizens who were educated more broadly. Examples of this being addressed in the late 1980s, as cited by my respondent, included the renaming of local institutions to pre-revolutionary ones, such as ‘gymnasium’ or ‘lyceum’. These manifested partly as cosmetic changes but did lead to curriculum revision, such as the introduction of classical languages and philosophy. Some of the reformed institutions were run and financed by companies or external organisations. At national level there were name and status changes of institutes from polytechnic to university – cited by another

respondent as happening in Yerevan, Moscow and Leningrad.

While the 1970s had seen school education lengthened, the 1984 Reform of General and Vocational Schools³ endeavoured to rebalance the ensuing high numbers of graduates coming out of universities with the increasingly unmet demand from industry for workers. The economic downturn factors and funding crises had impacted adversely on the capacity of the vocational education system to produce suitably skilled graduates from vocational and specialised schools (*proftekhnichilishcha*), colleges of technology (*tekhnikumy*) and higher education institutions (*vuzy*). Some commentators highlight the slow development of new technology as leading to the labour shortages⁴ (“too many engineers and not enough computers” cited one of the respondents to my questions). Oskar Anweiler, then Chair of the International Committee for Soviet and East European Studies, pointed to discrepancies between the educational and the occupational systems, and to limited curriculum choices in the senior school years.⁵



Claire Weiss interviews Valery Bulatov, Deputy Director of the Zhil Car Factory, Moscow, January 1990 (photograph by Karl Weiss)

Visiting the Palace of Culture at Moscow’s Zhil Car Factory, I found a well-resourced centre offering adult education classes in music, folk singing and dancing, and art. This was part of a full vocational offer that included evening classes in engineering and

other technical subjects. In discussion with the Deputy Director Valery Bulatov, I learned that the mainstream planning and funding regime, originally supported by the factory and the trade union, was coming to an end as a result of the *perestroika* self-funding initiative.

In Leningrad I was invited to help facilitate English language evening classes that had been set up by a joint economic enterprise. These classes differed from the mainstream offer in an absence of formal examinations and in higher fees paid by adult learners. The teachers received higher remuneration: evening class tutors netted 250–300 roubles per month for four evening sessions per week. This was more than a schoolteacher would earn for a full-time week in the state system.

A final and poignant contributor to my research expressed great concern that what had begun as a process of change (*perestroika*) had been overtaken by events, without objectives having been agreed. It was felt that change was taking place in conflicting directions: in organisational structure, in devising new cultural and humanitarian curricula, and in the adoption of new democratic methods. Of course, these trends were not unique to the Soviet Union, as readers may be aware, and my research utilised Becher and Kogan's concept of value analysis⁶ to attempt a comparison with similar developments in this country.

Footnotes

1 Glowka D, 'The Unfinished Soviet Education System' in Dunstan J (Ed), *Soviet Education Under Scrutiny*, Birmingham, CREES, 1987

2 'On the Course of Restructuring the Secondary and Higher Education System and the Party's Tasks in Carrying it Out' in *Uchitel'skaya gazeta*, 18 February 1988

3 *On the Further Improvement of General Secondary Education*, approved by the Supreme Soviet on 12 April 1984

4 Pietsch A-J, Vogel H & Schroeder G, 'Displacement by Technological Progress in the USSR (Social and Educational Problems and their Treatment)' in *Employment Policies in the Soviet*

Union and Eastern Europe, Palgrave Macmillan, 1987

5 Anweiler O, 'Chapter 8: The New School Reform' in Anweiler O & Kuebart F, *The Soviet Union 1984/85*, Routledge, 1986

6 Becher T & Kogan M, *Process and Structure in Higher Education*, London, Heinemann, 1980

Claire Weiss graduated in Russian Language and Soviet Studies from the University of Surrey in 1970. Her dissertation for her 1991 MA at Brunel University was entitled 'The extent to which the values of vocationalism have affected the structure, control, funding and organisation of post-compulsory education in England and the Soviet Union with special reference to the period 1973–1990'. Since her retirement in 2011 Claire has been a constant volunteer in the SCRSS Library, recently having completed the cataloguing of the Society's impressive collection of books on education in the Soviet Union.

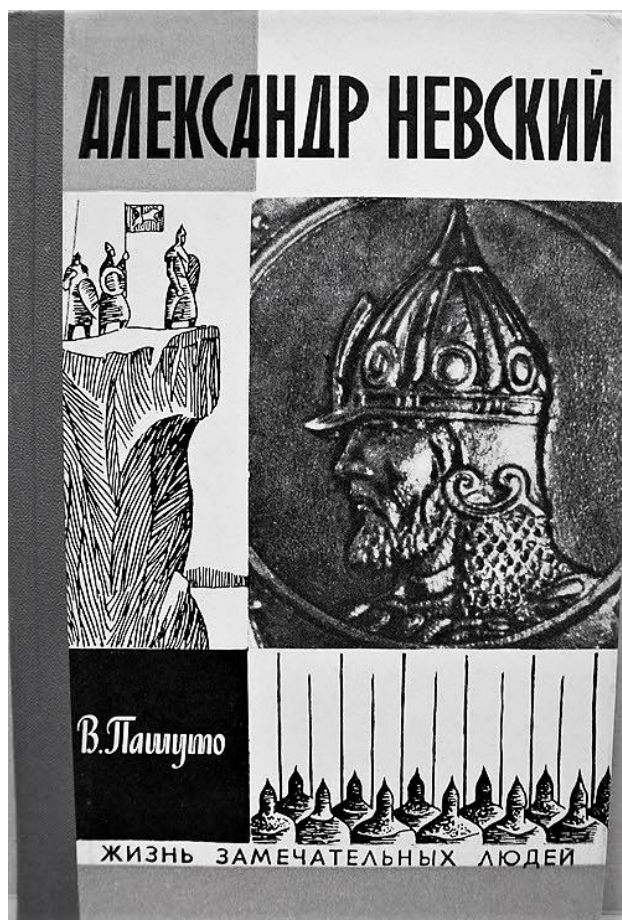
Feature

Russian Publishers and Their Achievements

By Andrew Jameson

As of 1 January 1930, there were 995 publishers in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) alone, reflecting the open nature of the New Economic Policy. It took thirteen years before the powers that be in the Soviet Union got around to the standardisation of book and magazine publishing. A decree from the Sovnarkom (Council of People's Commissars) changed all this on 8 August 1930, with the establishment of the state publishing monopoly. The overarching body was called OGIZ (Union of State Book and Magazine Publishers), which was responsible direct to the Sovnarkom. At its core was the former Gosizdat (State Publishing House of the RSFSR). Other union republics followed the same pattern.

Some of you will have seen these acronyms before in various places as historical terms.



Alexander Nevsky, 'Zhizn' zamechatel'nykh lyudei' series, 1974 (photograph by Andrew Jameson)

Many of the individual publishers formed under OGIZ lasted until the *perestroika* period, and you can see a list of their names in Wikipedia if you search using the phrase "Publishing Houses in the Soviet Union". The list isn't complete but it is enough to see the enormous breadth of publishing that is needed in a modern industrial society, Western Europe included. As befits the SCRSS's role in mediating cultural relations, we shall concern ourselves mainly with those publishers which provided Soviet readers with the arts – understood in the widest possible interpretation of the term.

I think of the Soviet Union at this period as a series of little empires, each aiming to have the same set of assets: a membership, a headquarters, its own holiday homes, a newspaper and a publisher (and much more). The publisher *Molodaya gvardiya* 'belonged' to the Komsomol (Young

Communist League), *Pravda* (newspaper and publisher) belonged to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), *Nauka* belonged to the Academy of Sciences, *Sovetsky pisatel'* belonged to the Writers Union, and so on. The Party of course pervaded all, occupying the *Pervyi otdel* (First Department) in any organisation – in charge of political security – and its decision on anything was almost always final.

The history of censorship in the Soviet Union is a topic for another article, but it is clear that there was a campaign in the early stages to eliminate literature that presented a different view of Russian history and politics, as well as anything that presented the Soviet Union in a bad light. In fact, this was just a continuation of tsarist censorship, but in the opposite direction, and worse. In *The First Circle* Solzhenitsyn makes fun of the fact that the only libraries not censored in this way were prison libraries (of all places). The censorship was conducted by Glavlit (an agency actually set up in 1922 to prevent publication of state secrets, but whose influence spread more widely). A separate censorship for literature and media was set up in 1949 under the name Goskomizdat (State Committee for Publishing).

Most Soviet books have a page containing what is referred to as *vykhodnye dannye* (publication details), usually on the final page but sometimes at the front. The censor number is usually there in the form A or B plus a 5-figure number. Other information includes: the full form of the author's name, date sent to the printer, date of permission to print, and the *tirazh* (print run). Where the two dates are far apart is an indication that there has been haggling about the final form of the text. Lastly, we have the names of editors and illustrators. In a recent journal article¹, a former editor describes how he was only ever given two copies of any book he worked on, putting him under pressure from all sides to obtain extra copies if the book was by a *modnyi* (popular) writer.

While the Russian public was 'protected' from harmful Western ideas and history that contradicted the official Soviet view, both of

these were eagerly sought after and consumed by broader-minded Soviet citizens. Many of us have met members of the intelligentsia who are far more informed than we shall ever be about the history and literature of Russia and Eastern Europe, not to mention Asia too. This was the product of the ease of travel within the USSR, whose break-up can be compared to the recent similar loss of European citizenship in the case of the UK. In Russia, although photocopyers were initially kept under armed guard, means were found to create a parallel world of communication through self-published materials. In a Moscow flat I was shown a whole, typed, *samizdat* library in a set of manilla folders, and heard floating through every window the voices of the Russian *magizdat* 'bards' making pithy and witty comments on the state of Russia and the world. Often they helped me to make copies of their tapes.

At the same time, there was another side to the story: the appreciation and refinement of the study of Russian history and culture, and the modernisation and acceptance of a rational world view. Far-sighted and liberal-minded writers and artists created ways to capture and spread knowledge of Russian culture by participating in the production of various book series, and by holding public debates through the medium of the many *tolsty* ('fat') monthly journals, each representing the point of view of a different subset of the intelligentsia. The first mind-broadening series was founded by Maxim Gorky not long after the October Revolution: *Biblioteka vseмирnoy literatury* (Library of World Literature). Over the years this was revived and expanded, and the SCRSS has an almost complete collection. After all we've said about censorship, could you really tamper with the text of a world-renowned author? This looks like a clever move.

The next series, which created the definitive texts of Russian and Soviet poets from the eighteenth century onwards, is the *Biblioteka poeta* (Poet's Library), founded by Maxim Gorky and published by *Sovetsky pisatel'* for the Writers Union since 1931. It is bound in dark blue with gold lettering. The

first series, from the 1930s, can still be found. The second series, after the war, represented its final form. Since 1991 it has found the means to survive and has changed colour to dark green. Each volume contains a learned article, notes on each poem, an index of first lines and a contents list. In the early stages there were also several styles of miniature volumes and these are nice to collect. The final form of these is the most attractive. There is, by the way, a website where one can download, free of charge, any of the Soviet volumes of the Poet's Library, and read it as one reads a book. Please contact me via the SCRSS if you would like this information.



Alice in Wonderland and Alice Through the Looking Glass, 'Literaturnye pamyatniki' series, 1979 (photograph by Andrew Jameson)

Probably the most prestigious series, dating from 1948, is published by the Academy of Sciences and entitled *Literaturnye pamyatniki* (Literary Monuments). The series is dark green in colour with gold lettering, and it survived 1991 in its original form. It includes, besides the verified texts and notes, various associated texts that shed extra light on the subject. I remember a recent translation of *Anna Karenina* was advertised as being "from the Academy text", which should be a guarantee that

mistakes or misprints from intermediate texts have been eliminated. The scope of Literary Monuments includes ancient texts worldwide, and important texts, including major poets, right through to the modern age. In addition, it has a sideline in folk literature, possibly with the idea of documenting things that might otherwise be lost. Perhaps the most famous example is the definitive edition of the *Povest' vremennykh let* (The Tale of Bygone Years, or the Russian Primary Chronicle). Another example, which I have treasured for years, is the annotated translation of *Alice in Wonderland*; it at least doubles the length of Martin Gardner's *Annotated Alice*, and includes a successful translation into Russian of *The Jabberwocky* using all the resources that Russian possesses.

The fourth series that I would like to mention is *Zhizn' zamechatel'nykh lyudei* (Lives of Remarkable People). This began as a publishing venture by the bookseller FF Pavlenkov in 1890 and lasted until 1924. Once again, the saviour of the venture was Maxim Gorky, who saw its importance as inculcating values and ambition into young people. The Soviet version began in 1933 and was picked up by *Molodaya gvardiya* in 1938 as appropriate to the ideas of the Komsomol. The size of the undertaking is underlined by the numbering of the different volumes, which reached 1,500 (including those produced by Pavlenkov). In 2010 it was calculated that the total number of copies produced so far exceeded 100 million. The series uses a more popular approach with an illustrated cover, groups of photographs and maps as needed. There are no notes, but there is a timeline and a short reading list. (My examples, quite old now, both have censor's numbers.)

In 2011 I was engaged in a passionate correspondence about a translation of the Lives of Remarkable People volume on Boris Yeltsin, 700 pages long. From my side, it was clear that the author was not aware of the difficulty of publishing such a book in competition with two other existing biographies, the time involved, the contract for payment and many other issues. And the major question: was it more of a

hagiography, or an honest account? I felt the job was too risky to undertake.

In concentrating on these four series, I have tried to show how a single unified system of publication can have advantages – in financial support, in setting standards, in making the achievements of Russian culture available (for example, without having to search for reviews and ordering volumes that may not have the information to carry one's knowledge further, or, worse, be written in a style aimed at marketing rather than informing).

Footnote

1 Sokolov V, 'O sovetskoy izdatel'skoy sisteme' in *Vesi*, No. 2, 2019, pp. 50–62, URL (archived pdf): http://ukbki.ru/upload/content/files/vesi-2-2019-all_low_.pdf

After studying Russian and radio technology at the Joint Service Language School, Andrew Jameson first worked in signals intelligence in Berlin. After Oxford, he taught Russian at Essex University, while also working as a sound recordist in Russia for the Nuffield-funded Russian Language Project. He later taught Russian at Portsmouth Polytechnic and Lancaster University. Now retired, he works as a professional translator.

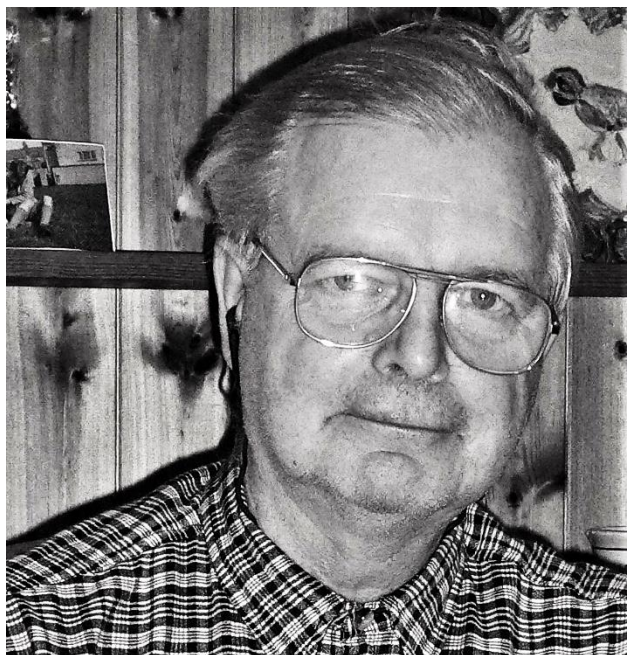
In Memoriam

Anthony ('Tony') Devereux (14 January 1932 – 6 March 2022)

The Society is sad to announce the death last year of long-standing SCRSS member Tony Devereux.

Tony was born in Cardiff in 1932. As a teenager his aptitude for chess sparked his fascination with Russia, while at the same time he became interested in ballet, particularly Russian ballet. He took a subsidiary course in the Russian language

while studying chemistry at the University of Aberystwyth, and became increasingly fascinated by Russian history, culture and literature.



Tony Devereux, photographed in 2006

Following National Service in the RAF, he pursued a career in public relations, often for electronics companies. However, in parallel Tony pursued his passion for Russian ballet. He was a ballet critic for *The Dancing Times* from the 1980s. He also acted as an intermediary with *Soviet Ballet*, the corresponding magazine published in Moscow. He specialised in classical Russian ballet, contributing articles and assisting with coverage of news from Russia on the main ballet companies. He and his wife often visited the USSR in the 1980s, and returned again to the new Russia in the early 2000s to enjoy cruises along the country's waterways.

As an SCRSS member, Tony was regularly in touch with the Society and contributed to the *SCRSS Digest*. As Editor, I enjoyed our friendly correspondence which led to the publication of several articles. Two of his features on famous Russian ballet choreographers were 'Fyodor Lopukhov and the Revolution in Russian Ballet' (Summer 2018) and 'Marius Petipa' (Autumn 2010). But Tony was also well versed in current events, as shown in 'Crisis Year in Russian

Ballet' (Spring 2014) on the shocking acid attack on the Bolshoi Ballet's Artist Director, Sergei Filin, and its political and institutional fallout.

The SCRSS sends its sincere condolences to Tony Devereux's widow, two daughters and four grandchildren. We also thank the family for the kind donation of Tony's Russian book collection, which includes ballet books, dictionaries and literature.

Diana Turner

Reviews

Kutuzov: A Life in War and Peace
By Alexander Mikaberidze (Oxford University Press, 2022, ISBN: 9780197546734, Hbk, 789pp, £26.99)

This is a doorstop of a book, with the page count split 525 to text and 264 to the exhaustive notes. All of it is testimony to the industry and persistence of its Kazakhstan-born Georgian author. Mikaberidze has an international law degree from Tbilisi State University and worked for the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1996 to 2000 (on human rights and relations with the Council of Europe). Moving then to the USA, he gained a PhD from Florida State University. After teaching both there and at Mississippi State University, he became Professor of European History at Louisiana State University. His professional output is firmly focused on the Napoleonic period: as well as being made a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society in the UK, he has won international awards for Napoleonic studies. He asserts, in many interviews, that he wants to showcase the Russian side of that epoch-making period.

Thus, here is a sample of his publications in the last dozen years: individual battle coverage for Borodino (*The Battle of Borodino: Napoleon versus Kutuzov*) and Berezina (*The Battle of the Berezina: Napoleon's Great Escape*); *Russian Eye-Witness Accounts of the Campaign of 1807*

and also of 1812 and 1814; *The Napoleonic Wars: A Global History*; *The Russian Officer Corps of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars 1795–1815*; *The Burning of Moscow: Napoleon's Trial by Fire, 1812*. Breathtaking.

In interview, Mikaberidze claims he has seen surprisingly little in modern Russian history-writing that covers Kutuzov's involvement in the shaping of Europe: he was present at the dissolution of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; actively involved in the reduction of the Ottoman Empire; and a key figure in the spread of Russian dominance in Poland and Ukraine. Mikaberidze's aim, he says, is to shake the Napoleonic era's kaleidoscope and pick out the dominant colours of Kutuzov's involvement.



Field Marshal Mikhail Kutuzov (SCRSS Library)

He is at pains to disconnect his subject from the mythmaking started by Tolstoy – depicting Kutuzov as a wise and spiritual counter to Napoleon's arrogant rashness. But Tolstoy also helped form the view of Kutuzov's other features: a fat, elderly, one-eyed general who fell asleep at crucial pre-combat briefings. This was the sort of headline that has been picked up by other reviewers. Mikaberidze deals with all the faults and foibles of his man, and homes in on Kutuzov's strategic strengths: his aim of letting the French break their teeth on Russian flint, or of letting Moscow be the

sponge that soaked up the Napoleonic torrent.

This review can only hint at the depth of the book's contents. Perhaps the reviewer may be allowed a little sidetrack of his own. My village neighbour is called Barclay, distant relative of the other giant in the book – Field Marshal Michael Andreas, Prince Barclay de Tolly. De Tolly and Kutuzov were exchanging roles and responsibilities throughout the period, each with contrasting strategic and tactical theories. Of Baltic, German, and Scottish descent, de Tolly was nonetheless a key figure in Russian military history: his statue is alongside that of Kutuzov, outside the Kazan Cathedral where Kutuzov had his lavish funeral. I have seen the Barclay family history, where Kutuzov is noted as 'an aboriginal Russian' after Tsar Alexander gives him command, firing de Tolly. This 'national purity' underscored Tolstoy's mythmaking – carefully taken on by Stalin, and delicately described by Mikaberidze in the final 'epilogue' chapter of his powerful book.

Phil Wilkinson

Friends and Comrades: How Quakers Helped Russians to Survive Famine and Epidemic

By Sergei Nikitin (translated by Suzanne Eade Roberts, QuacksBooks, UK, 2022, ISBN: 978-1-912728-57-2, Pbk, 385pp, £12.99; ISBN (eBook): 978-1-912728-60-2, £12.99, available via Amazon)

There are not many books on this subject, but an excellent 'background' history of the subject entitled *Quakers in Russia* by Richenda Scott (Michael Joseph, 1964) is still available on the web (try www.vialibri.net). This covers the period from George Fox's letters addressed to the second Romanov tsar (Alexis I, sent 1656 and 1661) to the 1960s International Work Camps.

The historical context of Nikitin's work is the second half of the First World War and the first fifteen years of the Soviet state. The beginnings of relief work in Russia can be seen here in copies of the actual letters

exchanged with the Imperial Russian Embassy in London in 1916, which said that medical relief was needed for “Polish and other Refugees” (the result of the disastrous battles in Eastern Europe). Approval was given and, at the same time, American Quakers offered to take part and were accepted.

The next stage was to agree where exactly they would operate. The Imperial Russian Interior Ministry suggested the Volga provinces; the first party set off there and decided on the village of Buzuluk in the Samara-Orenburg region. They were welcomed by the local authorities, who had not really welcomed the refugees who had come to them. So, the Quakers were given hospitals for relief work, as long as they treated both refugees and local people. Everything was in place before the first snow in 1916. Thinking to expand their activities, the Quakers contacted the Tatyana Committee, the central body for relief work in Russia, but in the end stayed in the area of Buzuluk

This is an unusual book both in content and form. The papers and reports quoted provide a living diary of Quaker work on health, famine relief and the revival of the economy, relations with local people, and interaction with the official agencies as they changed through time. This vivid chronicle continues through the years until Chapters 10 (‘The Survival of the Moscow Quaker Office until its Closure in 1931’) and 11 (‘Were Quakers “Useful Idiots” for the Bolsheviks, or Stubborn Optimists?’). Incidentally, the Quakers only returned to Moscow in 1990, when Friends House in Moscow was set up.

Beside the ‘chronicle’ aspect, Nikitin’s book has some features of an encyclopedia. These are: ‘Afterword’; ‘Sixty Years Later, Quakers Return to Russia’; ‘First Quaker Mission to Russia 1916–19’ [List of Names]; ‘Second Quaker Mission to Moscow 1920–31’ [List of Names]; ‘Chronology of Events Described in the Book’; seven pages of bibliography in English and Russian; Name Index. There are also copious explanatory footnotes (379).

Nikitin’s book does not stand alone. It is one of a pair, each of which tells the story of their side of the joint work undertaken in Russia by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), and the Friends War Victims Relief Committee (FWVRC) on the British side. The AFSC was actually the first to produce a book of this type using their members’ diaries and reports as supplied to their sponsors back home, and it is interesting to compare the two. The American title is *Constructive Spirit: Quakers in Revolutionary Russia* by David McFadden and Claire Gorfunkel, with an overview by Sergei Nikitin (Intentional Productions, USA, 2004). It has Endnotes; Glossary; Chronology; twenty-two pages of bibliography in English only; Name and Place Index; and good quality illustrations.

Sergei Nikitin’s book was written in Russian and has been well translated. One minor point: the byline on the cover should contain a hint about the dates concerned, otherwise the book could apply to any period in the last two centuries.

Andrew Jameson

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