



The Scotland-Russia Forum

Review



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Dear Readers,

Vladimir Burov's painting of Magnitogorsk stretches, sprawls and winds across our front cover. You may notice that, after four years of indulgent colour on the front cover, this issue of the SRF Review is all in black-and-white – a necessary way of saving money in these lean times. Burov's works and those of other contemporary Russian artists will be showing, in full colour, at the Soviet Grand Designs exhibition, part of the Edinburgh Art Festival, at the Scotland-Russia Institute from August 4 to September 22.

Before the close of the exhibition, on September 21, the SRF will hold its EGM. Jenny Carr, chairperson, lays out on the opposing page the challenges the SRF faces, and invites members to vote on the future course of the organisation.

Also on the opposing page, we gladly reprint the poster of Margaret Martin, which she created for SRF's Year of Russian Language competition in 2007. Margaret, a friend and SRF member, passed away recently and we are grateful to her close friend Natasha Black for writing about Margaret and her interest in Russia.

Elsewhere in the Review, we have articles about the extraordinary lives of Solzhenitsyn, Father Alexander Men and the Kamchatka Peninsula.

The protests that have been taking place across Russia since December have inspired publishers to release a glut of books about the country's rulers and the direction in which they are taking it. Our new reviews editor, Lewis White, has selected the most interesting among these for our reviews section. We also review two, less political texts about the cultural history of Moscow and a foreigner's take on living in Russia and Ukraine.

Thank you very much to the Review's contributors. If you didn't give up your time to write, we simply would not have a Review at all.

This edition is my last as editor. I am very grateful to Jenny Carr for giving me the opportunity four years ago to *have a go*. It has been a pleasure to work on the Review and I hope, dear readers, you have enjoyed reading it. I hope I will continue to contribute to the Review in some capacity and would warmly encourage you to do the same. A warm welcome to the new editor, Varvara Bashkirova.

Very best wishes for the summer and beyond.

Chris Delaney
editor

Editor: Chris Delaney
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Desperately seeking Solzhenitsyn

Writer and journalist Vitali Vitaliev goes on a quest to find the elusive Vermont home of Alexander Solzhenitsyn

IT WAS like chasing a ghost. At least, it felt like that in the beginning. I was driving through the forests of the Black River Valley, past schizophrenic pre-Halloween displays of grinning carved pumpkins and plastic skeletons on the porches of clapboard country houses. They seemed to be smirking disdainfully at the futility of my quest.

I was trying to find the former abode of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, near the town of Cavendish, tucked away among the hills of Vermont, the place where he had spent seventeen nostalgic and highly prolific years of exile before returning to Russia in 1994.

I always wanted to see this house. Why? Probably because of the mystery and mass hysteria which surrounded Solzhenitsyn's name in the Soviet Union of my youth. His books were confiscated, and one could easily end up in prison for simply possessing (let alone reading) any of his works. Bans and fatwas have always been the best publicity for writers, and I shall never forget the peculiar ticklish feeling of danger while reading a tattered copy of 'One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich', aged 16.

Later we learned that 'in accordance with the Soviet people's demands', Solzhenitsyn had been 'thrown out' of the country and, after a spell in Switzerland, settled in Vermont, USA, where he, allegedly, lived the life of a reclusive O'Reilly, penning his 'anti-Soviet drivels' in a palace, surrounded with barbed wire.

And here I was in autumn-ridden Vermont, on my way to that mysterious 'palace', whose famous dweller, at the time 80, was no longer there. He was back in his ungrateful motherland, where his prophet-like beard and his laughable attempts to teach the Russian people 'how they should rebuild' their country became subjects of bitter comments and open ridicule.

To call Cavendish a town was a typically American overstatement. By European standards, it was but a medium-size village stretching for a couple of miles along the track. Walking its deserted main (and only) street was like going back 70 years to the times of the Great Depression. Nearly half the houses were abandoned. Shabby wooden sheds of 'The Black River Medical Centre' and the 'Mammoth Hobbies Full Line Hobby Store' looked permanently closed. The only town service that seemed to be still running (its sign still had a phone number) was 'Chimney Care'.

In the town square, next to a firmly locked hut called 'town hall', I spotted a granite obelisk, which, from a distance, could be mistaken for a regulation countryside war memorial, but not to the fallen of Cavendish (the town lost only nine men in all the wars of the 20th century), but to a 19th century local railway foreman called Phineas Gage, who once had his tamping iron accidentally

blown through his skull and out the top of his head - and survived.

My first port of call was Joe Allan's general store, made world-famous by the hand-written sign 'No Directions to the Solzhenitsyns' that used to adorn one of its walls. In accordance with New Englanders' traditional respect for other people's privacy, the locals had been unconditionally protective of their own eminent exile and stayed mum about his whereabouts, although few of them were able to comprehend who exactly he was and from whom he was hiding in Cavendish.

But the sign was no more, and a stocky blonde woman, unhurriedly frying burgers behind the counter, had flipped her sixth before recalling that Joe had sold the shop a couple of years before and had moved out of town.

Apart from the store, the only other Cavendish establishment which wasn't shut down on that Saturday morning was a small bungalow, insisting to be called Cavendish Fletcher Community Library. There I met Joyce Fuller, the librarian, who was genuinely happy to see a fellow human. She pointed to a near-empty shelf with thirteen Solzhenitsyn volumes in English translation, presented to the library by the writer himself shortly before his departure. The glossy hardbacks were neatly spread out along the shelf to give the impression of abundance.

HE had been at both of Solzhenitsyn's public appearances before the townsfolk: in February 1977 to say hello and to apologise for the fence (a sacrilege, by Vermont standards) he had had to build around his property to protect himself from 'the reporters and the idle types'; and in February 1994 to thank the people of Cavendish for their 'kindness and hospitality' and to bid farewell.

'Are there any plans to commemorate Solzhenitsyn's 17 years in Cavendish?' I asked. She was not sure and suggested I approach Rich Speck, the town clerk. When asked, Rich sounded suspicious, as if Solzhenitsyn was still there and waited to be protected. He assured me that there were no plans for a Solzhenitsyn memorial and added that his presence 'had no day-to-day impact on the Cavendish community'. Unlike that of Phineas Gage, no doubt.

According to Mr Speck, Solzhenitsyn's house was now owned by his two sons, but he was not sure whether they were in town.

Using a sophisticated, almost spy-like, map, drawn by librarian Joyce Fuller on the margins of the Phineas Gage brochure, I set out in search of the old Hoffman house and farm, bought by Solzhenitsyn in 1976 for \$150,000. From the reminiscences of those few 'reporters and idle

types' who did manage to worm themselves on to the 50 acres property, I knew that it consisted of a two-story main house; a library-cum-study, where Solzhenitsyn wrote standing at a lectern from 8am to 9-10pm every day (without a single holiday in 17 years!); a guest house; a small pond; a vegetable garden, and a tennis court, where he would 'gracefully but slowly and inexpertly' (to quote one of his biographers) hit the ball during rare intervals in his writing.

WHOWER Solzhenitsyn was hiding from, he couldn't have hidden better. I turned off the paved road into a dirt-track, snaking through the thick forest alongside a bubbly creek. After an umpteenth zigzag, I finally saw it. Not the house itself, but the notorious fence and the gate with an imposing 'No Trespassing. Police Take Notice' sign. Several closed circuit security cameras were staring at me blankly from near-by trees. The rusty intercom button got stuck in its socket when pressed, and there was no reply. It was evident that no one was inside the compound. Three polythene-covered parcels with books lay on the ground, on the other side of the gate. They were addressed to Ignat

Solzhenitsyn, the writer's elder son, a one-time child-prodigy musician.

For a while, I stood in front of the locked gate, listening to the jolly chatter of the creek and to the soft rustling of falling leaves, as if nature itself was shedding the leafy luggage of the crazy epoch, when authors were either imprisoned or had to encage themselves behind fences and security cameras only because they wanted to keep writing the truth.

But, somehow, there was no finality about the scene. A leaf-carpeted path led from the gate towards Solzhenitsyn's house, which could not be seen from where I stood. The path climbed up the hill before disappearing from view. That was probably why - just like my quest - it seemed incomplete, as if cut in the middle. But it also implied continuation.

What was going to happen next? Vermont forest was offering no answers. Only the fallen leaves slowly pirouetted in the air, trying to delay the ultimate moment of dying. And the snow-white trunks of 'Russian' birches were bursting through the red-brown sylvan setting like piercing screams of discord through the harmonious symphony of autumn.

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The life and work of Alexander Men



Photos by Sergey Bessmertny

ALEXANDER MEN was murdered 22 years ago on his way to take Sunday service at Novaya Derevnaya, a small village outside Moscow. Men had come to prominence during glasnost for his writings, broadcasts and public lectures, and news of his assassination reverberated around the world.

As well as being an excellent parish priest, Men (pictured) was a scholar, scientist and social reformer. He pioneered pastoral care in hospitals and prisons, started the first Sunday School in Russia for the children in his parish and was a regular visitor to old people's homes. He was a man of extraordinary personal charisma and charm, happiest sitting at a small table in a Moscow flat with friends, coffee mug in hand, or pottering in his garden (his scientific speciality was botany). But he was capable of enthralling audiences of millions, thirsty to hitherto suppressed debates on culture, religion and history.

Men converted to Christianity many of the so-called 'wild tribe' of the Russian intelligentsia, including the musician and poet Alexander Galich, who, exiled in Paris, wrote 'When I Return', a haunting song in honour of Men. Another convert, the virtuoso violinist Vladimir Spivakov, has sponsored many events in Men's memory, including two remarkable animated films by Gary Bardin 'Ugadjii Utyonok' (The Ugly Duckling) and 'Adagio', the musical accompaniment of which he conducted.

An international conference, 'Russia: Lessons and Legacy', will be held in Moffat, Dumfries and Galloway, in September to discuss the issues inspired by Men's life and work.

Why Moffat? The conference is being organised by Elizabeth Roberts and the Rev Dr Ann Shukman, co-authors of 'Christianity for the Twenty-First Century: The Life and Work of Alexander Men', who both live in or near

the town. Also organising the event is Dr Donald Smith of John Knox House in Edinburgh, which sponsored in 2000 a co-production of 'A Russian Rehearsal', a play telling the story of Men's murder.

The Moscow partner of the conference is Dr Ekaterina Genieva OBE, director of the Rudomino State Library for Foreign Literature. Dr Genieva was a long-time colleague, friend and parishioner of Men. She was awarded the OBE for her long and distinguished collaboration with such institutions as the British Council and the BBC World Service, both of which host events in her library. Dr Genieva demonstrated enormous courage at the time of the coup which ended the Communist regime in Russia, allowing the printing facility of her library to issue bulletins about the swiftly-changing situation, to be rushed off the presses and onto the streets. She more recently refused to close the office of the British Council when the Russian government was displeased with certain of the Council staff's activities.

The conference in Moffat will host visiting speakers from the USA, France, Germany, Russia and other parts of the UK. Sessions will welcome audience participation, debate and discussion, as well as offer a unique opportunity to learn first-hand about the church and the man who inspired the conference through people who knew him.

Elizabeth Roberts

For full programme and list of distinguished speakers, visit www.alexandermenconference.com. The conference will be held at St Andrew's Church, Moffat and the Moffat House Hotel.

'Christianity for the Twenty-First Century: The Life and Work of Alexander Men', by Elizabeth Roberts and the Rev Dr Ann Shukman, is available to download as an ebook from Amazon.

Climbing in Kamchatka

*In summer 2011, **Henry Patton** and **Colin Souness**, geologists at the University of Aberystwyth, embarked on a three-week climbing expedition to Kamchatka, part of Russia's rocky, volcanic eastern coast. Colin, originally from Scotland, tells us about the trip.*



The Koryalsky and Avachinsky mountains overlooking Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky
(© Henry Patton)

KAMCHATKA lies on Russia's Far East Pacific coast, 12 time zones east of Scotland and 8 time zones east of Moscow. After more than 14 hours in the air, changing in Hamburg, Moscow, and Khabarovsk, we finally began our descent through patchy cloud towards Kamchatka's capital, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky (PK). Peering through the windows of our Rossiya Air A340 we could see the steaming summits of the Avachinsky and Koriaksky volcanoes, PK's fearsome neighbours, striking through the haze to the north of the city.

We met Martha Madsen, an Alaskan-born woman who had married a Russian from Sakhalin Island and moved to Yelizovo, near PK. In exchange for a few days of our time, which we laboured on their farm, Martha and her husband Yuri kindly let us sleep on the floor of their barn. After spending a couple of days orienting ourselves we set off on a four-day acclimatisation trek up Avachinsky. Following a summit day completed in glorious sunshine (topping out at 2741 m), complete with of the Pacific and inland towards Kamchatka's mind-bending expanses of wooded volcanic wilderness, we headed back to Yelizovo and prepared for the main effort of our expedition: Kamchatka's volcanic crown – the Klyuchevskaya Sopka massif.

Prior to heading north, we headed into PK and looked up the Kamchatka mountain rescue service headquarters where we had arranged a meeting with one of their seasoned servicemen, Feodor Fabarovskiy. Feodor talked us through the area we were heading for and gave us some great tips on places to camp, sights worth seeing en route, and how best to avoid bears.

The next day we boarded a small Korean-built bus which would carry us for nine-hour journey

northwards over 300 miles of unsurfaced roads to the village of Kozyrevsk. The best staging point for Klyuchevskaya Sopka (which at 4750 m in height is Eurasia's highest active volcano) and its neighbours; Kamen (4579 m) and Ushkovsky (3943 m).

Once in Kozyrevsk time was spent establishing onward logistics, and after a few hours talking to girls behind shop counters whilst intermittently dodging swarms of Satan's own mosquitoes, we eventually managed to arrange transportation through the 15 miles of bear-infested forest which stood between us and the tundra wastes of the volcanic highlands beyond. This lift met us at 8 am the next

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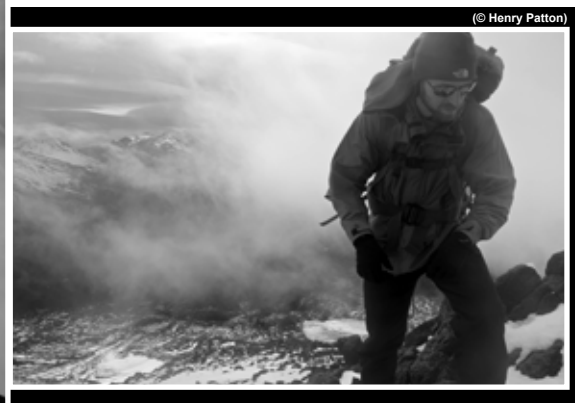
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Expedition driver, Alexander
(© Henry Patton)



(© Henry Patton)

day: a six-wheel-drive ex-military 'ZIL' truck, driven by the military fatigue-clad Alexander, a more severe-looking man than I have ever met, before or since.

The six-hour journey revealed Alexander to be a more sensitive chap than first impressions might belie. During a chat about off-road vehicles, in which I desperately attempted to score some man points of my own, Alexander even conceded that the British-built Land Rover is "a good car"! That's the best I could hope for in the context I suppose.

A mile from the edge of the woods and only a few hours shy of dinner time, the ZIL finally got stuck. Resigned to our the walk, Alexander gave us a cup of tea, shook his head at the anti-bear flares and mace aerosol we had in lieu of a rifle, and bid us a somewhat crestfallen good luck and farewell. He would meet us again in nine days time to take us back through the woods to Kozyrevsk on our way home. For now however, we were on our own. 25 miles of open tundra between us and the summits we sought. Excellent. I was terrified.

These nine days turned out to be probably the most rewarding wilderness experience I think I have ever had. Five days' in and we topped out on Klyuchevskaya Spoka's neighbour: Ushkovsky. Words cannot convey what Henry and I felt as we drank in the amazing views that were served as the sun rose to the east that morning, pouring its crimson early light onto the prehistoric landscape that lay unfolded beneath us. Klyuchevskaya's not-so-distant summit crater was swathed in blood-red rings of cloud and gas, every bit the Eye of Sauron. Utterly unforgettable.

It was on our last day that we were lucky enough to bump into Dr Andrei Abramov, who it turned out had also been camped out on the ice above the

Bogdanovitch Glacier. Andrei had been checking sensors and data loggers that he had placed on the mountain slopes several years previously, gathering information on ground temperatures and the distribution of permafrost amongst the fiery, heat-belching spitfires of the Klyuchevskaya Sopka area. With a mutual interest in ice science, some shared language skills and a couple of day's leeway, we joined forces. Henry and I accompanied Andrei on another day's fieldwork on the Tolbachik volcano. Over the course of that final day in the field we successfully recovered data from four sensor devices and eventually headed back to Kozyrevsk before catching the next morning's bus back over the 300 miles of gravel and rivers to Yelizovo. As it happened myself, Henry, Andrei and one of his assistants all flew back west on the same flight and we finally parted as good friends in Moscow, two days later. Since then, Andrei and I have collaborated on work publicising Kamchatka as a Mars analogue environment, and we hope to work together again in the future. My thanks to him for his help and

friendship, and to Feodor, and a salute to the wilds of Kamchatka: a truly magnificent land with views the likes of which I think I may never see again unless I return, and rest assured I intend to!

(Henry Patton's blog and more pictures at <http://henrypatton.org/2011/fire-and-ice>)



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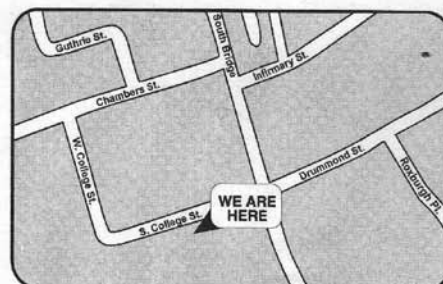
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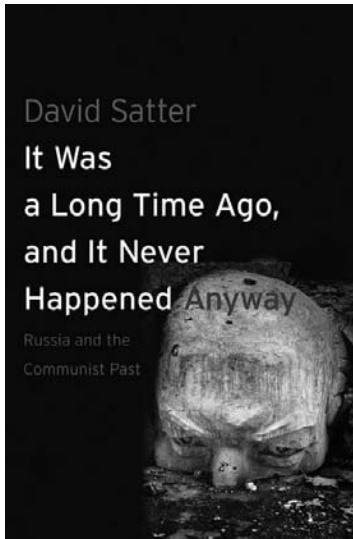
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Cogs in a machine

Samantha Sherry analyses David Satter's attempt to draw a link between the brutality of the Soviet system and the "moral corrosion" of Russia



It Was a Long Time Ago and It Never Happened Anyway by David Satter

Yale University Press, 2012,
pp. 416, £25

DAVID Satter's latest book opens with a gruesome account of the fate of a young Russian man, Taras Shugaev, who in 2002 was killed in an incident that shocked Russia.

Returning home drunk one night, Shugaev lost consciousness and woke in a garbage truck, a new model that processed rubbish on the go, chopping the waste into small pieces. Satter includes extracts of Shugaev's increasingly panicked calls to the emergency dispatchers,

during which he is repeatedly told that the lorry he is in cannot be found, although it later emerged that the GIBDD, the road safety service, was never actually alerted. Shugaev's horrifying death, and the apparent disregard demonstrated by the Russian authorities is seen by Satter as an example of the "moral corrosion" of Russian society, and of "an absence of 'absolute solidarity with the human being as such'".

In the course of the book, Satter expands on what he sees as the reasons for and sources of this moral poverty. He believes it to be a direct result of the Russian experience of the Communist past and, more to the point, its refusal to acknowledge and work through that past.

The continuing presence of Soviet-era figures like Dzerzhinskiy and Stalin in Russian life and public discourse, despite their brutal legacies, is evidence that Russia has not completely or successfully made the transition from totalitarianism and repression to freedom and democracy. Psychologically speaking, the Russian people have not overcome the brainwashing effect of Soviet ideology, and it is for this reason that Russians still view themselves as cogs in a great machine, and continue to pine for a (as the author sees it) false history of the Soviet past "not as a fabric of crimes but as a source of inspiration".

The psychological attachment to the Soviet past, and the continuing attachment to its political and social values results in a distressing disregard for the value of the human individual, the same disregard that resulted in Taras Shugaev's death.

The author traces Russia's troubled relationship

with its past through a series of accounts drawn from different periods of the Soviet regime. Of these, the most compellingly drawn are accounts of the Terror of the 1930s, and the efforts of Memorial, a civil rights group, to locate and commemorate the sites of mass graves. However, the cumulative effect of Satter's account is far from convincing.

Satter's formula – most chapters are comprised of a historical vignette followed by a description of how this or that historical fact has impacted on the Russian present – cannot hide (and, indeed, emphasises) the fact that his conclusions do not necessarily follow from the historical facts. Indeed, as one progresses through the book, one begins to feel that the links Satter makes between historical past and present reality are actually rather tenuous. Does the retention of symbols of the Great Patriotic War, for example, lead inexorably to disregard for the "inherent value" of soldiers and citizens? This is assertion, not examination.

Satter's technique of juxtaposing evocative accounts of past atrocities and present seems then, on closer inspection to simplify, rather than illuminate, and the impression is of an over-reliance on emotional and moral categories that are not always helpful in relation to the Soviet Union. For Satter, the Soviet Union was always and only evil, and this evil has leaked through, contaminating the present day.

Perhaps the most deeply troubling aspect of this moral examination of Russian history is the insistence on viewing the Soviet and, later, Russian, people, as totally subservient to the state ideology. Not only has this idea been thoroughly debunked in recent studies of Soviet and Russian life and culture (see, for example Alexei Yurchak's similarly titled *Everything Was Forever Until It Was No More*), it also, more dangerously, allows us to see Russian society as an *Other*, totally foreign and removed from the (moral, advanced) Western sphere. Such a portrayal only accentuates old Cold War 'them and us' divisions. Furthermore, trying to view Russia and the Soviet Union through the lens of Western psychological discourse (as Satter's implicit desire for Russia to achieve 'closure') is unhelpful for understanding the specificities of the Soviet experience.

In the end, Satter's characterisation of Russian moral poverty is far from convincing, and, contrary to the author's implied aims, is actually retrograde, relying as it does on a simplistic demonization of the Soviet system as a totalitarian system of unavoidable brainwashing, a description that has been reconsidered to striking and fascinating effect in the academic discourse of the last fifteen years.

Samantha Sherry has recently completed her PhD at University of Edinburgh

Spycatchers and shape-shifters

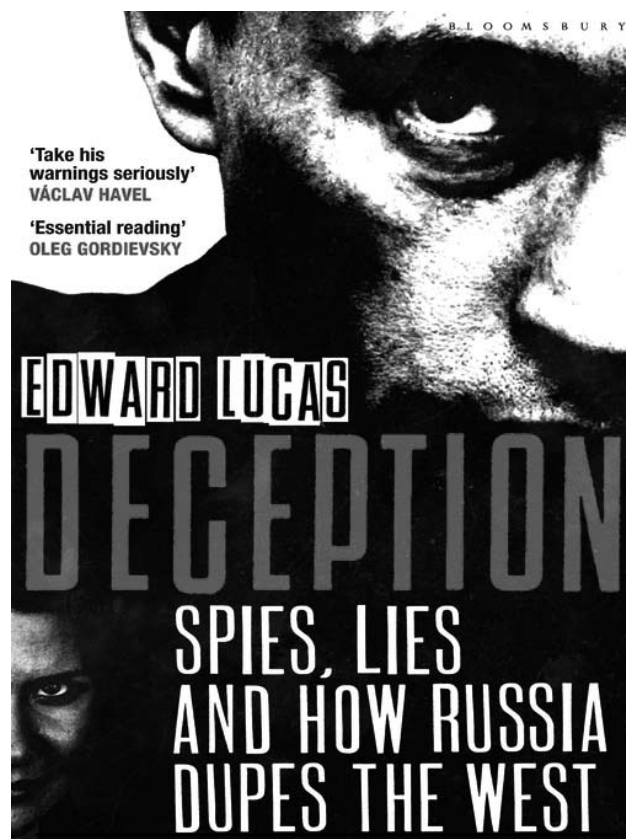
Edward Lucas tells a convincing and foreboding account of a new generation of Russian deceivers, writes Martin Dewhurst

WHILE reading Edward Lucas's new book (it is so gripping that this took only one day), I found I was continually thinking of some of the works by two of the most popular contemporary Russian authors of fiction (or should that read faction?): Vladimir Sorokin and Viktor Pelevin.

Sorokin enjoys writing about the *oprichniki*, the ruthless secret policemen of Ivan the Terrible in the 16th century and their activities in today's and tomorrow's Russia. The modern name for these splendid gentlemen is *siloviki*, a word that crops up regularly in Lucas's book and is as hard to translate adequately into English as is their prototype, the *oprichniki*.

Viktor Pelevin equally enjoys writing about present-day Russian werewolves (*oborotni*) – people who are far more (or far less) than what they appear to be to gullible and superficial onlookers, especially foreigners. The apparently good cops can easily turn into bad cops as soon as the situation requires this, especially in a society where man is a wolf unto man. It was therefore no surprise to read in Lucas's Conclusion that since "1999, the Russian intelligence threat has morphed further, posing a daunting task for Western spycatchers. The adversary is a *shape-shifter* [italics – MD]: in one manifestation it is a legitimate energy company, then a curious student apparently from a NATO country, then a pushy official from the Russian embassy, then a supposedly independent charitable outfit offering a large donation to anyone who conducts the right research, then a hard-working secretary, then a Portuguese business consultant".

Of course, to be successful, deception, like bribery, always requires two sides. Are not those who accept bribes as guilty as those who offer bribes? Similarly, if the current Russian deceivers – like their Soviet and Tsarist predecessors – succeed in their strategies, do they deserve a harsher punishment than those 'useful idiots' in, say, the FCO, BP, MI5 and MI6 who allow themselves to be deceived time, time and time again? Therein lies the special strength of Lucas's monograph: he criticises the West as much as he criticises Russia and makes it clear that Russian professionals in this field were and are, on the whole, far more skilful than their amateurish Western counterparts. He reminds us that some American 'experts' on Russia even managed to get the Russian word for 'reset' wrong when they initiated this new policy just a few months after the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008. With the increasing and improving knowledge



Deception: Spies, Lies and How Russia Dupes the West
by Edward Lucas

Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012, pp.384, £18

of English in Russia and the declining competence in Russian in the West, we should expect further successful and even more professional disinformation operations literally 'masterminded' by 'Moscow' in the future. As Lucas suggests, by quoting a real American expert on Russia, Don Jensen, Russia's main export these days is not oil or gas but corruption, so that those "who keep calling for an engagement that will eventually transform Russia cannot see that it is the West, not Russia, that is being transformed".

Because he can't cover everything relevant for his thesis, the author has to pick and choose, which means that his book is far from being a comprehensive survey of the subject – there is, for instance, disappointingly little on the huge pre-WWII Soviet deception operation, cynically entitled 'Trust',

which fooled not only Westerners but a good many intelligent Russian émigrés as well. But let us give thanks for what we get: clear accounts of the ongoing Magnitsky Case; of “the corrupt autocracy that rules Russia’s mafia state” (“People who are government ministers or senior public officials in the morning are the chairmen or chief executive officers of commercial enterprises in the afternoon”); of the ten recently exposed Russian ‘sleepers’ – or, in Lucas’s view, genuine and dangerous spies – in America; of the disastrous UK, US and Swedish attempts in the Baltic Republics to undermine the Soviet regime before, during and after WWII (‘Britain was making the biggest bungles imaginable, with a flawed concept, weak operational planning, poor assessment and sloppy compartmentalisation’); and, in the climax of this monograph, of the astonishing recent case of Herman Simm, an Estonian with top security clearance from NATO and, therefore, access to the most secret Western defence information who, it turned out in 2008, had been working a very long time for the Lubyanka. On this last story, I have to make a full and frank admission: as someone with a special interest in Estonia I am absolutely certain that I too would have been completely ‘deceived’ by Mr. Simm, if I had had the misfortune to know him.

There is much, much more in this book that gives the reader food for thought. For instance, Polish, Czech, Estonian and other Central Europeans who risked their lives in Soviet times by passing intelligence to the West have, if they lived abroad, been invited back to their native countries and given high state awards in honour of their genuinely patriotic efforts to bring communist rule to an end. In contrast, Russians like Oleg Gordievsky, who escaped in 1985 by a near miracle, are still not only officially reviled but know that their death sentences have not been revoked, or even commuted, but are still in force, despite their country’s membership of the Council of Europe, which bans capital punishment. This sheds further light on Lucas’s earlier study, *The New Cold War*. Much, of course, depends on definition, but alas, after only a few years in the 1990s the new, revised version of the old Cold War, both within Russia and between the current *oprishniki/siloviki-*

cum-oborotni and the economically advanced, albeit limping, western world has resumed with a vigour and venom that Western appeasers prefer not to notice. Now, of course, only one of the parties is waging this war seriously, so the change in the Western world is greater than the continuity in Russia.

Some readers are bound to think that Lucas, a senior staff member of *The Economist* magazine, is ‘overdoing it’ and even to doubt whether he really is the Russophile he claims to be – he distinguishes between the (mis)rulers and the (mis)ruled. I have no such doubts, and I think that everyone who tackles this book will be much the wiser by the time (s)he finishes it. It is a real page-turner.

Martin Dewhirst is Honorary Research Fellow at Glasgow University

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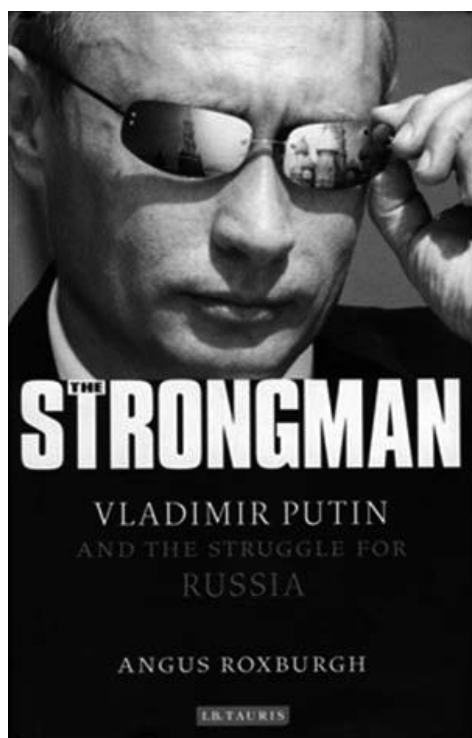
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Elite access

Angus Roxburgh's study of leading Kremlin officials is more than just a 'book of the film', writes Stephen White



The Strongman: Vladimir Putin and the Struggle for Russia by Angus Roxburgh

IB Tauris, 2011, pp.352, £20

Most of us will know Angus Roxburgh best as the BBC's former Moscow correspondent. Others will know his writings on the 'second Russian revolution', and perhaps his book on Pravda. Less well known, perhaps, is that he graduated at Aberdeen in German and Russian, and then embarked on postgraduate studies at Glasgow University (where I was his supervisor).

The content of his new book could also be said to be well known – partly because it deals with a recent past that many of us will remember from the newspapers and television screens, and partly because it formed the basis of a four-part series that was shown on BBC television earlier this year about the Putin presidency.

It was shown in Russia as well, where it attracted large audiences. This is more than a 'book of the film', and yet it has the same journalistic style: it focuses on individuals rather than larger social forces, a great deal of the text is in direct speech, and it will often use an anecdote or an amusing detail to draw attention to a larger theme. It rests, beyond this, on an impressive foundation: a large group of researchers working under the auspices of Brook Lapping, over a hundred interviews with high-level Kremlin and Western officials, and Roxburgh's own first-hand experience in Moscow and Georgia.

Generally, this is a work that achieves its effects though a mass of telling detail: as when Sergei Ivanov and Condoleezza Rice sneak off to watch avant-garde ballet; or when Blair's chief of staff, Jonathan Powell, confirms that the infamous rocks that featured in a Russian television broadcast were indeed loaded with intelligence technology; or when we hear of Putin's former economics advisor, Andrei Illarionov, giving the President regular

tutorials in his subject. All of this helps Roxburgh to paint a larger canvas, one in which perceptions are at least as important as 'facts on the ground'.

Roxburgh entered this world directly when he began to work for Ketchum, a Western public relations company that was given the task of assisting the Kremlin to dispel its unenviable image in many Western countries. It cost them nearly US\$1 million a month.

But once again, there was a cultural gap: the Kremlin thought it could simply pay for better coverage, and leading officials simply rewrote the speeches they were given if they had any reservations about the content. Equally, it came to view the West as a malign force that was behind the 'coloured revolutions', particularly in Ukraine, and a covert supporter of terrorism (why otherwise would we allow figures of whom they disapproved to take refuge in London?).

The book concludes, slightly awkwardly, with Putin's decision in September 2011 to stand once again for the presidency, and so it has nothing to say about the civic resistance that has developed since the Duma election last December. This casts some doubt on the validity of Roxburgh's title, and it raises larger questions about the nature of the Putin presidency that would require a different kind of treatment.

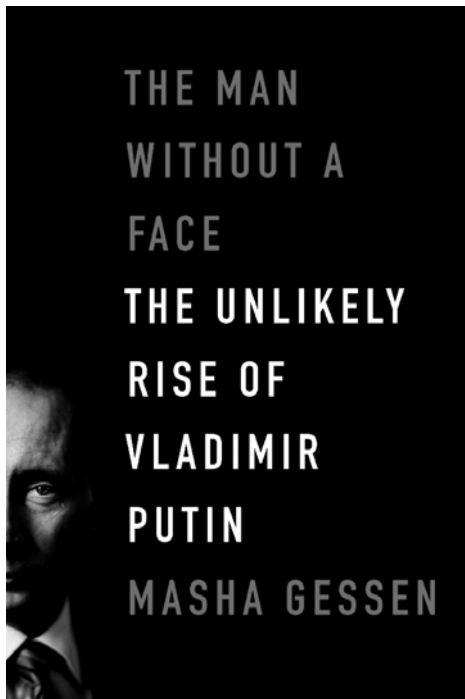
How much, for instance, has the Putin leadership depended on the world price of oil, or economic performance more generally? What are its bases of support within the wider society? And what kind of regime is it – at least, if some of the evidence that is quoted in these pages about the close links between government leaders and privatised wealth is to be taken seriously?

In the meantime, there is no study that has been more successful in gaining access to the Kremlin's leading officials and persuading them to discuss their changing agenda for a Western audience, on the record, and without (it seemed to me) shirking any of the difficult issues. The more we can continue to do so, the less our future relations are likely to be frustrated by the persistent of misunderstandings to which Roxburgh has so skilfully drawn our attention.

Stephen White is James Bryce Professor of Politics at the University of Glasgow

Opposing the president

Masha Gessen's account of account of Putin's presidency is damning but selective, writes Mark Penman



The Man Without a Face: The Unlikely Rise of Vladimir Putin by Masha Gessen

Granta Books, 2012, pp.320, £20

overarching goal of this timely publication is therefore to bring to life Putin's political career and highlight the sinister machinations behind the key events of his reign.

Where Gessen succeeds is in identifying the formative events that make Putin the most compelling and divisive figure in post-Soviet political life. Gessen begins by taking us through Putin's family and academic life, his career within the KGB, his appointment to the St Petersburg mayoral administration and his ascent to the Russian Presidency.

She then identifies the definitive moments in Putin's political career: the wars in Chechnya; the Moscow apartment bombings of 1999; the sinking of the Kursk submarine; Putin's war with Russia's oligarchs; the Beslan hostage crisis and the arrest of Mikhail Khodorkovsky. In exploring each of these events, Gessen paints a striking portrait of Putin as an intellectually limited, malevolent Grey Cardinal, whose personal influence extends beyond the walls of the Kremlin.

Gessen's Putin seeks, step-by-step, to construct a closed autocratic political system in the image of the Soviet Union, and his beloved KGB, and to accumulate vast personal wealth. Gessen's account is at its most convincing when uncovering evidence of rampant corruption within the Kremlin, and of Putin's participation in this enterprise.

Where the book ultimately fails however is in its non

“PUTIN loved the Soviet Union, and he loved its KGB, and when he had power of his own ... he wanted to build a system just like them. It would be a closed system, a system built on total control.”

Putin's return to the Russian presidency has made essential the need for a sharp, stinging critique of the anti-democratic reforms initiated during his regime. The

judicious use of sources and its failure to present tangible evidence to support its many accusations. For example, Gessen explicitly accuses the Russian Government, and Putin himself, of orchestrating the Moscow apartment bombings and of complicity in the murder of Alexander Litvinenko. These accusations, one an attack by a sovereign Government on its own citizens and the other an assassination executed on foreign soil, are incendiary and necessitate the presentation of new, incontrovertible evidence. Instead, as with much of the book, Gessen depends largely on the accounts of a number of well known Russian dissidents, each with their own gripe against Putin. The failure to assess the veracity of these accounts gives a clear sense of selectivity and bias, weakening Gessen's overall case.

A further weakness is Gessen's failure to explore the 'Putin phenomenon'. Despite innumerable foreign and domestic critiques, Vladimir Putin, and his macho, autocratic style of Government, retains vast popular support amongst ordinary Russian citizens. The failure to address this issue, alongside repeated references to Putin's infamous “rub them [terrorists] out in the outhouse” statement, and accusations of thuggery and vulgarity, create the impression of an author who positions herself amongst a liberal democratic vanguard, above the fray and out of touch with popular sentiment.

Furthermore, the questioning of Putin's parentage and the accusation that Putin plagiarised his university thesis feel contrived and cheap and diminish the power of Gessen's stronger critiques.

Despite being lauded by the Observer and Guardian as “courageous” and “luminous”, Gessen's polemic lacks both the hard evidence and measured analysis needed to make her numerous accusations stick. As such, the book reads more like a lengthy charge sheet than the forensic analysis of the subject which is needed. Overall, Gessen's account is vibrant and accessible but hamstrung by its lack of balance and selective use of evidence.

Mark Penman is a public affairs consultant and a graduate of Edinburgh and Glasgow Universities, where he studied Politics and Russian, Central & East European Studies

Capital culture

Margaret Tejerizo praises Katerina Clark's insightful book about a decade in the cultural history of the Soviet Union.



Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941 by Katerina Clark

Harvard University Press, 2011, pp.420, £25.95

A NEW book by Katerina Clark really is an event worth the wait and her latest volume will certainly not leave readers disappointed in any way. This work is a must for all serious scholars of Soviet culture and it impresses above all by the sweep of the author's vast knowledge, not only of literature, but of cinema, theatre, architecture and history, not to mention the countless new

insights which are gained from her careful and thought-provoking analyses and conclusions.

The span of the book covers ten critical and challenging years in the "life" of Soviet culture and it aims to fill in many gaps and to reassess ways of looking at literature, the city space, Soviet international relations and the arts in the course of these turbulent times. The methodology adopted is a very striking one indeed; having established in the Introduction that she plans to "treat cosmopolitan trends in Europe during the 1930s ... from an unusual viewpoint – the evolution of Stalinist culture as seen through Moscow intellectual life", Clark goes on to reveal that in order to engage with this chosen theme, there will be a focus on the activities and the achievements of "four intermediaries".

Professor Clark, in fact, chooses "four cultural functionaries who dealt with the West", these being Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948), Ilya Erenburg (1891-1967), Mikhail Koltsov (1898-1940) and Sergei Tretyakov (1892-1937). Although each intermediary has his own "special" chapter (the book has nine chapters in total, together with an Introduction, an Epilogue and Notes) there is a certain amount of comparison between and among them and their cultural engagements and activities are played out against the backdrop of their own individual and intriguing life stories.

As an example, Chapter One "The Author as Producer: Cultural Revolution in Berlin and Moscow (1930-1931)"

deals extensively with, on the one hand, the visit of Walter Benjamin to Moscow from December 1926 until February 1927 and Tretyakov's time in Berlin from 1930 till April 1931 "as it were, the reversal of Benjamin's journey". This chapter concludes with the section "Moscow-Berlin: A Tale of Two Cities" (pp. 73-77) which also incorporates various reflections on Brecht's drama, and notes that in 1931, just after Tretyakov returned from Berlin, plans were announced to rebuild the capital (Moscow). The "new" capital city would be neither Benjamin's village nor a "machine for living" but the centrepiece of an aesthetic state.

Chapter Seven, "Love and Death in the Time of the Spanish Civil War", is devoted largely to Erenburg. The "Romantic adventure tale" of the Spanish War which "in the Soviet Union captured the imagination of intellectuals and the populace at large" was played out against the background of Nemirovich-Danchenko's 1937 production of Anna Karenina – this being, according to the author "emblematic of the times and it throws into focus some of the paradoxes of late 1930s Soviet culture".

Those volunteers who chose to fight for Spain's cause are aptly described by Professor Clark as being themselves "Anna Kareninas" who chose to sacrifice their lives for this passionate cause. (However, one of Erenburg's greatest achievements, the fact that he was the last person to interview the poet Antonio Machado, one of the so-called "wounds" of the Spanish Civil War, shortly before his death is, alas, not mentioned in this Chapter).

From the few samples offered above it is hoped that the richness of this volume has at least been established. Scholars from many disciplines will find inspiration in this outstanding work and for years to come it will doubtless be a point of reference for all those who research in this area. If the monk Filofei had stated in the early sixteenth century that Moscow was the third Rome, Professor Clark assures us in her Epilogue that in the 1930s: "Moscow had not become a 'fourth Rome' ...[but this] failure should not blind us to the intensity with which Soviet intellectuals pursued this ideal, or to the extent which a distinctive Soviet cosmopolitanism informed so much cultural activity in the 1930s."

Dr Margaret Tejerizo is a Senior Lecturer in Slavonic Studies at University of Glasgow

Slavish generalisations

Walter Parchomenko fails to impress Lewis White with his personal recollections of life in Moscow and Kyiv

A WEAK AMERICAN
IN RUSSIA & UKRAINE
*Adventures & Misadventures
Living among the Natives*



WALTER PARCHOMENKO

"A delightful read for any American who has tried to jump into the Slavic world!"
—Dr. Stanislav Shkoda, of the Slavic Studies in Washington, D.C.

A Weak American in Russia & Ukraine by
Walter Parchomenko

2012, e-book available on Amazon; buy
paperback from CreateSpace. Contact
author at www.aweakamerican.com

Parchomenko, the son of Ukrainian peasants who emigrated from Europe to upstate New York shortly after the Second World War, is a university professor and civil servant who splits his time between Washington D.C., Moscow and Kyiv.

Promised a collection of “painfully funny” observations and anecdotes, the reader is instead treated to a depressingly repetitive collage of every negative representation of Russia and Ukraine imaginable, interspersed with serious lectures on how and why both countries are sliding inexorably down the pan.

Firstly, Parchomenko insists on referring to Ukrainians and Russians collectively as Slavs. While he does include something of a disclaimer, explaining that he’s done so for ease of reference and helpfully reminding us that “strictly speaking, the term Slav includes the inhabitants of many more countries classed as East or West Slavs” (nae luck, Bulgarians, Serbs, Macedonians, and the rest of the South Slavs, you’re out the club), this does not offset this device’s capacity to create annoyingly meaningless generalisations about almost 200 million people, many of whom aren’t ethnic Slavs anyway.

The “travel nightmares” he goes on to relate are, to be fair, familiar to anyone who spends an extended period of time in the post-Soviet world – the usual check-list of bureaucratic frustrations, surly shop staff, alcoholism, dodgy taxis, and the prerequisite part about how they

never smile are all ticked off with aplomb.

However, this well-trodden path is beset on all sides by sometimes jaw-droppingly flippant passages on subjects such as the sex trade, or ‘mail-order’ brides. While Parchomenko does provide some background on the challenges faced by women in the ex-Soviet nations, this is subsumed by glib tales of innocent middle-aged Western schmucks who find themselves being cynically ripped off while in pursuit of “the nectar of the young Slavic berry” (honestly, that’s what it says).

The sections in which he has something genuinely positive to say about either country generally slide off into a faintly patronising sentimentalism about vodka and friendship, and mostly in the context of these being the last refuge against a continuous tide of general awfulness.

By far the most engaging aspect of the book is when Parchomenko describes his own family history, particularly his complicated relationship with his Ukrainian parents, but we are permitted only limited glimpses into this. He is intriguingly reticent about how he relates his own background to his experiences in Ukraine and Russia, and were it not for a brief preamble and the obvious indicator of his surname, you’d barely notice he had Ukrainian roots at all. That he is a US citizen there is no doubt – the last chapter in which he eulogises his own passport was especially stirring – but it’s a pity that this element of Parchomenko’s experience remains so untouched.

The main problem with this book is that it’s simply not funny enough to be read as a wry observation of a strange land, nor is it sufficiently rigorous to count as a genuine critique of a foreign way of life. On the whole, Parchomenko only succeeds in portraying Russia and Ukraine as feckless, crumbling, backward, and morally bankrupt hellholes. He even refers to them as “third world” at one point.

Undeniably, both nations are beset with serious and deep-rooted problems – nonetheless, while I have no doubt that this was never Parchomenko’s intention, it’s difficult to anticipate this self-professed “survival guide” doing much other than reinforce existing prejudices and stereotype heterogeneous communities of millions of people as faintly unsophisticated caricatures.

Lewis White is a graduate of University of Glasgow, where he studied Russian & History, and an MSc in Russian, Central & East European Studies



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4 August - 22 September 2011. Scotland-Russia Institute. Free.

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Saturday 18 August: Art Workshop for children - Russian Abstract Art. £5 per child (incl. materials).

Saturday 25 August: Russian Art Workshop: from realism to abstract £5 (incl. materials)

2-4pm, Scotland-Russia Institute. Booking essential.

FESTIVAL OF POLITICS DISCUSSION: UK-Russian Relations Today

Saturday 25 August, 1-2pm. Committee Room 1, Scottish Parliament, Holyrood. Free entry but **booking essential – phone the Parliament on 0131 348 5405.**

A *Festival of Politics* event in association with the SRF. The panel, representing a spectrum of British and Russian views, will debate the topic with each other and with the audience. Expect lively discussion of this important topic. Unmissable

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SOCIAL: Чай н Чат

Thursday 6 Sept, 11am. Scotland-Russia Institute

All welcome to join us for sparkling conversation in Russian and English and delicious cakes. No charge but contributions of cakes and help with washing up appreciated

SRF EGM.

Friday 21 September. Members will receive details with the newsletter. An important meeting to discuss the future of the SRF. Keep this date!

SOCIAL: Student Reception

Friday 28 Sept (provisionally). Scotland-Russia Institute

A chance for Russian speaking and Russian learning students from all Edinburgh's universities and colleges to meet each other. A popular annual event. Details to follow.