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Editorial information

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for the June newsletter is
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British Association for Slavonic
and East European Studies



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President's
Editorial

I begin this editorial quite possibly
one hundred years to the day since
V.I. Lenin received the news of
insurrection in Petrograd.

As Catherine Merridale's new account *Lenin on the Train* (Penguin, 2016) reminds us, he punched the air, exclaiming: "Staggering. Such a surprise! We must go home. It's so incredibly unexpected". Much that is 'staggering' and 'unexpected' has happened in the twelve months since BASEES's last annual conference, but most of us, I imagine, have not felt the urge to punch the air, though I have found that pounding a cushion is a helpful response to the broadcast news.

Without insisting on the parallels between 1917 and 2017, I suspect that there is a consensus that we are now also living through a period of epochal change. Much that the liberal intelligentsia took for granted is being challenged; the future is unpredictable. British academe, and within it BASEES, faces uncertainties. Our Association has proven its resilience in the past, most notably when its *raison d'être* was apparently dismantled by the Soviet retreat from Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the USSR and Yugoslavia. Our survival then affords grounds for optimism now. Today's challenges are different from those of 1989 and 1991. Instead of (re)defining the Association's fields of enquiry, we need to defend the inclusivity and diversity of the community that we have fostered over many years. We are particularly proud of the growing international presence at the annual conference and the large number of younger scholars contributing papers. Also welcome is the enthusiastic response to new initiatives, such as the Women's Forum, and the formation of new study groups which facilitate knowledge exchange between conferences. But these positive developments are taking place against a backdrop of travel bans on colleagues and students wishing to travel to the USA (already one of my postgraduates has had to shelve plans for attending the workshop she helped set up in the USA, because of her parents' country of birth), the demeaning treatment by consulates and visa offices of overseas scholars we invite to lecture,



the threat of deportation looming over colleagues from other European countries if hard Brexit is negotiated, and the consequent impoverishment of the pool of emergent scholars in our field.

In order to sustain BASEES's position as one of the leading scholarly communities within Slavonic and East European studies, we will need to work hard to counter the insidious effect of those political forces which divide and fragment us. Members can help by emailing me or any of the committee if they or their colleagues encounter politically motivated obstacles when pursuing international collaborative work and travelling to and from countries within and outside Europe. Members can also urge their own institutions and learned societies to participate in higher-education-wide initiatives to bring pressure on Theresa May. It is important that during Brexit negotiations the UK takes steps to secure continued access of British academics to European research funding, while guaranteeing measures to allow the free movement of scholars at all levels between higher education and research institutes in the UK and Europe. Our featured interview with Catherine Gibson, a British PhD student based at Florence's European University Institute, demonstrates the importance of such movement for rising scholars.

An initiative launched this year may offer one model for forging and strengthening links within the community of Slavonic and East European scholars. This was the conference held by BASEES in Budapest in November 2016, hosted by Hungary's Institute of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The conference responded to the sad fact that the welcome participation of scholars from the former Soviet bloc in Western conferences has fallen off since the 1990s. There are many possible reasons for this: cost; the bureaucratic >>

>> and expensive process for obtaining British visas; the unpropitious political atmosphere; and the perceived lack of relevance of BASEES's traditional focus on (post)-Soviet space for scholars in the EU accession states. We have initiated BASEES regional conferences to give people who are unable to attend our annual meeting in Cambridge the opportunity to network and discuss their work with the UK-based community of scholars in Slavonic and East European studies.

The Budapest conference was themed around the 60th anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. This first experiment in exporting BASEES confirmed how productive, indeed vital, it is to keep the channels of international scholarly dialogue open. There was an enormous amount of original scholarship on display from young scholars within the region. UK delegates came away with far greater insight upon how the interpretation of the 1956 revolution has become a contested site for alternative visions of Hungarian state-building. The UK participants, for their part, reminded the conference of the broader international context of 1956 and the revolution's role in reshaping the politics of socialist parties in Europe and setting the terms of East-West debate in the Cold War. A report on the conference (including texts of the two keynote lectures) may be found on the BASEES website at basees.org/news/2017/1/16/basees-regional-conference-in-budapest-december-8-9th-2016-1956-and-its-international-environment.

By comparison with the prominence that 1956 enjoys in current Hungarian political discourse, public commentary about the Bolshevik revolution is relatively muted. The area studies community is the exception. My inbox has filled with notifications of workshops and conferences themed on 1917. BASEES got in ahead of the field as the year of the revolution's centenary dawned, when the Study Group on the Russian Revolution met in early January at Northumbria University. The SGRR is one of the oldest and most active of BASEES's study groups and some of the original founders took part in the discussions. Of course, it was fitting that the study group met in Newcastle to discuss revolution because this is the 370th anniversary of the end of the English Civil War when the Scots handed Charles I over to Oliver Cromwell there for a hefty fee. The insight about the nature of history to be drawn from this temporarily escapes me, but I am sure it occasioned much all-round air punching.

Professor Judith Pallot
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Professional News – Major Research Grants

Reframing Russia

Stephen Hutchings (Manchester) is principal investigator, with co-investigators Vera Tolz (Manchester), Marie Gillespie (Open University) and Alistair Willis (Open University), on a project entitled *Reframing Russia: From Cold War To 'Information War'*, which has been awarded an AHRC 3-year Standard Grant Award of £889,000. The project aims are summarized below.

The projection of national identities and interests on the global stage is being radically reconfigured by the twin consequences of post-Cold War geopolitical dynamics and transformations in the global news media landscape. The arrival of new players like Russia Today (RT) is altering the international media ecology. RT is Russia's primary international broadcaster with a reputation for being a mouthpiece of Putin's regime but the reality is more complex. The mediatization of political conflicts, or the myriad ways in which media like RT not only represent but also intervene and shape conflicts, have significant consequences for peace and security. The research project, which runs from June 2017 to May 2020, is the first in-depth, comprehensive study of the role of RT in representing Russia for international audiences. It will be carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of specialists in Russian culture, history, politics as well as experts in media, security and computational linguistics. We will bring journalists, policy makers and academics into dialogue via a major conference and workshops, demonstrating the significance of Arts and Humanities research for studying the relationship between media, identity and international security.

Cross-Language Dynamics – Transnational Strand

One of the four major research programmes that the Arts and Humanities Research

Council (AHRC) is currently funding as part of its Open World Research Initiative (OWRI) is Cross-Language Dynamics: Reshaping Community (@CrossLangDyn), a multi-institutional consortium led by Professor Stephen Hutchings (University of Manchester). OWRI is not a standard grant scheme, but a large, strategic investment on the part of the AHRC that aims to 'rescue' Modern Languages in the UK, including Russian Studies.

The programme of the Cross Language Dynamics consortium is structured into three interconnected research strands – the Multilingual (led by Professor Yaron Matras, University of Manchester), the Translingual (led by Professor Catherine Davies, IMLR, SAS, London University), and the Transnational (co-led by Dr Andy Byford, MLAC; and Professor Anoush Ehteshami, SGIA, Durham University).

Members of BASEES are likely to be particularly interested in the Transnational Strand, which has a strong focus on Russia. Satellite institutions directly associated with the Transnational Strand and collaborating with Durham researchers are the Universities of Leeds (Professor Paul Cooke of the Centre for World Cinemas & Digital Cultures), Edinburgh (Dr Lara Ryazanova-Clarke of the Princess Dashkova Centre) and Oxford (Professors Julie Curtis and Philip Bullock). Also of note would be the series of workshops at Durham on Language and Identity in the Post-Soviet Space, convened by Dr Polina Kliuchnikova, and the conference Transnational Russian Studies, co-convened by Andy Byford, Stephen Hutchings and Dr Connor Doak (University of Bristol), which will take place in Durham on 14-16 September 2017.

For further details on all of the above, and associated sub-projects, go to dur.ac.uk/owri and follow the links. For further information contact Andy Byford at andy.byford@durham.ac.uk.

Books received (reviews will appear in the June and November 2017 issues)

- Alexander Cooley and John Heathershaw, *Dictators Without Borders: Power and Money in Central Asia* (Yale University Press, 2017)
- J.A.E. Curtis, *Mikhail Bulgakov* [Critical Lives series] (Reaktion, 2017)
- Daphne Skillen, *Freedom of Speech in Russia: Politics and Media from Gorbachev to Putin* (Routledge, 2017)

Prospective reviewers are invited to contact the editor at: muireann.maguire@exeter.ac.uk

The BASEES Newsletter talks to Catherine Gibson, a second year PhD student at the European University Institute in Florence, about the joys of being a UK Slavist abroad.

BN: You've studied in four different universities. What was best about each?

CG: As an undergraduate at the University of St Andrews, I was introduced by my supervisor Dr Tomasz Kamusella to the history of the lands and peoples between Poland and Russia. In 2013, I undertook a joint Erasmus Mundus Masters between UCL SSEES and the University of Tartu in Estonia. During my year in Estonia, I loved doing research in the region and working on my language skills. In 2015 I moved to the beautiful Tuscan hills to start my PhD at the EUI in Florence, supervised by Prof Pieter Judson and Prof Pavel Kolář.

What inspired your current PhD research?

My PhD investigates the spatial demarcation and visualisation of ethnolinguistic groups on maps of the Baltic provinces between 1845-1917. On my travels in Central and Eastern Europe I observed a disjunction between the multilingualism I encountered, and the cartographical depictions of 'nations' as bordered, homogenous blocks of colours.

During my Masters, I co-edited (with Tomasz Kamusella and Motoki Nomachi) *The Palgrave Handbook of Slavic Languages, Identities and Borders* (2016), which opened my eyes to the historical-spatial aspects of how languages and linguistic groups have been constructed.

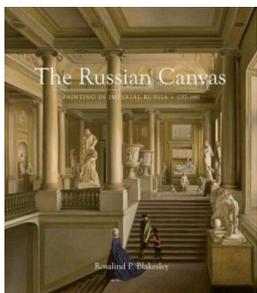
What are the highs and lows of being a UK Slavist studying in Europe?

Besides the stunning location and amazing Italian food, the EUI is a really energising place to do research. I engage daily with international colleagues and scholars, interact with historiographies in multiple languages, and am challenged to think beyond nationalising historical narratives. However, although the UK is a member of the European University Institute, my university is still not very widely known in the UK and I have to make an extra effort to stay connected to the British academic community. BASEES is a great way to do this! I really appreciate updates from the *Newsletter* and mailing list and I look forward to presenting at the annual conference this year. ■



Book review

Rosalind P. Blakesley, *The Russian Canvas: Painting in Imperial Russia, 1757-1881*. Yale University Press, 2016. 380 pages. ISBN: 9780300184372. £50 hardback.



Rosalind P. Blakesley's latest study of Russian art is visually stunning: *The Russian Canvas* includes over 250 beautifully printed reproductions

(many full-page, most in colour) of artworks held by major museums and private collections worldwide, never before gathered in one publication. Reading this book in chapter order is like walking through the galleries of Moscow's Tretyakov Gallery, with the exception that this volume's visual delights are organized and enhanced by Rosalind Blakesley's acutely observed and

minutely researched text. Her 'Introduction' contextualizes Russian efforts to create a 'national' school of painting – in a society divided between traditional, European, and colonial identities, and where creative autonomy was frequently sacrificed to an autocrat's will – modelled on Western examples of academic training, court patronage and commercial success. Her account begins in 1757, with the foundation of the Russian Academy of Arts: '[f]or better or worse, it remained the backdrop against which Russian artistic identities were defined' (6). Subsequent chapters frame key developments – the institutionalization of artistic instruction; inevitable rebellion against the latter through foreign travel – against the careers of Orest Kiprensky, Karl Briullov, Vasily Perov and many others. There are intriguing insights: for instance, Alexei Venetsianov's unusually explicit studies of maternity and breastfeeding demonstrate the conflict of realism and romanticism in his studies of peasant subjects. A final chapter scrutinizes the challenges faced by women

artists in Russia (from 1884, the Academy only allowed an annual quota of 25 women to matriculate). A brief 'Coda' highlights the cultural coincidence that the ninth Peredvizhniki exhibition opened on the day of Tsar Alexander II's assassination. Blakesley documents and interrogates changing conventions of artistic production. Many illustrations, including the cover image (Ivan Ivanov's 1830 "View of the Parade Staircase in the Academy of Arts") emphasize those spaces – the studios, galleries, auditoria, corridors, and, as in Ivanov's painting, staircases – where art was taught, created, and displayed; sometimes, again as in Ivanov's example, we observe the spectating public too. While high-quality illustrations lend *The Russian Canvas* general appeal (its publication tied in with the National Gallery's 'Russia and the Arts' exhibition in spring 2016), it also constitutes the first major academic study of how Russian art emerged as an internally coherent, internationally competitive school.

Muireann Maguire

New Books in the BASEES/Routledge Series on Russian and East European Studies

The BASEES/Routledge Series on Russia and East European Studies comprises original, high-quality, research-level work by both new and established scholars on all aspects of Russian, Soviet, post-Soviet and East European Studies in humanities and social science subjects.

NEW TITLES IN THIS SERIES:

Freedom of Speech in Russia: Politics and Media from Gorbachev to Putin
by Daphne Skillen
<http://bit.ly/2ngpl9L>

Putin's Olympics: The Sochi Games and the Evolution of Twenty-First Century Russia
by Robert W. Ortung, Sufian N. Zhemukhov
<http://bit.ly/2ngvBOG>

Russia-China Relations in the Post-Crisis International Order
by Marcin Kaczmarek
<http://bit.ly/2INVXuF>

Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe
by Tomasz Zarycki
<http://bit.ly/2mxo3st>

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more details
on all conferences
and events, visit:
[basees.org/
conferences](http://basees.org/conferences)

Forum for Czech and Slovak Studies

This society, now affiliated with BASEES, will have a presence at this year's conference in the form of two panels.

The purpose of the Forum is to act as a coordinating research base for all academic and students in the UK involved in Czech and Slovak studies (history, language, literature, politics, music etc). See the Forum website on how to join the mailing list: bristol.ac.uk/russian/research/css-forum

Chaired by Professor Mark Cornwall (Southampton) and with Dr Rajendra Chitnis (Bristol) as secretary, with a small steering committee, the Forum co-ordinates a series of academic events through the year. These include an annual lecture (*Masaryk lecture*) at the Slovak or Czech embassies, and a workshop showcasing postgraduate research. The latter will occur this year at the University of Sheffield on 19 May, directed by Professor Neil Bermeil: sheffield.ac.uk/russian/research/czech-studies-day-2017

We also organize periodic conferences in agreement with our partner Forums in the Czech and Slovak Republics. Since 2002, there have been five such international conferences on historical themes. The next conference is planned for 2019 in Bratislava on the theme of 'Collaboration and Cooperation in East-Central Europe 1848-1989'.

The Forum was originally founded in 2000, as the *Forum of British, Czech and Slovak Historians*, the brain-child of the then Czech ambassador to the UK (Dr Pavel Seifter). The first chair was Professor Robert Evans (Oxford). In 2015 the Forum was reorganized in order to better reflect the diverse nature of Czech and Slovak studies in the UK. It now acts as the key British research base for such academic studies. We welcome your interest!

Over 5,000 entries now on UTREES thesis database

The ninth annual update to the UTREES online database listing British and Irish university theses in Russian and East European studies has added a further 224 entries from a record number of 67 institutions, taking the total of thesis titles listed up to 5,160.

The database was set up to continue the centennial bibliography *University Theses in Russian, Soviet and East European Studies 1907-2006*, which was published by the Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA) in 2008, and to improve access to its contents. The MHRA still supports UTREES, which is free to access at utrees.mhra.org.uk and allows searches by keyword, subject, area and a range of other terms. As a record of postgraduate research in an interdisciplinary field of study, we think it may be the fullest as well as the longest (chronologically) in the world.

As usual, the update shows the immense variety of topics being addressed in current doctoral research. They include anticorruption campaigns in former Yugoslavia; composers and the Ballets Russes; Russian social networks on the web; and Chechen refugees in Poland. And it's hard to imagine the fieldwork needed for some investigations, such as the economics of hashish production in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan.

We are always happy to make additions and corrections. Please send them to the Editor at gpmwalker@btinternet.com.

Gregory Walker
Editor, UTREES

BASEES CONFERENCE 2017 • ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING • 1st April 2017

BASEES members attending the annual conference in April are warmly invited to attend the AGM 2016. It will take place during the lunch break on Saturday, April 1st, at 12:45-13:45, in the Reddaway Room. Attendees are welcome to bring their lunch to the meeting. There is also a small cafe on site at which delegates can buy sandwiches, cake and drinks. If you have already booked hot lunch, but would like to attend the AGM instead, please email info@basees2017.org.