[ba|sees]
british association for slavonic and east european studies

Newsletter
No.31, April 2021

## Contents



## Editorial information

Please send any news, comments, or contributions to the editor, Ben Phillips (B.G.Phillips@exeter.ac.uk)

Deadline for submissions for the August newsletter is 23 July 2021.



## Stay in touch

British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies

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**www.basees.org**

# President's Report

**This year we are marking the 30th anniversary of the collapse of the Soviet Union.**

When the three presidents of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine came together in December 1991 and signed the Belovezha Accords, they not only formally ended a drawn out process of demise with the dissolution of the world's largest socialist state, but also started a process of reconfiguring the regional and global order. The multiple and complex legacies of this watershed moment are there with us to this day. When I look back to this year, the momentous nature of the events that unfolded in winter 1991/92 are somewhat in the shadow of my own coming of age in post-unification Germany. Like in the Russia the memory of the 1990s are very much shaped by generational factors in the former GDR. In Russia the decade has become branded as the 'wild nineties' in the public and political discourse, dominated by narratives around economic dislocation, national disintegration, financial ruin, and the broader rise of wild west capitalism that saw a collapse of morality. However, for myself and for many Russians who were in their teens and early 20s during the 1990s, these were also times of incredible new freedoms, colour entering the greyscale of post-socialist streets (if only through excessive advertisement), and new youth cultures. Coming of age in the 1990s in post-socialist spaces was for many a liberating, exciting, and invigorating experience.

There will be plenty retrospectives and debates about the dissolution of the Soviet Union over the next months which will highlight the existence of competing memories of this period. BASEES has recently started its online series BASEES Talks which will run several roundtables and in-conversations in the autumn dedicated to revisit the times of turmoil of the early 1990s. Earlier this month, I was taking part in a special event organised by the Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS) in Berlin that considered 'The end of communism as a generational phenomenon?'. Generational renewal is a vector of social and political change in any society. A shared generational outlook can sometimes explain the dynamics that unfold during moments of profound rupture. But to what extent can the Soviet Union's collapse be interpreted through a generational prism and how important was the question of generational belonging for contemporaries of the 1980s? What can we learn more generally about the history of communism and its end when looking at it through a generational prism? These were some of the questions discussed by a panel, including Marci Shore (Yale University), Mikhail Anipkin (Volgograd State University), Félix Krawatzek (ZOiS) and myself, which opened this year's BASEES Regional Conference 'Globalising Eastern Europe – New Perspectives on Transregional Entanglements' held in cooperation with the EEAG in Leipzig. A recording of the panel can be found on the ZOiS Facebook page. This conference, which was postponed as a result of Covid-19, took place fully online from the 20 – 24 April 2021. It sparked lively discussions about transregional entanglements and Central and Eastern Europe's place in the history of colonialism as well as the process of decolonisation. For a long time, the voices of scholars from the region have been underrepresented in the academic discourse on the latter issues. I was therefore particularly pleased that the BASEES/EEGA conference was able to give a platform to so many ECRs from Central and Eastern Europe to present their exciting research.

In one of my editorials last year, I mentioned that BASEES is currently undertaking a strategic review of our activities, organisational structures, and governance. It is our aim to use the downtime imposed on some of our activities by Covid-19 to put the organisation on a sustainable footing and prepare it for the challenges ahead. A crucial aspect of this reviews is a >>

## In Memoriam

### R. W. Davies
### 1925-2021

**The BASEES Committee was saddened to learn of the recent death of Professor R. W. (Bob) Davies, a remarkably prolific economic historian of the USSR, member of the NASEES (BASEES's predecessor organization) committee from 1963-1977 and for many years director of the Centre for Russian, European and Eurasian Studies (CREES) at the University of Birmingham. In 2020, Davies was the recipient of BASEES's Alexander Nove Award for Distinguished Scholarship (see citation in *Newsletter* 29, July 2020). A full-length obituary will appear in the *Newsletter* in due course.**

>> consultation of our members and broader constituency. I am delighted to be able to use this newsletter to launch the first ever BASEEES members' and constituency survey. Please take a few minutes to respond to it. It will help us to gain a better understanding of the composition of our membership/ constituency, identify current and future needs, discrimination, inequalities, and barriers to full participation in our organisation. The survey will run until the end of June. Dr Alison Long (Keele University) who has become a co-opted member of the BASEES Executive Committee to take on the role of EDI officer will collate the results and lead a working group to draft proposals that will feed into the BASEES 2030 Strategy. Please take part in the survey. It is your opportunity to help shaping the organisation and make it serve the discipline in the best way possible!

Finally, let me share the news with you that the planning for our return to Robinson College, Cambridge, for the annual conference 2022 is well under way. The Call for Papers will be released in June. I am very much looking forward to switching off Zoom and welcoming colleagues back in-person in spring next year in Cambridge.

**Matthias Neumann**

**For more details on conferences and events, visit: basees.org/conferences**

# News of the field

## UTREES database now records over 6000 theses

The latest annual update of UTREES, the bibliographical database of university theses in Russian and East European studies, has added a further 202 entries, bringing its listing of 114 years of British and Irish theses in the field to 6039. The latest additions have been provided by 59 institutions in all, with the largest numbers coming from UCL (18), Cambridge (15), Oxford (14), KCL (12) and Nottingham (11), while 26 have contributed one thesis each. As usual, the diversity of subjects tackled is impressive. Recent events in Donbas have attracted several different approaches, and the geographical range extends from Kazakhstan (shepherds' relationship with golden eagles in the Altai) to social media in Belarus, death and injury rates in the Soviet Gulag, and women's fashions in interwar Bucharest.

A high proportion of the UK doctoral theses listed on UTREES are also recorded on the British Library's massive EThOS database of British theses. All such entries on UTREES (over 4500) now carry a link to EThOS, which in many cases offers access to an abstract and/or the full text of the thesis.

UTREES is supported by the Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA), and is free to use at www.mhra.org.uk/publications/mb-3/UTREES.

Additions and corrections are welcome, and should be sent to the Editor at gpmwalker@btinternet.com.

**Gregory Walker**
**Editor, UTREES**

## XVII International Congress of Slavists, Paris, August 2023: Website and Call for Individual Papers and Posters

The XVII International Congress of Slavists will take place in Paris on 28 August – 1 September 2023, with excursions on 2 September. Further to last year's call for panel proposals (see Newsletter 30, December 2020), proposals for individual papers and posters are now invited by 1 May 2022. The website for the XVII International Congress of Slavists, Paris 2023, can be accessed in French or Russian here.

Individual papers should either deal comparatively with more than one Slavonic language or literature/culture, or should have a theoretical dimension, and must fall within the thematic scope of the Congress. Individual papers are subject to the national quota of places, and applications must therefore be forwarded via the national representative on the International Committee of Slavists. The quota of places for UK delegates at the Congress is 15, and the national representative is Mary MacRobert (catherine.macrobert@lmh.ox.ac.uk). Please send your applications to her before 1 May 2022. Advanced graduate students who wish to offer posters with brief oral presentations (180 seconds) should likewise send their applications to Mary MacRobert before 1 May 2022.

Applications to give papers and posters must include speaker's first name and surname, institutional affiliation, institutional address, e-mail address, title of presentation, indication of appropriate thematic section, and short abstract (not more than 1000 characters including spaces).

Prepublication of papers is no longer required, but 5-page abstracts of accepted papers should be made available on the Congress website in advance of the Congress itself. It is assumed that papers will be published, preferably in peer-reviewed journals, either before or after the Congress, and national representatives will be asked to provide lists of these publications.

Reminder: Applications to organize 'thematic blocks' (panels) must be submitted by the deadline of 1 May 2021, for decision in September 2021. A thematic block should consist of 3-8 participants, of whom not more than 2 may be from the same country. The organizer of a thematic block must >>

# News of the field

>> ensure that there is an introductory paper lasting not more than 20 minutes and that the other papers last not more than 15 minutes each; discussants should speak for not more than 5 minutes.

When submitting an application for a thematic block, the organizer must send in a subject outline and short abstracts of the papers (not more than 1000 characters including spaces). A model application form is available on the Congress website. Applications and abstracts should be sent to Temblok2023@orange.fr before 1 May 2021; please copy for information to the UK representative, Mary MacRobert (catherine.macrobert@lmh.ox.ac.uk). The contact for enquiries is Professor Silvie Archaimbault (sylvie.archaimbault@sorbonne-universite.fr). Organizers are expected to arrange electronic publication of papers for accepted thematic blocks and to provide links to them.

## New Project: Orthodoxy as Solidarity: An Examination of Conciliar Orthodoxy in Estonia and the Baltic Region

As a result of the 2020 ETIS grant competition, the project "Orthodoxy as Solidarity" has won support from the Estonian Research Council. Based at the University of Tartu and led by Professor Irina Paert, this new project examines the much-debated notion of Orthodox conciliarity (sobornost) as it was applied in the Baltic region. Here, conciliar forms of church life developed rapidly in the late imperial period. Focusing on practices of church life from the 1860s to the 1990s, the project seeks to uncover the significance of religious identity, which crossed ethnic and social divides. In light of studies on 'national indifference', the project will point to a variety of forms of solidarity that existed prior the break-up of the Russian Empire and then experienced crisis and breakdown as a result of war, revolution, and the rise of nation states. Applying a network approach, the project will offer an innovative analysis of how Orthodox practices of conciliarity affected the activities of both religious and secular actors over a long-term period that saw significant political, social, and cultural change.

The project is employing a multinational team to conduct the research, with representatives from Estonia, Russia, Finland, and the United Kingdom. Using archival, printed, and interview materials, individual project members will conduct research on diverse topics, such as Baltic monasticism, the origins of ecclesiastical democratization, Orthodox martyrdom in the context of Estonian historical memory, perceptions of national and religious identity in the Baltics, the role of tolerance in inter- and intra-confessional relationships, the politics of the Estonian Orthodox Church after Soviet annexation, and contemporary views on religious community. Along with distributing the results of this research through traditional academic channels, the project intends to digitize rare and previously undocumented archival collections, provide teaching materials to schools, and deliver information to a broader public.

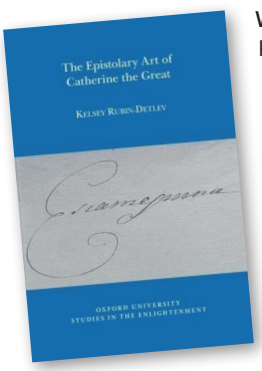
Further information can be found on the website https://orthosolidarity.ut.ee/ and on Twitter https://twitter.com/OrthSolidarity.

**Dr James White**
**Ural Federal University, Ekaterinburg**

# BASEES Prize Winners

## BASEES is delighted to announce the winners of (and honourable mentions for) the annual Alexander Nove, George Blazyca, Women's Forum and postgraduate prizes...

### Alexander Nove Prize (judges: Jeremy Hicks and Judith Pallot)




**WINNER:**
Kelsey Rubin-Detlev, *The Epistolary Art of Catherine the Great* (Liverpool University Press, 2019)

**Citation:** This is an impressive study by a first time-author. In the Epistolatory Art of Catherine the Great, Kelsey Rubin-Detlev has provided an in-depth analysis of the correspondence practices of an eighteenth-century monarch. In the study, she has combined the management of an extremely large corpus of materials with insights from recent theorization in gender, cultural and communication studies that allows her to tell a multifaceted story of the intellectual life, image construction, personal life and statecraft of the monarch. Rubin-Deltev does an especially good job of analysing the intended audiences of the letters, and distinguishing between the truly personal, such as the love notes to Grigory Potemkin, and those targeting a broader audience in the salons of elite society, politicians at home and abroad or future generations. The study involved the examination of no fewer than 10,000 letters in archives in five different countries and in so doing demonstrates how digitization and 'big data' analysis can be put to the service of the historian, in this case, allowing the visualisation of the extensive domestic and international networks the monarch forged. The book exhibits great imagination in the range of skills Rubin-Detlev demonstrates in spanning the broad historical grasp, theorisations of the letter genre and of gender construction as well as a fine >>

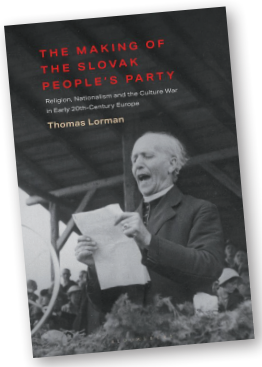
# BASEES Prize Winners

>> sense of nuance when teasing out subtleties of evolving word usage or cliché, the nuances of Catherine's switching between languages, and textual detail. All of these facets are seamlessly integrated with an engaging and imaginative writing style especially impressive in a first book.

**HONOURABLE MENTION:**
Brendan McGeever, *Antisemitism and the Russian Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 2019)

**Citation:** This is an exceptionally nuanced and insightful work about the way in which antisemitism was expressed and addressed during the Russian revolution by the Bolsheviks and other socialists. The story it tells is not agenda-changing in the historical understanding of the Russian Revolution but it is new and, given 21st discussions about the relationship between left politics and antisemitism, and the issues surrounding the sociology of race raised by Black Lives Matter, timely. The book deals with just two years and in this respect is quite narrow in focus, but it opens up a whole terrain in its examination of the intersectionality between race, class and ethnicity in relation to Jews on the revolutionary left. This is a terrain that McGeever, with justification, argues has been marginalised and/or misrepresented, in the histories of the Revolution. In the book, he skilfully plots the various twists and turns in the story he unfolds, prising apart the complex interplay between Bolsheviks and the other socialist parties and presenting careful and well-researched biographies of the actors involved. The enormous number of archives accessed was impressive and all of this material was worked into a smooth and cogent analysis that belied its complexity.

## George Blazyca Prize



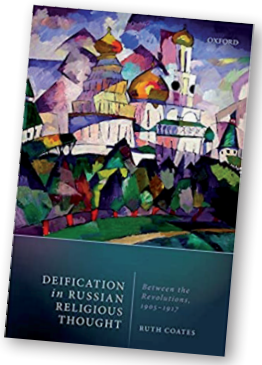

**WINNER:** Thomas Lorman, *The Making of the Slovak People's Party: Religion, Nationalism and the Culture War in Early 20th-Century Europe* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2019)

**Citation:** Lorman's book explores the centrality of Catholicism to Slovak nationalism through an analysis of the Slovak People's Party. By pushing the story of the party's origins back to before the formal establishment of a party of that name, and by examining the intellectual trajectories of the people who formed it, he provides profound insights into the nature of the political right in Central Europe, both past and present. The intermingling of religion and ethnicity began when Magyar-speaking officials, representing a nevertheless mainly Catholic Hungarian state, imposed 'liberal' civil marriage on Slovak-speaking, traditionalist Catholic clerics. In the protracted story, which Lorman develops elegantly, with painstaking and meticulous research across Hungarian and Slovak sources, mainly Catholic Slovak activists, feeling themselves under assault, gravitated first to the Catholic People's Party of 1894, which was particularly strong in the Slovak highlands, before creating, in 1905 and relaunching in 1913, the Slovak People's Party itself, with a somewhat stronger, and gradually increasing, national agenda. The enemy from the start was liberalism and its perceived attack on Catholicism and Slovaks alike, and liberalism was represented first by Hungary, and then, with telling parallels, the Czechoslovak state. Also common to the party, both before and after 1918, were its antisemitism, its radicalism, its disdain for democracy, its cult of youth and its preference for ambiguous rhetoric. Lorman is equally at home identifying the policy differences between the key individuals in the story (Hlinka, Tiso, Mach, Skyčák) and portraying the emergence of nineteenth-century Slovak Catholic organisations (religious societies, sodalities, clubs, but also banks and cooperatives) which provided the popular groundswell for Slovak nationalism. By breaching the 1918 caesura, his book is a major contribution not only to Slovak (and therefore of course Hungarian and Czechoslovak) history, but also to our understanding of right-wing politics in the region.

## Women's Forum book prize (judges: Professor Simon Dixon and Dr Muireann Maguire)

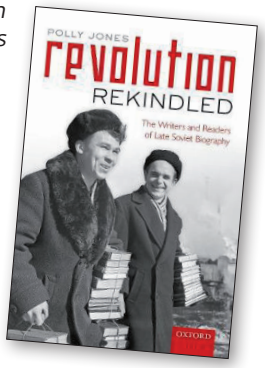
**WINNER:**
Ruth Coates, *Deification in Russian Religious Thought: Between the Revolutions, 1905-1917* (Oxford University Press, 2019)

**Citation:** While our understanding of the Russian religious renaissance has been vastly




amplified over the last generation, unfamiliar vocabulary and still more unfamiliar modes of expression have conspired to keep even the most fundamental Orthodox ideas beyond the reach of all but a dedicated band of specialists. By exploring a variety of eschatological solutions to one of the most important questions that Christians face – how to transform death into everlasting life – *Deification in Russian Religious Thought* addresses a broader readership. As Ruth Coates shows with exemplary clarity and grace, apocalyptic challenges were especially acute in the revolutionary era between 1905 and 1917. Beginning with Merezhkovsky's *Tsar and Revolution* (1907), 'the text that engages most overtly with Russia's contemporary political realities', she goes on to consider works by Berdiaev and Sergei Bulgakov before discussing Florensky's *Pillar and Ground of the Truth* (1914), 'the most recognizably Orthodox treatment' of her subject. Specialists will admire the precision and poise of the analysis. But this is a book whose importance extends to all those with an interest in modernism, Marxism and millenarianism. As a distinguished and discriminating study of the place of religious ideas in the culture of Russia's Silver Age, it deserves the widest possible reception.

**HONOURABLE MENTION:**
Polly Jones, *Revolution Rekindled. The Writers and Readers of Late Soviet Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2019)




**Citation:** This authoritative book compels attention for three substantial achievements. It is a case study of an important phenomenon in the Soviet publishing industry (the 'Fiery Revolutionaries' series of biographies introduced in 1968 to 'rekindle' post-Thaw readers' socialist enthusiasm); a study of late Soviet reading habits; and an analysis of how Soviet publishing actually functioned. The tightly organized chapters are informed by numerous interviews with former industry insiders as well as impressively thorough archival research, making extensive use of committee minutes and other official documents >>

# BASEES Prize Winners

>> to illuminate late-Soviet decision-making mechanisms. Polly Jones' book upsets various ideological assumptions and reveals unexpected paradoxes: for example, the fact that this relatively experimental, at times daringly liberal book series was one of the first publishing initiatives to founder during the market transformation of the 1990s.

## Women's Forum article/ chapter prize (2019, awarded 2021; judges: Professor Mary Buckley and Professor Katharine Hodgson)

**WINNER:** Jelena Golubović, "'One Day I Will Tell This to My Daughter': Serb Women, Silence, and the Politics of Victimhood in Sarajevo." *Anthropological Quarterly* 92.4 (2019), pp. 1173-1199.

**Citation:** This excellent analysis is based on fieldwork in Sarajevo and reflects upon the results of interviews with Serb women who stayed in the city during the siege of 1992-1995. It sets out to explore the literature and realities of the moral economy of victimhood which can encourage recognition of certain victims but in so doing fails to recognise others. Golubovic convincingly challenges the dichotomy between victims and perpetrators and ways of interpreting the world in terms of 'either/or' It is an outstanding contribution to the literature for addressing layers of complexity in a lucid and persuasive way. The evidence gathered in fieldwork is well integrated into her argument and effectively demonstrates the tangled nature of the situation that she explores. The ethical dimension also merits recognition.

**HONOURABLE MENTION:**
Eglė Rindzevičiūtė, "Systems Analysis as Infrastructural Knowledge: Scientific Expertise and Dissensus under State Socialism," *History of Political Economy*, 51.S1 (2019), pp. 204-227.
**Citation:** This fascinating discussion of hugely wide scope highlights how important systems scientists in the USSR derived an authority and legitimacy from material successes in designing infrastructures. Information about them was often unexplored due to secrecy surrounding their work. Systems scholars, however, became vital mediators between computer technology and decision-making in infrastructural design. Scientists could resist projects and play a role in internal scientific dissent. Rindzevičiūtė's examination of their role in Soviet aid programmes in Cuba and Vietnam leads the author to contend that systems analysts could, in fact, practise a politics of dissensus by disagreeing with the utility of large-scale projects and by favouring more pragmatic 'modelable' policies to fit local conditions.

## Postgraduate prize (judges: Kelly Hignett and Andrea Gullotta)

**JOINT WINNERS:** George Bodie, "It is a Shame we are Not Neighbours': GDR Tourist Cruises to Cuba, 1961–89', *Journal of Contemporary History* 55.2 (2020), pp. 411-434.

**Citation:** George Bodie's article constitutes the first dedicated study of East German tourism to Cuba, a travel destination which functioned as both a site of exoticism and of revolutionary allure for the GDR. Extensively researched, using a rich combination of source materials including archival documents, state-produced travel material and secret police files, this fascinating study explores the ways in which GDR tourist cruises to Cuba fulfilled a variety of functions in the years 1961-1989, from their origins representing a utopian ideal of transnational proletarian convergence within the socialist world in the 1960s to the less imaginative reality of meeting growing domestic demand for 'exotic' travel in the 1980s, subject to increased security scrutiny. Bodie effectively argues that while the numbers of GDR citizens who partook in these cruises was relatively small, they provide an important example of how East Germans experienced the world outside of their nation's borders, both in reality and in image. His research also critiques contemporary depictions of GDR travel and challenges the dominant presentation of the GDR in both academic and popular literature as parochial, insular, and restrictive. This article makes an important contribution to the growing field of socialist tourism and to changing perceptions of the Cold War-era 'socialist world system' more generally...

... and Tamar Koplatadze, 'Theorising Russian Postcolonial Studies', *Postcolonial Studies* 22.4 (2019), pp. 469-489.

**Citation:** In this rigorous and well-researched article, Tamar Koplatadze questions the legitimacy of the current application of postcolonial theory in Russian studies. In order to do so, the author analyses an impressive number of secondary sources, ranging from Gayatri Spivak and Adeeb Khalid's invitation to widen the horizon of postcolonial studies in the post-Soviet area, to Mark von Hagen's proposal to overcome the binary paradigms used to analyse Russia's relationship with the East in relation to the concept of Eurasia, to the works of literary scholars, such as Harsha Ram. Koplatadze discusses with rigour an outstanding variety of approaches, ideas and interpretations on some of the key issues in Russian intellectual history, culture and geopolitics (e.g. Orientalism, modernisation and centre-periphery dynamics), providing a series of insights and thought-provoking analyses, and arguing in a convincing way that a new, more nuanced and less Russo-centric approach needs to be undertaken in order to obtain a more efficient and comprehensive implementation of postcolonial theory in Russian culture. By doing so, Koplatadze shows the ability to shift well-established paradigms, and she does so with a confidence that is surprising for a PG candidate.

## The Prizes

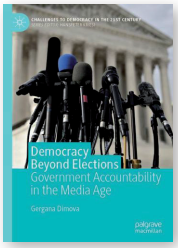
The Alexander Nove Prize for scholarly work of high quality in Russian, Soviet and post-Soviet studies was established by decision of the annual general meeting of the Association in March 1995 in recognition of the outstanding contribution to its field of study made by the late Alexander Nove.

The George Blazyca Prize is offered annually for scholarly work of high quality in East European studies (including those countries of Eastern Europe that were formerly under communist rule but not part of the Soviet Union).

The BASEES Women's Forum offer annual prizes for scholarly work of high quality either produced by a woman or which furthers knowledge about gender and diversity relevant to the East European, Russian and Eurasian region.

Finally, the postgraduate prize is offered annually for a scholarly, peer-reviewed article of high quality in any of the disciplinary and geographical areas which fall within the BASEES remit.

# Book Reviews



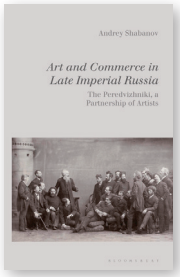

## Gergana Dimova. Democracy beyond elections. Government accountability in the media age. London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, XVII + 339 pp, index, bibliography (e-book). ISBN 978-3-030-25294-6. £44.99.

Gergana Dimova's 2019 monograph provides an innovative and much needed approach to measuring government accountability beyond elections – useful especially in these highly volatile times. Dimova looks beyond procedural democracy and makes the case for accountability as a measure of democracy, arguing for a broader understanding of the instruments available for the public to hold officials accountable, in particular through the effects of media allegations. The author proposes as concepts the 'accountability turn' and the 'accountability pyramid', a comprehensive picture of means of holding politicians accountable that identifies the most influential ones. Democracy is further evaluated through a statistical model based on 5 elements of the accountability process: the identity of the accuser, the nature of the allegation, the sanctioning power of the 'accountability forum', the relative frequency of investigations across accountability forums, and the type of sanctioning imposed. The broad analytical framework of supply and demand of accountability is especially relevant considering the double-sided effects of the media age on government accountability, as argued in the book.

The empirical part of the book analyses a database of 6000 media allegations collected from three countries in different stages of democratic development. The results show the 'de-parliamentarisation of accountability' in Germany (an established democracy), the 'presidentialisation of accountability' in Russia (a monitored democracy), and the 'judicialisation of accountability' in Bulgaria (a transitional democracy).

This monograph is a welcome addition to the debate on the future of democracy. It sits between the models of crisis and transformation and provides a more nuanced view: democracy may be in crisis, but the public benefits as well. In these exceptional times, when quick decisions are made, followed by intensive scrutiny in the media, Dimova's approach may prove to an insightful one. In order to put to the test the author's conclusions, the model can be used for measuring the democratic deficit of the European Union or even applied to countries which are further more in the realm of competitive authoritarian regimes.

**Ana-Maria Anghelescu**
**National University of Political Science and Public Administration (SNSPA), Romania**




## Andrey Shabanov. *Art and Commerce in Late Imperial Russia: The Peredvizhniki, a Partnership of Artists.* Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2019. ISBN: 9781501335525. £90.00.

Of all topics in Russian art historiography, that of the nineteenth-century group of artists known as the *peredvizhniki* (usually 'the Wanderers' in English) has most often breached disciplinary silos. Andrey Shabanov's new book on the group is an important addition to the literature.

The *peredvizhniki* are often seen as having broken away from the Imperial Academy of Arts and its elitist, westernised syllabi to create a new brand of critical realist and nationalist painting. Not least by association with other liberal movements in the post-Emancipation era, this rupture has been read as politically motivated. This interpretation gained traction when *peredvizhniki* paintings were lionised as a model for Soviet artists to follow under Socialist Realism. The 'anti-establishment' label continues to stick, despite Elizabeth Valkenier's ground-breaking 1977 account that recast the group's members as liberal-minded painters who produced a wide range of artistic subject-matter. For Shabanov, though, Valkenier did not sufficiently separate the *peredvizhniki* from the narrative of realist painting. More important, he argues, is the perspective of artistic commerce, and he presents the group as seeking to capitalise on an emerging independent art market rather than promoting a certain type of art. As Shabanov writes, the group had "something to sell, but nothing specific to declare" (p. 28).

In *Art and Commerce*, Shabanov takes a 'revisionist' line and provides many useful insights. He revisits the group's name, *Tovarishchestvo peredvizhnykh khudozhestvennykh vystavok*, and chooses 'Partnership', with its sense of enterpreneurship, rather than the usual 'Association' offered by translators for *tovarichestvo*. He then points to the group's founding constitution to illustrate that its aims were commercial and inclusive. Although less room is given here to discussion of the art, Shabanov argues that for most of its existence the group had no clear aesthetic agenda, whether stated in manifestos or achieved more indirectly. Some of the evidence that he seeks to rebut as inconclusive, such as an anniversary report in 1888 that included a rejection of the Academy and the assertion of a realist and nationalist agenda, is dismissed a little hastily. But Shabanov scrutinises statistics closely, such as who exhibited what and when (e.g., Konstantin Makovskii's large portrait of Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna in 1883), or how many exhibits had political themes. By returning to the facts and examining how the *peredvizhniki* represented themselves and were perceived, Shabanov corrects some previous misreadings, as well as explaining how these came about.

The book is divided into two parts. The first examines the group's foundation and analyses how the *peredvizhniki* used advertising and group photographs to build a public image. The second charts the contemporary reception of a selection of the group's annual exhibitions. A short conclusion draws some parallels with secessionist activity elsewhere in Europe. Lastly, there is an appendix with edited versions of previously published translations of key texts, such as the founding documents and some anniversary reports. Shabanov does not completely overturn earlier assessments: he does not deny that independence from the Academy led some artists to paint contemporary scenes that were strongly critical. The book's strength lies in the author's desire to rewrite the narrative by returning to primary sources. As a more nuanced history of the *peredvizhniki*, *Art and Commerce* meets the need for new perspectives on late nineteenth-century imperial Russian art and culture.

**Dr Louise Hardiman**