

RUSSIAN STUDIES AT BUCKNELL

An Annual Publication by Students

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Writers & Editors:

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From the Desk of the Editor-in-Chief

Добро пожаловать! We are excited to bring you the second issue of the Russian Program Newsletter, a publication by Russian Studies students at Bucknell University and hope you enjoy reading about the interesting activities students in the Russian Program have engaged in during the past year. In this issue, you will find reflections on studying abroad in several Russian speaking countries as well as student perspectives on NATO expansion and the 75th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz.

A special thank you to Professor Ludmila Shleyfer Lavine for her involvement with this newsletter despite the challenges of distance learning. We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and dedicate it to you.

“In hours like this, one rises to address
The ages, history, and all creation.”

-- From, “Past One O’Clock” by Vladimir Vladimirovich Mayakovsky

Cheers,
Indigo Clingerman

Ruminations on Public Transport: A Semester in St. Petersburg

Matthew Waldschmidt '20 is a Political Science major at Susquehanna University. He studies Russian at Bucknell University

In every country, cities do not tend to get along. From historical differences to the yearly battle over the budget, major cities have rivalries. St. Petersburg and Moscow are one such case with Petersburgers seeing Muscovites as uncultured, spoiled residents of the capital, while Petersburgers are viewed as cultural snobs who still think that their wet, gloomy, city is the capital of the country. Having spent a semester in Petersburg, I will make no bones about my attachment to Russia's northern capital, especially its metro system.

I must state at the outset that both Moscow and Petersburg have metros, and a public transport system that puts to shame anything we have in the United States. That being said, I am still more impressed with Petersburg than Moscow. Why? you ask clutching your *podstakannik* in indignation: Moscow has 180 stations to Petersburg's 72. Well I will tell you- first off, each station in Petersburg on the whole is much deeper than one you could find in Moscow. In Moscow the average station is somewhere between 114 to 180 ft deep, the deepest station at a depth of 276 ft. In Petersburg the deepest station is 282 feet below ground with an average station being around 196 ft deep. This is because Petersburg is built on a swamp. As a result, they have to dig down to such depths to hit a layer of frozen clay that building each new station becomes a monumental undertaking. And this in a city that does not enjoy the same "flexibility" of budgets as Moscow. But this handicap has its benefits. Moscow's stations tend to be in love with underground tunnels, many entrances and exits, producing a proper warren underground. In Petersburg this would be a laughable idea and as a result the metro system is much simpler. TV ads compared the Moscow metro system to a complex circuit board, and that is a fair comparison, but in terms of technology I find Petersburg to be more compelling.



It is a fact of life that it is easier to play catch up then to forge ahead with new systems. In Moscow the tracks are flat, producing a noticeable, hard, jerk when the car stops. Petersburg cars produce this same effect but greatly lessened because the metro

which was built later and the tracks slope down at the end of the platform and slope up at the start of the platform, making it easier for the train to accelerate and slow down. This is a good thing seeing as most of the train cars in St. Petersburg still proudly show their Soviet awards. Yet even in the new modern trains of Moscow there is that stronger subtle jerk at the end of each ride, reminding the traveler where they are.

As I said at the start of my rant, both Moscow and St. Petersburg have metro systems that are far more advanced than anything we have in the United States. In



Europe this is in general the rule--yes, point to how much money they spend on it compared to us; yes, talk about there being a commitment to it, etc.,--but regrettably to my urbanite friends, the United States will never have anything like this. The simple reason is, even if you live in the city, you need a car to go anywhere else. If you live outside of the city you need a car to go anywhere. How, with most of the population paying for private transport, can you sell the idea to spend boatloads of taxpayer dollars to

provide modern affordable public transport when most people would still need to use their cars as their primary means of transport? At best we can make some changes around the edges. But I still admit that I think about Petersburg, and yes even Moscow with envy when I am stuck in traffic on a hot day and long for the cold temperate weather, the calming cadence of the metro system, and the feeling of being alone in the crowd of humanity in the metro car, instead of being alone by myself in the car tailgating the slowpoke in front of me while being tailgated myself.

Pictured: *Previous page:* Statue of Alexander Pushkin in Pushkinskaya Metro Station, St. Petersburg;
This page: Mural of Peter the Great in Admiralteyskaya Metro Station, St. Petersburg

Russia's Soviet Past: A Semester in Moscow

Indigo Clingerman, '20 is a History and Russian Studies major

I spent last spring in Moscow on the Advanced Russian Language & Area Studies Program (RLASP) through American Councils. While there, I spent most of my free time exploring the city and experiencing how Russians in 2019 relate to their Soviet past. I was slightly surprised by the number of communist relics (mainly statues of Lenin) still on display around the city.



I think my favorite place in Moscow was Gorki Leninskiye, the estate where Lenin spent the last few years of his life. It was particularly interesting to experience a Soviet museum-park dedicated to the memory of Lenin and to see the path that they carried Lenin's body along in 1924. I also enjoyed visiting Muzeon Park of Arts (formerly known as Fallen Monument Park). The park is home to multiple statues from the Soviet era as well as the early Russian Federation. Together, these statues showcase some of the impacts of the Soviet regime on society as well as the uncertainty during the 1990s.



In addition, I traveled to St. Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Sochi, Suzdal, Vladimir, and Volgograd. While each city was amazing, I think I enjoyed Volgograd the most because of its historical significance. We visited the memorial park "To Heroes of

the Battle of Stalingrad" at Mamayev Kurgan and saw the statue "The Motherland Calls." Additionally, since it was a nice spring weekend, we biked around the downtown part of the city and waterfront.

I would highly recommend studying abroad in Russia or another Russian-speaking country. It was a wonderful opportunity to practice Russian with native speakers and experience Russian culture.

Pictured (previous page): *Top right:* Statue of workers carrying Lenin's body to Moscow in Gorki Leninskiye; *Bottom left:* Part of "Victims to the Totalitarian Regime" by Ye. I. Chubarov, 1980s (Е. И. Чубаров, Жертвы тоталитарного режима, 1980-е.), Muzeon Park of Arts, Moscow; *Bottom right:* Part of the wall as you walk up the stairs to the Motherland Calls statue in Volgograd.

Summer Abroad in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Ben “Kostya” Wilken, ‘21 is a Biochemistry and Russian Studies Major. He speaks with Indigo Clingerman about his experience studying Russian over the summer.

IC: Can you tell us about your summer in Kyrgyzstan? What were some unexpected parts of your trip? Highlights?



BW: My summer in Kyrgyzstan was full of adventure and cultural immersion. I expected them to live much differently than us, but many aspects of life were exactly the same. College students there know as much or more about American pop culture as me. My favorite parts were exploring different parts of Bishkek and finding old Soviet monuments. The food was also very shocking. I was not prepared for a diet that consisted so heavily on meat, so it took a few weeks to get used to it.

IC: What would you like to tell/advise students who are considering studying abroad in Kyrgyzstan or other Russian speaking countries?

BW: I would advise students to talk to as many locals as possible and make friends with Russian speaking students there. This helped me to better understand "slang" and other phrases I was not taught in the classroom.



IC: Why Russian Studies at Bucknell? Where did your interest in Russian language and/or culture start?

BW: I study Russian at Bucknell because I fell in love with the language after taking my first summer course in Russian after my freshman year here. Once I started learning the language, it has been very hard for me to stop.

IC: Do you see Russian Studies figuring into your plans after graduation? If so how?

BW: I honestly do not know where the Army is going to take me after college, but I hope I can use my Russian skills wherever I am placed. I would eventually like to work in an Embassy in one of the former Soviet countries or Russia.

Pictured (previous page): *Top:* Ben holds a falcon; *Bottom left:* Ben (third from right) with a group of students from the program; *Bottom right:* Ala-Too Square in Bishkek.

Understanding Georgia's Relationship With the USSR: A Summer Abroad

Indigo Clingerman '20

I spent last summer studying abroad on the Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program in Tbilisi, Georgia. In addition to Russian, the program included some very basic Georgian language instruction.

I think one of the coolest experiences in Tbilisi was visiting Stalin's Underground Printing House. Despite most of it being closed for renovations, the owner showed me the printing press and the secret entrance. The owner is an older gentleman, who claimed to be a high ranking member of the Communist Party during the Soviet Union. Surprised by the fact that I, an American, spoke Russian we joked about communism and U.S.-Russia relations as he showed me around.

While we lived and studied in Tbilisi, we also took short trips to Batumi, Kazbegi, and Gori. In addition, a few friends and I decided to spend a weekend in Kazbegi. While in Kazbegi, we hiked up to a small church in the mountains. Despite the drizzly weather, the view in the mountains was fantastic.



For most of the time I was in Tbilisi there were frequent protests, stemming from the fact that Sergei Gavrilov gave a speech in Russian on the closeness of Orthodox relations between Russia and Georgia from the chair reserved for the head of Georgia's parliament. This event is merely the tip of the iceberg in terms of the tense relations between the two countries in the post-Soviet space. As a history major, I was particularly interested in understanding the depth and origins of these tensions. After visiting the "Soviet Occupation Hall" in the Georgian National Museum, I discovered that the current Georgian government views the Soviet Union as an occupying force since Georgia was captured and forced to join the Soviet Union in the 1920s. However, I was curious how Georgians living in the 1920s viewed Sovietization. This curiosity became the basis of my history honors thesis, which examined the Georgian perceptions of the Sovietization of Georgia.

In a lot of ways, spending the summer in Georgia allowed me to find a niche to explore in early Soviet history. I discovered that I am interested in how the Soviet Union impacted countries besides Russia. In the fall, I am pursuing a MA in history at the University of Chicago and I plan to continue studying how Georgia was impacted by Sovietization and how and why their perception of Sovietization was different from other former Soviet Republics.

Pictured (previous page): *Top left:* Statue of a Cossack in Tbilisi; *Bottom left:* Stalin's printing press; *Bottom right:* View from a church in Kazbegi.

Intensive Summer Russian at Bryn Mawr

Julia Stevens '20 is a Russian Studies and French and Francophone Studies major. She talks with Indigo Clingerman about her summer at Bryn Mawr.

IC: Tell us about your summer at Bryn Mawr studying Russian. Most memorable experience?

JS: I spent 8 weeks total on Bryn Mawr's campus. It was a lot of work, but it was really great! We had class all day long, optional sports and activities that they organized for us, and various movie nights and weekend trips. The most memorable experience was probably our weekend trip to Brighton Beach. We had such a good day together and tried some really great, (mostly) authentic food!



IC: Do you have any advice for someone studying in an intensive summer program?

JS: If you are going to do an intensive program, you need to really commit to it. I took on way too many additional responsibilities at first and my studies and sleep schedule suffered. An intensive program is exactly that – intense – so it requires your full attention. However, I found that it was important to set aside some me-time as well!



IC: Would you recommend Bryn Mawr's summer language program?

JS: I would definitely recommend it! They did a great job of teaching us well while making it fun, which we all greatly appreciated since we were in class for so long each day. I think I made great strides in my Russian capabilities thanks to this program. Before coming to the program, I hadn't had a Russian class in over two semesters due to limitations in my abroad program's host university. The Bryn Mawr professors helped me get back up to speed and made the new material easy to understand.

IC: Do you see Russian figuring into your plans after graduation? If so how?

JS: I certainly hope to use Russian in my career. I'm looking for jobs now and everything is uncertain, but I would love to find a job that allows me to make use of both of my majors. No matter what, I plan to continue my Russian studies after graduation.

Pictured (previous page): *Top right:* Julia with Professor Sandugash; *Bottom left:* the Cloisters at Bryn Mawr; *Bottom right:* Bryn Mawr's old library.

NATO Expansion: Today's Consequences

Matthew Waldschmidt '20

The fall of the Soviet Union is one of the watershed moments in history. Rapidly the Soviet Union, an entity that had for decades seemed an unmovable feature on the world stage, fell apart and imploded. The great rival of the West now ceased to exist; the result of almost a hundred years of poor economic policy and leadership were now laid bare for the world to see. Into the breach poured thousands of experts, and millions of dollars, as the western world worked to integrate the former Soviet bloc countries into the west. Along with the thousands of experts, and millions of dollars, NATO itself started moving east, much to the displeasure and anger of Moscow, whose opposition to this expansion reached only deaf ears in the West. By looking at what NATO fundamentally is, its history, and purpose, we can understand how the rapid eastward expansion of NATO has not only caused difficulties in defending Europe, but also why it has provoked deep Russian resentment and military concern.

NATO was formed to protect Western Europe in response to the Soviet Union's presence in Eastern and Central Europe following the conclusion of the Second World War. The key feature of NATO is that of collective defense; an attack on any member nation would be deemed an attack on all member nations. The Soviet Union responded to the formation of NATO with the formation of the Warsaw Pact. In the West, the two organizations are often viewed as parallel entities. Both organizations were used to project power in the spheres of influence claimed by the United States and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union and the United States found themselves in competition with each other both ideologically and militarily.

Strategically, NATO performed a vital service by tying the security of Western Europe to that of the United States. This vital service was accomplished through the collective defense commitment found in the NATO treaty. Collective defense stopped the Soviets from taking over Europe one country at a time. Likewise, it was quite clear that any western incursions behind the Iron Curtain would be countered by Soviet military might. Thus, the entire security arrangement in Europe was designed to produce a strategic balance between the United States and the Soviet Union. This can clearly be seen in the controversies that occurred in Europe around issues such as medium range Soviet nuclear missiles (which could not hit the United States, thus separating European security from that of the United States), the Berlin crisis, the West German Policy of Ostpolitik, and the Prague Spring. In all of these situations the United States and the Soviet Union made great efforts to maintain the balance of power and advance their own interests if possible.

With the security of Europe largely locked in a static conflict, albeit one that potentially could destroy the entire world, both the United States and the Soviet Union had to look elsewhere to actively spread their influence through military means. This resulted in the

large number of proxy wars fought throughout the third world, the Middle East, South East Asia, and Latin America. The fact that we do not have in our collective histories a total war between the United States and the Soviet Union in Europe, is a testament to the balancing act performed by both countries.

All objective observers of NATO quickly point out that the United States has a critical, even commanding role in the alliance. This is quite logical given the status of the United States' military in the world, and the portion of NATO's budget financed by the United States. This oversized role was not a recent historical development but was built into NATO's foundation from the original treaty. This is reasonable considering the state of Western Europe after World War II. Granted Western Europe was not as devastated as large sections of Eastern Europe, but it was in no condition to resist Soviet expansion. The United States used the Marshall Plan to alleviate the economic conditions of those in Western Europe. The Marshall Plan limited the appeal of communist ideology and provided an export market for American industry that was no longer on a war footing. The Marshall Plan stood in stark contrast to the harsh war reparations extracted from Germany after the First World War. This economic assistance was then combined with NATO to limit Soviet expansion by both ideological and military means.

The United States' role in NATO from the start was that of a leader, policy setter, and primarily that of banker and manpower provider. Similarly, the Soviet Union dominated the Warsaw Pact, evidenced by when Stalin threw Yugoslavia out of the pact after Marshal Tito refused to allow Soviet troops to be stationed in his country. Of the Eastern European countries, only the Soviet Union could hope to compete with the United States ideologically, militarily, and economically. Thus, both the Soviet Union and the United States found themselves in control of organizations (The Warsaw Pact and NATO) they then used as vehicles to channel their own competing interests in Europe and counter those of the other country.

In this context, NATO can be viewed as one of a variety of tools the United States used to exert influence in Europe. To quote the first NATO Secretary General, Lord Ismay, the goal of NATO was "to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down"(Wheatcroft). With the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact gone from the international landscape, why did the NATO alliance continue? The answer to that question is found in seeing NATO as not simply a security alliance that was made to keep the Soviets out of Europe, but also as an alliance that keeps the United States in Europe. It is true that one of the chief goals of NATO was to minimize Soviet influence in Western Europe, but by keeping Soviet influence out, the United States greatly increased its own influence in the region. Soviet Union or no Soviet Union, the United States wants to promote and expand its sphere of influence in Europe, and NATO was and is a vehicle by which that can be achieved. In addition, NATO, by encompassing most of Western Europe, is a powerful tool to prevent France and Germany (or any other country) from going to war with their neighbors, and the United States' intervention that would naturally follow. By having an outsized role in NATO, the

United States by default is a major player in the defense of Europe, and in the militaries of Europe. Therefore, the United States can “direct” European foreign policy and prevent any of the countries of Europe from taking major military actions that the United States does not approve.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, it would be unreasonable to expect that Russia would have the same sphere of influence that its predecessor enjoyed. At the time of the Soviet Union’s collapse, the new Russian economy was in shambles, and the country was in no shape to maintain the type of direct control the Soviet Union had exercised over the countries of the Eastern Bloc. Given the tremendous gap between the economies of the United States and the fledgling Russian Federation, some NATO expansion could have been expected as counties that had been under Soviet control now saw a golden opportunity to firmly attach themselves to the West.

While Russia was too weak to do more than protest, western policy makers made an error when they stated that simply because a country that had been historically a part of the Soviet/Russian sphere of influence wanted to leave we should accept them into NATO. This has led NATO to admit the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. These states are impossible to defend properly. Even western think tanks admit this fact, stating that it would take “a force of about seven brigades, including three heavy armored brigades — adequately supported by airpower, land-based fires, and other enablers on the ground and ready to fight at the onset of hostilities... to prevent the rapid overrun of the Baltic states” (Withnall). This massive arms buildup on Russia’s border would only prevent the “rapid” overrun of the Baltic States and is about 5 or 6 times the current number of troops stationed there. The Baltic States are also isolated geographically. With the heavily militarized Russian enclave of Kaliningrad and a subservient Belarus, the only land route to reinforce the Baltic states is the narrow Suwalki gap. At best the Baltic States could serve as a tripwire to broader Russian aggression. At worst, the Baltic States’ rapid fall to a Russian army, which then halted military operations saying that their only object was to secure rights for minority Russian citizens, would leave NATO with the difficult choice of either looking powerless by doing nothing, or going to war for countries that were already overrun, against Russian forces which were not advancing. The possibility of the lack of a unified timely response by NATO to aggression against member nations would encourage hostile actions against more vulnerable members. At the same time vulnerable member nations might feel that because of their membership in NATO they have more of an equal footing with Russia than they actually possess. Uncertainty over NATO’s commitment to defend all member states equally weakens the value of collective defense. In allowing the Baltic States into NATO, the United States now finds itself in the position of deploying troops on Russia’s border, which needlessly escalates tensions with another nuclear armed state.

While the merits of permitting the Baltic States to join NATO provides a good example of expansion gone awry, what is done is done. If collective defense and by

default NATO are to mean anything, NATO and the United States must do their best to defend the Baltic States. However, we can use this example to help us from making more mistakes with other countries, specifically in regards to Ukraine and Georgia. Succinctly, these countries should not be part of NATO for the foreseeable future. This fact should be made known to both countries. Their admittance would make NATO's strategic situation even more precarious than it is now. At the present time there are ongoing conflicts in both of these countries involving Russian backed forces. Admitting them now would almost guarantee a broader conflict with Russia. Then there is the question of geography. Georgia is isolated from most other NATO countries, and like the Baltics, could easily be overrun before an effective response could be mustered. Ukraine also would prove to be a challenge to defend. Because of Ukraine's broad open plains, and long border with Russia and Belarus, it would be very hard to have enough defenders to secure all possible locations that could be attacked. Short of using nuclear weapons, Ukraine and Georgia would be hard to defend with conventional forces, as the Russians could easily overwhelm defensive positions. With NATO's new members and with conflicts still raging in Ukraine and Georgia, the strategic situation of NATO is under increasing strain; this needs to be considered when thinking about future expansion.

NATO has been a vital tool in uniting the major European powers with the United States and preventing them from going to war with each other. However, under pressure by the desire to be seen as the defenders of free peoples, the United States has allowed NATO to make a series of tactical errors by permitting NATO to expand as far as it has. Moscow has made it clear, they will do more than protest NATO's eastward expansion. NATO and Russia must come to an understanding and re-establish a strategic balance like they had in the old Cold War. This will preserve the peace and prevent a regional conflict from spiraling out of control into a world devastating conflict.

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Russian Involvement in the 75th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz

Julia Stevens '20

In January 2020, I was fortunate to attend the 75th anniversary event to commemorate the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. I was joined by fellow students Julia Carita and Caroline Hromy and professors Keith Buffinton and David Del Testa. After a brief visit to Berlin to meet an alumna, Bettina Jaeger, our group traveled to Krakow to pursue our work. Each member of our group had had their own specific projects and questions and mine was that of Russian involvement in the commemoration.

Tensions between Poland and Russia have been uneasy for some time and this event seemed to exacerbate the situation. When our group first planned our trip, Russia had not announced that it would be sending any representative or delegation to the event at all. This was particularly intriguing considering the fact that the camp had been liberated by Soviet troops. However, Russia eventually announced that the country would be represented at the event by Ambassador Sergey Andreev.



Though it is nearly impossible to have an event such as this remain politics-free, the commemoration was noticeably led by the survivors of the camp rather than by heads of state. As a result, political tensions

were effectively forgotten for a short time. Unfortunately, our group was not able to participate in the main event, which was held in an enclosed tent and reserved for delegations and survivors. The general public, our group included, gathered in a taped-off section of the Birkenau camp to watch a live feed of the commemoration on a large screen. Though it was challenging in more ways than one – we were not provided with translations of the speeches and the cold was nearly unbearable after the sunset – it was an unforgettable experience. It was touching to see how many people were willing to stand outside in the Polish winter for hours to honor the survivors, many carrying flowers and flags and banners. Even when we could not understand the speakers who largely spoke Polish, we could see and feel the effect they had on the others around us.

Now back in the States, we are all continuing the work on our individual projects. Despite the move to remote education, our professors have remained supportive of our work. If I am successful with my project, you will be able to read about my thoughts and observations on the commemoration in print!

Pictured (previous page): *Top right:* Julia in front of the Berlin Wall; *Bottom Left:* Birkenau camp; *Bottom right:* Commemorative event at the Birkenau camp.

From the Office of the President of Russian Club

Друзья и товарищи!

Friends and Comrades! It has been my pleasure to serve as the president of Russian Club for the past three years. During that time, I have seen the club continue to expand its on-campus engagement. Last fall we took a trip to New York City and Brighton Beach. In Brighton Beach we had lunch at a Russian restaurant and wandered around the Russian shops. In the evening, we saw The Russian Ballet Company's production of *Swan Lake*.

I also want to acknowledge my fellow officers and faculty advisors that I have had the pleasure of working with during my tenure as president. I am forever indebted to them for their help in planning and putting on club events. I wish next year's officers success in leading Russian Club.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Indigo Clingerman', with a stylized, cursive script.

Indigo “Инга Импы-Швимпы” Clingerman

Russian Club Event Calendar 2019-20

Fall 2019	
Russian Table	Mondays @ 3 pm
Welcome Back Meeting	September
Trip to NYC Brighton Beach and <i>Swan Lake</i>	November
Spring 2020	
Russian Table	Mondays @ 6 pm

Student Spotlight

Julia Stevens '20: to serve as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Russia.

Indigo Clingerman '20: Critical Language Scholarship [CLS] (Tbilisi, Georgia, summer 2019); Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad Scholarship (Moscow, Russia, Spring 2019); Foreign Language and Area Studies [FLAS] for the study of Russian (Summer 2018); "Honor in the Voluntary Army Under General A. I. Denikin." *The Birch* (Spring 2020): 14-20 (https://issuu.com/thebirchjournal/docs/the_birch_2020_final).

Ben Wilken '21: Project Go Scholarship (University of Pittsburgh, summer 2018); Melikian Scholarship (Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, summer 2019).

Cole Reish '23: Honorable Mention in the Annual ACTR [American Council of Teachers of Russian] National Post-Secondary Russian Essay Contest.

Susie Williams '23: Silver Medal in the Annual ACTR [American Council of Teachers of Russian] National Post-Secondary Russian Essay Contest.

(In this year's ACTR essay contest, there were 1261 submissions from 56 universities, colleges, and institutions across the US.)