

PERM NEWS

The newsletter of the Perm Association

January 2009

Restoration of young physicists' school in Perm State University

As you know Soviet Union was the great country. Certainly, it was the last half-colonial empire with authoritative, and from time to time, a totalitarian system. The rigid planned economy system in our country was complemented by flexible and effective system of selection and professional training in the leading branches of economy especially connected with military-industrial complex. One of the most effective and completed systems was system of specialists preparation in physical and mathematical sciences. Our country needed advanced physical schools for space exploration, atomic engineering and nuclear weapon development.

The system of selection and professional training began working when the child began school. In Soviet Union the majority of children studied at the nearest school. All schools were obliged to accept children in place of their residence. But in large cities always were specialized schools: first of all physics and mathematics, then schools with profound studying foreign languages, basically English. In these schools the talented and presented children were selected.



The best teachers were concentrated in these schools. Programs of employment were very intensive so the graduates had good chances to pass exams to the best

universities. Such special schools taught children to do creative work and show initiative. In Soviet Union was effective system of professional orientation. At schools various clubs on interests worked. Radio engineering club traditionally was one of the most popular. Then we had Olympiads system for various disciplines. [Olympiads are inter-school academic competitions.] Winners of such Olympiads had more chances to enter the most prestigious universities of the country.

Certainly, pupils of small rural schools and prestigious capital schools had different opportunities of successful receipt in universities. However the system of selection was flexible and plenty of talented scientists and engineers were from provincial schools. The state guaranteed grants to successful students. Such system gave real chance to talented children from rather poor families to receive good formation.

Physics faculties in all Universities were the most prestigious. Training of students physics was very expensive yet the quantity of physicists was obviously superfluous. What for it was necessary? In conditions of confrontational opposition of two world systems, Soviet Union needed to have huge weight of averages in abilities of scientists and engineers.

In conditions of external isolation it created critical weight of scientists at which occurred qualitative jump. Scientific schools were born and the newest manufactures developed. Besides in higher education there were the military faculties so that abilities of scientists-physicists and engineers in conditions of a wartime could be quickly retrained in the newest military specialities. The superfluous quantity of experts of technical specialities made a reserve of armed forces.

Soviet Union has lost the Cold War and has collapsed. After falling of Soviet empire the greater country has collapsed in numerous slices. The heavy period of

transition to new capitalist system of society organization has come. It was the period of disintegration. In the country there was a real reduction of army and arms, many military schools and institutes have been closed. In Perm city helicopter school and rocket institute were closed. The starting mines of intercontinental ballistic missiles were blown up. We stop average range rockets manufacturing aimed to the Europe. Military activity in Russia was really reduced. But looking-forward Russian politicians saved the physics faculties. The educational base necessary for scientific and technical upward discoveries of Russia has remained.

Ten years have passed, and young vigorous Vladimir Putin was and still is ambitions leader with huge working capacity. Gradually, after the leader, our country has also changed. Approximately in fifteen years after disorder of Soviet Union, Russians have realized that they have an opportunity. In the inheritance from Soviet Union we managed the huge sparsely populated country with rich natural resources and enough talented population. In the end of Putin's second presidential term, the real middle class began forming in our country. All this time our country slowly, but constantly was changing for the best. When the positive changes reached the critical point people in our country realized that the worst already behind. Russia has ripened for winning. Mass media daily showed our victories in economy, in politician, in sports. The sphere of national interests of Russia began promptly to be extended. The world became closer. Dependence of the European and Asian countries on Russia has increased.

For many years an idea that Russia is the marginal territory of Europe was imposed to Russians. But now we realized that it is the source of recreating the territory of Europe. Our natural resources - oil, gas, pure potable water - became vital to many of our neighbours. There was a conflict of interests. Actually all Europe, the USA and Japan were united against Russia in a question of use of our resources. TV began to show how the intelligence services of other countries planned for Russia. According to these plans Pacific islands, including Sakhalin, depart to Japan, Kamchatka and the most part of Siberia to the USA, and the remained part of Siberia is given China. Russia still has only the European part up to Urals Mountains. All this time we were

frightened by necessity to choose to be under the Europeans, or Chinese influence. And this propagation was spread by TV for years.

However Russian traditionally gave the asymmetrical answer on all these threats. In the twenty-first century Russian absolutely realized that in the military opposition we have no chance for victory. We cannot win the military fight; therefore it is necessary to win the economic battle. The modern economy is necessary for this purpose. But it is very difficult to reform economy in such big country. It can not be a revolution it is a long evolutionary process. We need high educated population for success of reform in our country. And the system of continuous formation: school, university, after university, additional education, is necessary for this purpose.

It is very difficult to create such system. School programmes should be adapted for university requirements. Universities should let out experts who can continuously study and raise their qualification. The system of national educational projects was organized to revive the Higher Education sector.

In 2007-2008 Perm state university won the competition and has received financing under the national educational project. From 1.5 billion rubles about a quarter has been spent on modernization of instrument base of physics faculty. This money was spending for buying modern physics equipment and raising qualification of employees. The enclosed money gives feedback practically immediately. Now we are proud of our laboratories. Interest of schoolboys to university has sharply risen and the number of school excursions in university has increased.

In 2008 Perm University has restored links with schools. In addition to existing Olympiads system, the 'School of Young' was revived. Eleven Schools of Young were founded: philologists, philosophers, sociologists, economists, historians, programmers, physicists, chemists, geographers, biologists and psychologists. School children could choose freely any of these directions and carry out small scientific research under direction of university supervisors and school teachers. More then quarter of all schoolboys have chosen the School of young physicists. In total at School of Youth 116 Perm schoolchildren studied. They do big creative work.

The most productive cooperation was with grammar school No.1. The talented teacher of physics Kychova L.G. has really estimated the situation. Even well-off schools which are not Specialised Physics Schools have no real chance to create good physical laboratories with proper demonstration equipment. But university has such modern equipment. But physics faculty is not very popular among school graduates and has lost up to 50% of students. So now pupils for two years are engaged at physics faculty and decide to be or to not be physicists. Elimination occurs *before* they enter the faculty. This early professional selection helps the university.

The university itself comes to the school. We organized open lesson in grammar school No. 1. We bring the modern equipment. Using the multimedia equipment, I do a special lesson devoted to the problem of quantum theory of conductivity. Then schoolboys do a laboratory work as a little scientific research of high-temperature conductivity. The teachers of physics from different schools of Perm city have wonderful chance to the new possibilities of constructive cooperation. This lesson has sharply raised prestige of School of Young Physicists.

The culmination moment of our work in School of Young was at the First Scientific Conference of pupils of Perm. The young scientists presented 51 stand reports. Forty two oral presentation were made on 6

sections. The most active among them were physicists.

In the end of conference all pupils, professors and teachers do a common photograph for memory. The hymn of the Russian Federation was sounded and everybody stand up. It was absolutely unforgettable feeling. I remember 1994 when I was in Great Britain for the first time. I was on the excursion in Windsor Palace and queen arrived. The British flag was rising up and all the people were demonstrating feelings of patriotism. I had really understood that it was important for Englishmen. In our country at that time the word 'patriot' was abusive, and veterans of Second World War were ashamed to put on the awards. That was the reality in Russia in the beginning of the nineteen-nineties. And then I told to myself that what was in Britain will be in Russia too. We shall not be hesitating to show our patriotic feelings when the Russian Federation flag is rising. And this becomes a reality in 2008. The same feelings were among us Russians on this conference.

In summary we suppose that in several years the full cycle of training will be realized. Then the money devoted to physics and engineering science will give real feedback in economy. Russia will make qualitative jump and become modern and advanced country. Thus national interests of Russia are reliably protected.

Volkhin I.L., Perm State University
Kychova L.G., Grammar school No.1, Perm

Perm Association contact details

Chairman:	Mari Prichard;	tel. 01865 556673 or 07768 908341;	e-mail: mari.prichard@hcarpenter.co.uk
Perm Liaison:	Karen Hewitt;	tel. 01865 515635;	e-mail: karen.hewitt@conted.ox.ac.uk
Secretary:	Rosalyn Roulston;	tel. 01993 813215;	e-mail: r.roulston@btinternet.com
Treasurer:	David Roulston;	tel. 01993 813215;	e-mail: djrouls@btinternet.com
Membership:	David Roulston;	tel. 01993 813215;	e-mail: djrouls@btinternet.com
Newsletter:	Richard Sills;	tel. 01865 721644;	e-mail: richardsills@btinternet.com
Twinning:	May Wylie;	tel. 01865 252537;	e-mail: mwylie@oxford.gov.uk
Social Events:	Ann Davis;	tel. 01993 811927;	e-mail: annharvarddavis45@hotmail.com

Dates for your diary

Annual General Meeting, reception and talk

The AGM of the Perm Association will be held on Wednesday 11th February in the Buttery, Wolfson College. The reception will start at 6.30 pm with light refreshments, wine and soft drinks. This will be followed by a short AGM consisting of reports on the Association's work and election of committee members and officers. It will also be proposed, for clarity, that we should from now on be called the Oxford Perm Association. New volunteer committee members are welcome and are urged to contact the chair by phone, email or post before the meeting.

Dr Ann Pasternak Slater, Fellow in English Literature at St Anne's College, Oxford will give a talk following the AGM, about her grandfather Leonid Pasternak, his paintings and family connections.

Directions Wolfson College is at the end of Linton Road. If coming by bus, get off at the St Margaret's Road or Linton Road stop. By car, there is ample parking space in the college (turn right after entering) or on the adjacent roads (in spaces unrestricted after 6.30).

Having a baby in Perm and London

Ksenia Hewitt will reflect on the similarities and differences. At Karen Hewitt's house, 6 Rawlinson Road, Oxford, at 6.30pm on Wednesday 11th March. Light refreshments provided.

Filming visit

A film crew from Perm hopes to visit Oxford in the spring, to make a film so that Permians can learn about their English twin city.

Summer party

Tea and strawberries from 4.00pm on Friday 24th July in the garden of 6 Rawlinson Road; followed by wine and savouries. Members may like to go on from here to see the production of 'Carmen' (see details below).

Dorchester Festival

A balalaika band from Perm is due to take part in the Dorchester Festival.

Future plans

Plans are under way for Oxford Fiddlers to visit Perm in 2009; and for Permians to participate in the Oxford Folk Festival in 2010.

The Trans-Siberian Railway: a traveller's anthology

Over twenty years ago, on my second visit to Russia, I travelled from Liverpool Street Station in London to Hongkong – all by train apart from the crossing to Holland, from where a very drab train carried us to Moscow – and onward on the Trans-Siberian and then Chinese railways. When I returned home I was amazed when people sought me out to tell them of my holiday, introduced me at parties as a person who had been on the Trans-Siberian railway and acknowledged that it was *the* greatest journey one could make.

I realised that there was a story here that could be published. I spent long days in the old Reading Room of the British Library – still then within the British Museum – working my way through as many accounts of the journey that I could track down. From them I selected the pieces I could string together to create an anthology of the railway in time and space. In 1988 it was published.

Two years later Russia opened up and soon, following Karen Hewitt's pioneering work, I was going regularly to Perm for the Oxford Council for Voluntary Action's link with the developing voluntary organisations in Perm.

That work continues, and now I have updated the anthology and it has been re-issued by the Oxford publisher Signal Books – ISBN 978-1 904955-49-8, price £12.99 from all good booksellers, as they say. It will also be available at this price at the Perm Association AGM on 11 February – with the difference between the trade price and the published price going to the Perm Association to support the Oxford-Perm link.

Deborah Manley

Oxford International Links News

Band festival

The Oxford Band Festival was a great success, despite the bad weather which affected the outdoor events. Bands from Leiden, Bonn, Grenoble and Perm presented a free concert in the Newman Rooms and played in Blackbird Leys and at Blenheim. The Leiden Jazz Band also played at the switching on of the Christmas lights in Headington and the winter light festivities in Oxford.

Flood Management Seminar

A seminar for all the twin towns on Flood Risk Management, held on 6th-9th November 2008, was considered to be a great success. A printed report will ultimately be available for the general public. After the seminar all the delegates from Oxford, Leiden, Bonn, Grenoble, Perm and Torun joined in a wreath-laying ceremony to commemorate the victims of all wars.

St Valentines Day

OIL is running a fund-raising event on St Valentine's Day, 14th February. See enclosed flyer for details. Tickets at £10 from May Wylie at the Town Hall.

Folk Dance Festival

The Folk Dance Festival on 21 -22 March will feature bands from Leiden and Bonn. On Sunday 22nd, at 7.00pm in the Newman Rooms, the 'Reel Bach Consort' from Bonn will be playing folk music 'in the style of Bach', together with the Oxford Fiddle Group.

Carmen

There will be a multi-national performance of Carmen in July 2009, featuring young dancers from Perm and section leaders from Perm Symphony Orchestra, who will be playing with, and giving master classes to, the young players in the Leiden Youth Orchestra. Quentin Hayes will play the part of Escamillo. Hosts are needed from 19th July, when joint rehearsals in Oxford begin. The performances will be on 23-25 July.

Christmas Carol Concert

Bonn and Leiden have offered to take part in a Christmas carol concert in Oxford

News of other links

Bonn

Planning is under way for Bonn Week in Oxford, in May 2009. The festivities will include an art exhibition, the formal opening of the revamped Bonn Square, a Burgerfest (in Bonn Square), a Barn Dance and the Lord Mayor's Parade, led by the Bonn Ehrengarde in full uniform. Those hoping to visit Oxford include the Band of the Bertolt Brecht School, a gospel choir, canoeists, young athletes and Irish dancers.

Grenoble

In October, an Oxford delegation visited Grenoble on the occasion of the British Weeks, held to celebrate twenty years of the twinning link. Events included an exhibition by Oxford artists, an exchange between farmers from the two areas and a concert including Oxford's Pavlova Quintet and works by Oxford and Grenoble musicians.

Leiden

The Feestkapel Decibel Party band from Leiden played in Oxford in late November as part of the city's winter light celebrations.

The joint Leiden-Oxford link committee is considering a range of exchanges, including hockey, judo, football, baseball, school gardeners and lacemakers.

Leon

There will be another operatic fund-raising evening, at £20 per head, in the Newman Rooms on 20 March 2009.

The conflict in Georgia – viewed from Perm

'As soon as I heard about the invasion I rushed to look at the CNN and BBC channels. I knew that our TV would not tell the whole story, so I wanted to learn more. But I was shocked to discover that your programmes were inaccurate, tendentious and deceitful. Why are you trying to demonise Russia in your media??'

Thus, more-or-less, was I greeted in Perm last September, a month after the Russian invasion of Georgia. My friends (in this case a group of middle-aged women teachers) were anxious for explanations. Russia had sent tanks into South Ossetia at the request of the South Ossetians to protect them against Georgian bombing of civilians. So why had our Foreign Secretary rushed off to Kiev to denounce the invasion while David Cameron turned up in Tbilisi to give support to the Georgians? Why was Putin portrayed as even more sinister than usual, a calculating monster ensconced in Beijing (which was somehow even worse than plotting in Moscow)?

I had come with photocopies of a handful of thoughtful articles which did *not* interpret this conflict as Big Bully lashing out at small heroic Georgia. But they were few, and since most Russians get their news from television rather than newspapers, the articles were no counterbalance to BBC reporting, let alone CNN accounts. "I was so angry," said one of these friends, "that I went on to one of the American blogs which send messages to Senators. And one or two of the (American) bloggers agreed with me, so I felt a bit better."

I heard several accounts of a CNN interview with an American mother and 12-year-old daughter who were visiting relatives in South Ossetia and got caught up in the fighting. The journalist asked the girl to

describe what happened. She told him about the bombing, about how they ran out of the flats and started to walk north away from Tskhinvali, 'until we met some Russians and they put us in a bus and helped us to get away...' At which point the interview was cut off. Evidently the journalists did not want stories of 'good' Russians. A statement at the end of the programme said that the interview had been broadcast in error. (I didn't see this programme, but I heard about it from Russians who felt cheated by the deceitfulness of 'Westerners' who proclaimed the value of free expression.)

The Russians were not uncritical of their own government actions: 'We were wrong – and foolish – to go as far as Gori [just beyond the South Ossetian border]. But why didn't your journalists explain that this quarrel between Georgians and Ossetians has been going on for nearly twenty years. Why begin with the Russians?' I was given, very lucidly, facts and figures which were later confirmed, somewhat grudgingly, in some of the lectures at St Antony's last term. One friend said, 'Of course this was not a surprise for our forces. Our tanks were ready to move with full tanks of petrol. Well, they had to move, but unfortunately, our government will now feel impelled to spend more money on the military.' Another said, 'The tragedy is that we are now further than ever from our former friends, the Georgians, whose culture many of us much admired. But the Georgians have been very unfortunate in their leaders. Very unfortunate.'

I spoke to Perm's most articulate radical activist. He said, 'You know, for once – after so many years – I felt proud of my country. We had to do an unpleasant job but it was necessary. And we did it.'

Karen Hewitt

Greetings from Perm

Dear members of Perm Association! Dear Friends!
New Year Greetings from the NP "Perm-Oxford"! We trust that 2009 will bring new hope for you!
Let our fruitful work on twinning strengthen international links between Oxford and Perm!
Best wishes for a terrific 2009!

With love from Perm, the NP "Perm-Oxford" Committee

Russian experiences of an English children's author - Arthur Ransome

Most people know Arthur Ransome as the author of the children's classic 'Swallows and Amazons'. Not so well known perhaps are his connections with Russia, firstly as a journalist, then falling in love with Trotsky's secretary, and later just outside Russia's borders, as a yachtsman. It all started with an unfortunate marriage - to Ivy Walker in March 1909. By 1913 his life with Ivy had become intolerable and he decided to escape to Russia, where he planned to learn the language and write a children's book on Russian folk tales (having come across a collection of Russian fairy-tales in the London Library). Old Peter's Russian Tales were broadcast on BBC Radio 4 during Christmas 2008.

In June 1913 he travelled to St Petersburg and soon he was enjoying writing in the white nights in a dacha on the Gulf of Finland, the guest of an Anglo-Russian family, staying for three months. He started to learn the language by starting with Russian children's reading primers then newspapers with a dictionary and succeeded in reading and making copious notes on Russian fairy-tales. His next visit to Russia came about because he was commissioned to write a guide book of St. Petersburg; he went there in May 1914. He had by this time fallen in love with Russia and described drinking kvass and eating black bread in the Alexander Nevsky Monastery. Russia mobilised in July 1914 and the guide book was never published.

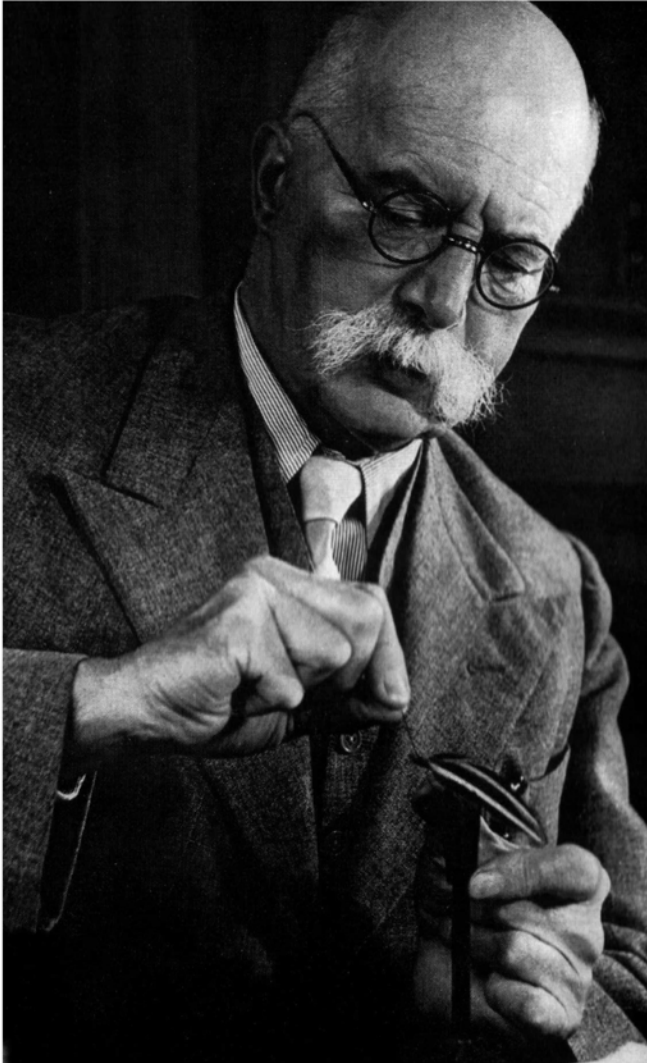
Back in England he decided that he could usefully become a newspaper correspondent in Russia. In the meantime he wrote articles for the New Statesman and began to write Old Peter's Russian Tales. In the winter of 1915 he was back in Petrograd, then Moscow making literary and journalistic connections, enjoying skiing and travelling around Moscow at night by sledge. In the autumn of 1915 the correspondent for the Daily News fell ill and Ransome first deputised for him and soon took on the job permanently. He also started a collaboration for a news agency with Bruce Lockhart (consul general) in Moscow - this was a sort of English propaganda machine for Russian newspapers.

In March 1917 Lenin arrived in Petrograd and

the fighting in the street was observed by Ransome from his Glinka Street flat where he was then living. Later that year, he made daily visits to the Smolny Institute in Petrograd which including seeing Trotsky and met for the first time Trotsky's secretary Evgenia Petrovna Shelepina ('a tall girl who carries a revolver'). Ransome was sympathetic towards the Bolsheviks, which led to arguments with the Observer and also with the British Government with whom he was in frequent contact. But the British officials appreciated the links which Ransome had with Russian officials.

Arthur Ransome and Evgenia Shelepina became close friends and when things became difficult, both of them left for Sweden; however within a few months they were back in Moscow. During this period Ransome had a letter signed by Lenin (with whom it is widely reported that he played chess) giving him free access to all the ministries - absolutely invaluable for a journalist; but upon his return to England he was interrogated in depth about his 'Russian affiliations' by the Foreign Office - they were suspicious of his contacts and worried about what he might get printed in Britain, but wanted his insider information to what was taking place amongst the Russian leaders (the British Foreign Office sympathies were not in tune with Ransome's vis a vis the Bolsheviks).

He returned to England from time to time and in 1919 sailed from Newcastle to Reval, Estonia. He then made the hazardous trip to Moscow, crossing white and Red Russian lines and risking being shot until he made it clear he was going to see Lenin (whilst playing chess with a Russian officer). Months later he returned to Reval with Evgenia (who had by then returned to work in the Kremlin) where they lived for a few years, with frequent visits to Russia and reporting for the Manchester Guardian. The meetings with Lenin and other leaders continued until 1923 with acknowledged feedback to the British government known to both sides - so he was definitely not a spy, just a very good journalist with a first hand appreciation of how things were evolving in a torn country.



It was in Reval that Ransome started his sailing hobby, firstly in a dinghy called Slug, then in 1922 having a 30 foot yacht built for him when he moved to Riga, Latvia, which he named Racundra. He wrote a book 'Racundra's First Cruise' which became a classic for yachtsmen. In it he described a voyage to Helsinki and back where he frequently referred to the ship's cook. It was only years later that it became publicly known that this was in fact Evgenia whom he eventually brought back to England and married, having sold Racundra (and divorced Ivy!). Back in England, he had a succession of yachts designed and built for him (being a very difficult person to please). His fifth boat was called Peter Duck after one of his children's books. This design was so good that a class of 38 Peter Ducks was built - and for the past ten years I have sailed number three. Every time I sit in the cabin of my old Peter Duck wooden ketch, peacefully at anchor in Walton Backwaters (Ransome's "Secret Water") or elsewhere in the Thames Estuary creeks, I think of Arthur Ransome - the sailor, children's author, adventurer, journalist (and more) of the Russian revolution.

Recommended reading:

"Ransome in Russia" Ted Alexander & Tatiana Verizhnikova, Portchester Publishing, 2003.

"The Autobiography of Arthur Ransome", Jonathan Cape, 1976.

"The Life of Arthur Ransome", Hugh Brogan, Jonathan Cape, 1984.

David Roulston

