New Zealand & the Great Northern Bear

In 1939, Winston Churchill characterised the Soviet Union as a ‘riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma’. That might also be considered an apt description of the relationship which has developed between New Zealand and Imperial Russia, the Soviet Union and now the Russian Federation.

The relationship has been characterised by misconception, exacerbated by distance, and compounded by physical and cultural distances between the two nations. From a New Zealand perspective, Russia has often been considered the prime military threat in the Pacific. From the 1850s (the Crimean War took place in 1854–55) a series of ‘Russian scares’ encouraged the construction of coastal fortifications on sections of the New Zealand coastline — Otago Harbour included — and similar fears reappeared during the Cold War in the latter half of the 20th century.

The relationship has not always been confrontational. In World War I, Imperial Russia was part of the Allied cause and the Gallipoli Campaign was waged in part to open up a vital supply line to Russia through the Dardanelles and the Black Sea. Again, in World War II, New Zealanders were involved in the supply of war material to the Soviet Union. Trade has frequently been a vital link between the two countries, with Soviet fishing vessels in recent years being regular visitors to Otago Harbour.

This Bulletin offers an introduction to relevant titles available in the Hocken Library.

EARLY NZ-RUSSIAN RELATIONS

RUSSIAN SCARES

SOVIET DIPLOMACY IN NZ
Pozdnyakov, Yevgeny. Soviet press about NZ: To commemorate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and NZ, Sovpress, 1974.
Yermoshin, Pavel. First Soviet mission in New Zealand: to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and NZ, Sovpress, 1974.
Zakharov, Igor. The USSR-NZ Friendship Society: To commemorate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and NZ, Sovpress, 1974.

NZ DIPLOMACY IN THE SOVIET UNION
Lake, Ruth M. My years in Mrs. Boswell’s Moscow, NZ Society for Closer Relations with USSR, Wellington, 1950.
Yuryev, Valery. NZ’s first ambassador in Moscow: To commemorate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and NZ, Sovpress, 1974.
TRADE

NZ PERCEPTIONS OF RUSSIA


Scott, Helen J. *A NZ woman in Russia ... truth about the Soviet Union*, Stratford, 1932.


The papers of Robert Bruce Godward include his journals of a ‘Grand Tour’, which took him to the Soviet Union on four occasions in the 1960s. (AG — 347, items 014, 021, 022, 023, 024, 025)

The papers of Louise Sutherland, whose epic cycle tour through Europe, the Middle East and Latin America included a tour of Communist Bloc countries in the 1960s, are also held by the Hocken. (Reference 95-008).

RUSSIAN PERCEPTIONS OF NZ
Averbakh, I.U. *Na raznykh kontinentakh : ne sovsem obyknovennye putevshchiki*, Moskva, 1971. The author, a well-known chess player, relates his travels through five continents, including Australia and NZ.


NZ COMMENTARY ON THE USSR


ALLIED INTERVENTION IN RUSSIA


NZ-USSR SOCIETIES
Atmore, Harry & ‘Uncle Scrim’ [pseud. Scrimgeour, C.G.]. *You and the USSR*, Commercial Ptg. & Pub., Wellington, 1941; includes Atmore’s address at the inaugural meeting for the formation of a NZ Society for Closer Relations with the USSR.


Paris, P. R. *Rev. Percy Paris praises Russia in the famous Man in the street broadcast talk*, Russian relations pamphlet No.3. NZ Society for Closer Relations with the USSR, 1941.


*Soviet News*, Wellington Official Organ of the Friends of the Soviet Union. Also available on microfilm. Issues for Jan. 1933 called v.1, no.7; Aug. 9, 1933 called no.12; Aug. 26, 1933–Mar. 21, 1934 called new series.

The photographic section holds three 1973 photographs recording the observation of NZ Day in Moscow by members of the USSR-NZ Society (696.00130-33-34).

COMMUNIST PARTY OF NZ


The Hocken also holds 7 boxes of the records of the Dunedin branch of the CPNZ for the period 1912–1965. This material, consisting of minutes, correspondence, subject files and publications, is now unrestricted; ref. MS-0675. See also the Working Women’s Committee, Dunedin branch, Minute Book 1936–1938; ref. AG-122.

NZ POLITICS


Silverstone, Harold. They sabotage your mind, Communist Party of NZ, Wellington, 1943?

USSR: GENERAL


Gould, C.J. Finland: the truth, D. McCarthy, Auckland, 1940.

Lenin, V.I. The State: Lenin’s lecture delivered to students at the Sverdlov University, 11.7.1919, with a foreword by the National Secretariat, CPNZ, Communist Party of NZ, Auckland, 1987.

Lenin, V.I. The Soviets at work: a discussion of the problems faced by the Soviet government of Russia after the revolution... ‘Program Address’ before Soviets, April, 1918, Maoriland Worker Printing & Publishing Co., W’ton, 1918?

Lowden, C.H. (ed.) The World must choose God and religion or Communism, Slavic Missionary Soc., Auckland, 19—.


The socialist sixth of the world, (slightly abridged ed.), Sydney, 1943.


Sewell, W.A. The Soviet Union & International order, Studies on peace aims, NZ Inst. of International Affairs, no. 9.

Souter, B.E. The Soviet Union and Finland, NZ Left Book Club Assn, 1940.

Tolstoy, A. et al. We carry on: tales of the war, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1942.

Wellington Marxist-Leninist Organisation. Superpower rivalry: source of a new world war, Wellington, 1977. (The Hocken holds further publications by this organisation, but they do not relate directly to the USSR)

See also the Voice of Women, Dunedin branch records 1963–1968, which include correspondence relating to Anglo-Soviet Relations; reference: MS-1023.

The papers of Ron Malcolm include material pertaining to communism and socialism, & pamphlets relating to the USSR; reference: AG-775.

The papers of Brian MacDonnell include a photograph album entitled ‘Freedom for All Mankind’, from the World Anti-Communist League; reference: 99-121

ESPIONAGE

An intriguing feature of NZ-Russian relationships were the espionage-related activities of Soviet diplomatic staff in NZ or of New Zealanders accused of spying for the Soviet Union. General histories of the NZ Security Intelligence Service and NZ’s involvement in the international ‘Echelon’ spying network include:


One New Zealander accused of spying for the Soviets while working as an official for the Australian Department of External Affairs in the 1940s was the Oamaru-born Rhodes Scholar Ian Milner. Various aspects of the Milner case are examined in:


Another New Zealander, D.P. (‘Paddy’) Costello, gifted linguist, diplomat and scholar, and a close personal friend of Dan Davin, was also accused of being an agent of the Soviet Union. For details of the Costello case, see:


William Sutch is the only New Zealander to have been tried (and acquitted) on a charge laid under the Official Secrets Act. See the entry for Sutch in the Dictionary of NZ Biography. Volume Five 1941–1960, Auckland UP/Dept of Internal Affairs, 2000. The 1974 Sutch case has also been covered, with varying detail and accuracy, in a number of political memoirs, such as: Sinclair, K. Walter Nash, Auckland/Oxford UP, 1976.


Hayward, M. Diary of the Kirk Years, Cape Catley, 1981.


ART AND LITERATURE

Anon. Contemporary Soviet art: an exhibition of contemporary paintings, sculpture drawings and graphic art arranged by the Legation of the USSR. for exhibition in NZ, Government Printer, Wellington, 1957. [Held in Leith St Bliss, not Hocken].


Templeton, Natasha. Winter in the Summer Garden, Vintage, Auckland, 1999


[See also The NZ Slavonic Journal; Australian Slavonic & East European Studies — the journal of the Australian & NZ Slavists’ Assn and of the Australasian Assn for Study of the Socialist Countries; and Pochta — the journal of the Australian & NZ Society of Russian Philately.]

MUSIC

Arensky, Anton Stepanovich, Romansy, op. 49. Davno l pod volshebnye zvuki. [But lately in dance I embraced her]. Russian poem by Fet / [sound recording] : Baum, Arensky ; [performed by] Frances Alda, Victor, Camden, [192-?]. 1 sound disc: analog, 78 rpm, mono.; 10 in. Sung in English. For soprano, with ‘cello obbligato and piano. Frances Alda was born in NZ.

Laing, Shona, Soviet Snow, CD

WDFF song Russian Air, undated, 1 broadband [sheet music]

CULTURAL VISITS

The Hocken Library’s ephemera collection is extensive, but has yet to be fully described. Several Soviet ballet and dance troupes, musical groups and circuses have visited Dunedin, and it is likely that the brochures, pamphlets and other material associated with these visits are waiting to be discovered amongst this collection. Once fully catalogued, the ephemera collection will offer rich pickings for all cultural historians.

RUSSIAN LANGUAGE


NZ. Dept of Education. School Certificate examination prescription, Wellington. Collection of School Certification examination prescriptions. No publication date, but the History prescription has the statement ‘Effective as from the beginning of the 1966 school year’ and the Russian prescription has 1964.

IMMIGRATION

Jacks, Harry. Draft paper entitled ‘Life’. Misc - MS-0470. Dr Harry Jacks was born in Dubauti, Romania (now Chernovtsy, Ukraine) in August 1908.

Lochore, R.A. From Europe to NZ: an account of our continental European settlers, Reed & NZ Inst. of International Affairs, 1951.

O’Grady, Ron. The Old Believers; a NZ refugee programme, National Cl of Churches, Ch’ch, 1972.


SCIENCE


Vysotskii, I.V. & Kucheren, E.V. Mestorozhdeniia gorisichikh poleznnykh iskopaemykh. Tom 5 [Deposits of fossil fuels. v.5. the major gas and gas condensate deposits of the world; Non-Soviet Asia, Africa, America, Australia and NZ], Hall, Boston, 1974.

WARBIRDS OVER WANAKA


Inevitably, this introduction to the Hocken Library’s Russian-related holdings cannot cover all the ground. For one thing, the Library’s biggest single source of Russian material is its magnificent newspaper collection. The Otago Daily Times Index, now computerised for the period c.1950 up towards the 1990s, provides ready access to major issues in NZ-Russian relations. Although the flow of news was somewhat slower in the 19th century, New Zealand’s close interest in Russia at that time ensured solid coverage of Russian doings in the cable news and mailed commentaries.

These issues included the New Zealand Government’s protests to Russia over its anti-Jewish pogroms, of particular interest to those in Jewish communities here with family links to Russia. Similar genealogical material applies to others who emigrated to NZ in the gold-rush and pioneering days (the von Tunzelmanns, for instance); not to mention the cultural, sporting, trade and other material to be identified in innumerable general books and periodicals.

Illustrations from Low’s Russian Sketchbook, Drawings by David Low, Text by Kingsley Martin, Victor Gollancz, London. 1932.