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Apollon Davidson

RUSSIAN AND BRITISH HISTORIANS ON THE WAY TO MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

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*Apollon Davidson*¹

RUSSIAN AND BRITISH HISTORIANS ON THE WAY TO MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING²

For decades of the Cold War and for centuries before it the interests of both Russian and British academics that studied the history of each other's countries seemed to be centred mainly on differences and conflicts between them, providing multiple detailed accounts of mutual hostility. History, alas, gave enough ground for this.

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¹ Apollon Davidson is Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), Professor of the National Research University - Higher School of Economics and President of the Association of British Studies in Russia, e-mail: adavidson@yandex.ru

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Not an Easy Relationship – But so Much Shared

Paul I attempted to send Russian Cossacks on a march to India together with the French, and during the reign of Nicholas I the Crimean War happened, in which Britain supported Turkey against Russia. Then the competition for spheres of influence in Central Asia almost led to another armed conflict. Londoners sang, “The Russians shall not have Constantinople”, and the Russians recited mocking verses about Palmerstone. During the Anglo-Boer War, Russian sympathies were with the Boers, and during the Russo-Japanese war, Britain supported Japan. The two largest empires of the world just could not get along.

Following a decade of reconciliation, known as *Entente Cordiale*, mutual intolerance and hostility returned with vengeance after the Bolshevik coup. Rallies in Moscow in the 1920s were held under such slogans as "Our Response to Chamberlain" and "We'll Wipe the Lord's Nose". The *Small Soviet Encyclopaedia* called Churchill a fascist. And even during the Second World War, when our countries were allies, Stalin was suspicious of and prejudiced against Britain. Needless to speak about the relations during the Cold War: they obviously reached a very low point. Viktor Popov, a well-known diplomat who served as ambassador to the UK from 1980 to 1986, said of Soviet relations with Britain during this era: “the barometer of the Soviet-British relations points to bad weather”³.

Even then some Russian academics propagated the need for a balanced approach to the relations between the two countries. In his book on the image of Britain in Russia, historian Nikolai Yerofeev (1907-1996) wrote:

The accuracy, objectivity, and authenticity of such [historians'] views are particularly important at the international level, in relations between countries, since they determine the effectiveness of state policy and the preservation of peace. The belief that a nation and its government are friendly and sympathetic to another nation, that they value its friendship, culture, and its goods, greatly fosters international relations, contributes to the exchange of material and cultural values, and makes the tasks of foreign policy easier. On the other hand, fear that a nation has hostile feelings to another nation creates an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion.

³ Popov V.I. From the book Margaret Tetcher: chelovek i politik [Margaret Thatcher: A Person and a Politician // A Bright Life Worth Living. Dedicated to the memory of a wonderful diplomat, scholar and man, V.I. Popov. – Moscow: Nauchnaya kniga, 2008. P. 115.

In such an atmosphere, a trivial case may become a source of problems and the smallest incident that could easily be settled under conditions of mutual trust, may lead to bitter disputes⁴.

But Mikhail Alekseev (1896-1981), a philologist, thought that a full, detailed, and well- documented history of relations between Russia and Britain in the sphere of culture and literature, as well as of their centuries' long interaction, cannot yet be written. Such a task still requires many more sketches and preliminary research before we are able to recover all most important stages in the development of ties, to name the most important participants of the Anglo-Russian rapprochement in the past, to present their full profile, and to make the necessary socio-historical analysis of the causes that have led to mutual interest of literary figures of these two countries...⁵

Russia and Britain were allies in the most important wars of the 19th and 20th centuries: the Napoleonic Wars, the First and the Second World Wars. Despite all contradictions and hostility, the two countries shared many historical tragedies and triumphs, and there were many social, political, and cultural episodes that drew the two nations closer. Britain always had some prominent admirers among the Russian intellectual elite. A trend of rapprochement, mutual understanding and even mutual allure goes far back in time, to Princess Dashkova, the first head of the Russian Academy of Sciences under Catherine the Great, and Karamzin, Russia's first professional historian. They had many followers.

Writer Maxim Gorky wrote about London: "In its name I hear a gentle jingle of history's bells, a pensive cry from the depths of the centuries, a kind advice of old wisdom: you need to know more of each other, people..."⁶. Another Russian writer, Korney Chukovsky, wrote:

We, Russian intellectuals, have long been in alliance with the British – long before any formal treaties: English literature, poetry, painting, not to mention the genius of British civil society and civic spirit, have allured to us since our youth... But the wider public, the men in the streets, don't

⁴ *Erofeyev N.A.* Tumannyi Albion. Angliya i anglichane glazami russkix [Foggy Albion. England and the English by Russian eyes]. 1825-1853. – Moscow: Nauka Publishers, 1982. P. 3-4.

⁵ Russian-English literary connections (18 century-first half of the 19 century) // *Literaturnoye Nasledstvo [Literary Heritage]*. V. 91. – Moscow: Nauka Publishers, 1982. – P. 13.

⁶ *Gorky M.* London // *Ya bereg pokidal tumannyi Albiona [I Left the Coast of Foggy Albion]...* Russian Writers about England. 1645-1945. – Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2001. – P. 323.

know much about England and stand aloof. They are still in the old habit of whispering to each other about the ‘treacherous Albion’⁷.

Russian philosopher, Georgiy Fedotov, noted: “The British saved the freedom of France and Europe, and did it twice, by defending their island from Napoleon and by making it the only oasis of freedom in Europe both in 1812, and in 1940”⁸.

To many Russians who are tremendously proud of their victory in the Second World War, this praise may seem overblown. Many remember that from May 1940, when France fell, until June 22, 1941, Britain, indeed, alone fought against Hitler, who had by then devoured all of Europe up to the Soviet border. And back in 1812, prior to Napoleon’s invasion of Russia, England too was left to fight alone against the rest of Europe conquered by Napoleon, who also had a treaty with Alexander I of Russia. Many more Russians remember British convoys to Russia during the Second World War and pay tribute to those Britons who lost their lives in the deadly task of delivering supplies and ammunition to the Soviet port of Murmansk.

Yet, despite admiration and tributes, it was only after the end of the Cold War that balanced research became possible, and more positive mutual images of these two countries began to emerge. The situation with British studies in Russia today is incomparable with what it was two decades ago. This year, for example, Russia and Britain declared 2014 a year of British culture in Russia and of Russian culture in Britain. Just one event which came from this development, an academic conference, “The British World: an experience of political, social and cultural development” (St. Petersburg, 20–21 March) attracted 107 Russian participants who presented their papers. No fewer papers were presented at the international congress, “Russia and Britain: five centuries of cultural ties” (St. Petersburg, 6-8 June). More conferences are to take place both in Russia and in England later this year. There will be many cultural events, too. Russia, for example, widely celebrates the Shakespeare Jubilee.

But there is still a lot of mutual misunderstanding and distrust in the relations between Russia and Britain. Moreover, in recent years new divisions emerged. Here is thought from Fedotov: “Russia is now at loggerheads with Europe... This quarrel dates back to 1917 and is powered by Russia’s bitter humiliation. Russian national feeling was deeply hurt by the defeat, division and fall. Unwilling to take

⁷ *Chukovskiy K. Zagovorili molchavshiye (Anglichane i vojna) [Spoke the Silent (The British and the War)]. Fourth Edition. – Petrograd: A.F. Marx Publishers, 1918. – P. 3.*

⁸ *Fedotov G.P. Sudba i grekhi Rossii [Fate and Sins of Russia]. – V. 2. – St. Petersburg: Sofia Publishers, 1992. – P. 271.*

responsibility and having no courage to repent, it started looking for the culprit in the West”⁹.

Someone in the West might ask, Fedotov wrote, “Is Russia a part of Europe?” Russian nationalists, he thought, would reply: “Russia does not need Europe either economically or culturally”¹⁰. This was written decades ago, but history repeats itself. It looks like the situation is now back to where Fedotov was, writing in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s.

However, in times of trouble when relations deteriorate, it is important to find incidents in the past which can help nations to understand each other better and to bring them closer together rather than to rub salt into the wounds and play on old and new problems.

Russian academics have already contributed a lot to this noble course.

Soon after the end of the Cold War in 1992, the Russian Academy of Sciences created the Association of British Studies in the Institute of General History. Almost every year since then, the Association has held well attended conferences together with different universities and published the proceedings. The latest conferences were held in Moscow in November 2013 and in St. Petersburg in March 2014. Each attracted about 90 participants from many Russian universities. The latest issue of the conference proceedings appeared in 2013 under the title, *History of Britain: Recent Research*.

Since 2003, the Association of British Studies, in partnership with British historians who specialise in Russia, has held a number of Russian–British conferences, alternately in Moscow and London. Conference papers and articles were published under the title *Russia and Britain*. One of the latest ones was published under the title, *Russia and Britain: on the way to mutual understanding*¹¹. Among its 35 contributors were some of Britain’s distinguished academics, A. Cross, D. Bates, P. Dukes, L. Hughes, and J. Nelson.

The association mostly deals with issues of British history and culture and of the history of its relations with Russia. The Centre of British Studies at the Institute of Europe under the Russian Academy of Sciences, on the other hand, centres its attention on the analysis of modernity. It regularly holds round-tables dedicated to the

⁹ Ibid. – C. 230.

¹⁰ Ibid. – C. 228.

¹¹ *Russia and Britain: on the way to mutual understanding* / A. Davidson, ed. – Moscow: Nauka, 2010, 511 p.

problems of modern-day Britain and its global role. In 2014, it published a large collective monograph, *The British Dilemma. The Search for Ways of Development*, edited by Al. A. Gromyko.

Not Just in the Capitals

For a long time the main flow of knowledge in Russia came from its capitals, Moscow and St. Petersburg. However, recently a new trend has emerged. Two major international conferences on British history were held in Yaroslavl. They gave academics from numerous Russian research centres the opportunity to get to know each other and to exchange information and views. Andrei Sokolov organized the conferences.

The Ural Federal University (Yekaterinburg) publishes a series called *Albionica*¹², and the Southern Federal University (Rostov-on-Don) gather a collection of articles in *British Studies*¹³.

In 2006, a book on British Prime Ministers of the 19th century was published in Kurgan.¹⁴ In 2005, a study on Britain's constitutional development appeared in Arzamas¹⁵, and a study on the English origins of European liberalism, in Nizhniy Novgorod.¹⁶ 2004 saw the publication of a book on British 20th century historiography in Kazan¹⁷, and in 2010 a collection of articles *The British World of Russian Novistics*¹⁸ was published there. In 2003, a book on Liberal Democrats in the UK appeared in Magadan¹⁹. The list could go on.

¹²Imagines Mundi. Almanac of World History Studies, 16-20 centuries. No. 6. Albionica Series. Issue 3. – Yekaterinburg: Ural University Press, 2008; Vol. 4. – Moscow, 2013.

¹³ Studies in the History of England (12-20 Centuries). Actual Problems of World History (Volume 3). – Rostov-on-Don: Rostov State Pedagogical University, 2004; British Studies. Collection of scientific articles. Issue 1. – Rostov-on-Don: Logos Publishers, 2006; Issue 3, 2010.

¹⁴ *Menshikov I.S.* Britanskiye premier-ministry XIX veka [British Prime Ministers of the 19th Century]. – Kurgan: Kurgan University Press, 2006.

¹⁵ *Mineyeva T.G.* Konstitutsionnoye razvitiye Anglii XIV-XV vv. [Constitutional Development in England in the 14th-15th centuries]. – Arzamas: Arzamas State Pedagogical Institute, 2005.

¹⁶ *Romanovskaya V.B., Mineyeva T.G.* Pravo i politika v pozdnesrednekovoy Anglii: istoki yevropeyskogo liberalizma [Law and Politics in Later-Medieval England: The Origins of European Liberalism]. – Nizhny Novgorod, Nizhny Novgorod State University, 2005.

¹⁷ *Sharifzhanov I.I.* Angliyskaya istoriografya v XX veke [English Historiography in the 20th Century. Main Theoretical and Methodological Trends, Schools and Directions]. – Kazan: Kazan State University, 2004.

¹⁸ *Britanskaya oikumena russkoy novistiki* [The British World of Russian Novistics]. – Kazan: Kazan State University, 2010.

¹⁹ *Frolov V.P.* Liberalnye demokraty Velikobritanii na parlamentskix vyborax [UK Liberal Democrats in Parliamentary Elections: Programs, Strategies, Electorate (Mid-1970s through early 21st century)]. – Magadan: SMU, 2003.

A series, *Russian Presence in Britain*, has been launched. A volume of Russian and British papers was published in Moscow with the support of the Russian Embassy in Britain and the State Commission on the Affairs of Compatriots Abroad²⁰.

Another series, an English language *RuBrica. Russo-British Department* edited by V. Bychenkov, has been published in Kaluga since 1996. It features articles by both Russian and British authors.

What Russians Read about Britain

A large proportion of recently published history books, both original and translated, are dedicated to the British Middle Ages and early modern history²¹. This is consistent with the tradition of British studies in Russia as represented by M. Kovalevsky, P. Vinogradov, D. Petrushevsky, A. Savin, C. Arkhangelsly, E. Kosminsky, J. Levitsky, V. Semenov, G. Tchartishvily, V. Shtokmar, V. Lavrovsky, M. Barg, and E. Gutnova. Today, L. Repina, I. Basovskaya, O. Dmitrieva, M. Vinokurova and several other scholars are continuing this tradition.

Works on the history of the 19th and 20th centuries manifest a clear departure from the decades-long domination of political bias and propaganda. Serious academic works, both original and translated, have been published on the history of British foreign policy²², political parties and political movements, from the labour movement²³ to Nazism²⁴.

²⁰ *Russkoye prisutstviye v Britanii* [Russian Presence in Britain]. – Moscow, 2009.

²¹ *Azimov A. Istoriya Anglii: Ot lednikovogo perioda do Velikoy khartii volnostey* [The History of England: From the Ice Age to the Magna Carta]. – Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2005; *Basovskaya N.I. Stoletnyaya voyna: leopard protiv lilii* [The Hundred Years' War: Leopard against the Lily]. – Moscow: Olymp; AST, 2002; *Barlow, F. William I and the Norman Conquest*. – St. Petersburg: Eurasia, 2007; *Vinokurova M. Mir angliyskogo manora* [The World of English Manor (Based on Land Inventories of Lancashire and Wiltshire in the Second Half of the 16th-early 17th Century)]. – Moscow: Nauka, 2004; *Glebov A.V. Angliya v ranneye srednevekove* [England in the Early Middle Ages] (2-nd Ed.). – St. Petersburg: Eurasia, 2007; *Gunina L.A. Sotsiodinamika kultury Anglii XVII veka* [Social Dynamics of the English Culture in the 17th-Century]. – Moscow: Sputnik Publishers, 2005; *Dmitrieva O.V. Yelizaveta Tyudor* [Elizabeth Tudor]. – Moscow: Molodaya Gvardiya, 2004; *Quennell C. H. B., Quennell M. Everyday Life in Anglo-Saxon, Viking, and Norman Times: 1066-1499*. – Smolensk: Rusich, 2006; *Lee B. A. Alfred the Great: The Truth Teller, Maker of England, 848-899*. – St. Petersburg: Eurasia, 2006; *Markova S.P. Angliya epokhi Srednevekoviya i rannego Novogo vremeni* [England in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: a Textbook for University Students]. – Moscow: Universitet Publishing House, 2007; *Milutin Y. E. Filosofiya zdravogo smysla v kontekste kultury angliyskogo Prosvesheniya* [Philosophy of the Common Sense in the Context of English Enlightenment]. – St. Petersburg, 2002; *Mineyeva T.G. Evolutsia formy pravleniya v Anglii XIV-XV vv.* [Evolution of the Form of Government in the 14th-15th Century England]. – Moscow: Yurist Publishers, 2007; *Fedorov S.E. Rannestyuartovskaya aristokratiya* [Aristocracy in Early Stuart Period]. – St. Petersburg: Aletheia, 2005; *Finkelshtein B.B. Garold Khrabryi: istoricheskiy roman* [Harold the Brave: A Historical Novel]. – Moscow: AST, 2005; *Erlikhson I.M. Angliyskaya obshestvennaya mysl vtoroy poloviny XVII veka* [English Social Thought in the late 17th century]. – Moscow: Nauchnaya kniga, 2007; *Erickson C. Bloody Mary*. Moscow: AST, 2008; *Erikson C. The First Elizabeth*. – Moscow: AST, 2001, 2003, 2005.

²² *Akhmedova L.Sh. Politika Anglii v zone Persidskogo zaliva v posledney chetverti XIX-nachale XX v.* [British Politics in the Persian Gulf in the Last Third of the 19th-early 20th Century] (1870-1914). – St. Petersburg: St. Petersburg University Press, 2006.

²³ *Susloparova E.A. Evolyutsiya Leiboristskoy partii Velikobritanii vo vtoroy polovine 20-x godov XX veka.* [Evolution of the British Labour Party in the late 1920s]. – Moscow: Moscow University Press, 2007.

Compared to two decades ago, many more books on public figures of the British Empire have appeared. A book on Admiral Nelson²⁵ by V. Trukhanovsky was soon followed by another one on the same topic by a different author. After Trukhanovsky published his book on Disraeli²⁶, V. Vinogradov released his own biography²⁷ on Disraeli. There was a book on Lord Salisbury²⁸, and another one on Cecil Rhodes²⁹. The latter was later published in English in Pretoria³⁰.

Among the translations are numerous biographies of members of British Royalty³¹, from kings of old to Princess Diana³² and even to Camilla, the second wife of the Prince of Wales³³.

“Churchilliana” has recently gained momentum, as in many other countries. It includes Churchill's works, collections of his speeches from different years³⁴, his memoirs of colonial wars³⁵, his book on the First World War³⁶ and his multivolume publication on the Second World War (its abridged Russian translation went through several editions). A collection of Churchill's witticisms and quotations from his speeches was also published³⁷. There are innumerable books about Churchill³⁸.

Several popular books and history textbooks on the United Kingdom and on different periods of its past have been published in Russian³⁹. In 2008, *The Oxford*

²⁴ Prokopov A.Y. *Fashisty Britanii. Soyuz Osvalda Mosli: ideologi i politika* [British Fascists. The Union of Oswald Mosley: Ideology and Politics (1932-1940)]. – St. Petersburg: Aletheia, 2001.

²⁵ Hibbert C. *Nelson: A Personal History*. – Moscow: AST, 2006.

²⁶ Trukhanovskiy V.G. *Bendzhamin Dizraeli ili istoriya odnoy maloveroyatnoy karyery* [Benjamin Disraeli or the Story of an Unlikely Career]. – Moscow: Nauka, 1993.

²⁷ Vinogradov V.N. *Bendzhamin Dizraeli i feya na trone* [Benjamin Disraeli and a Fairy on the Throne]. – Moscow: Nauka, 2004.

²⁸ Naumenkov O.A. *Robert Solsberi i ego vremena: Viktorianskaya Angliya v litsax* [Robert Salisbury and his Time: Faces of Victorian England]. – St. Petersburg: Neva Publishers, 2004.

²⁹ Davidson A. *Sesil Rods – stroitel imperii* [Cecil Rhodes: A Man who Built an Empire]. – Moscow: Olimp; Smolensk: Rusich, 1998.

³⁰ Davidson A. *Cecil Rhodes and his time*. – Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2003.

³¹ Ludwig E. *The Fate of King Edward*. – Moscow: BSG-Press, 2007; Rose K. *King George V*. – Moscow: AST, 2005.

³² Caradec'h J.-M. *Lady Diana: L'enquete criminelle*. – Moscow: Yunipress, 2007.

³³ Tyrrel R. *Camilla: An Intimate Portrait* / Translated by Vlasova M.N., Sinelnikova M.V. – Moscow: AST, St. Petersburg: Astrel, 2006.

³⁴ Churchill W.S. *Sinews of Peace*. – Moscow: Eksmo, 2008.

³⁵ Churchill W.S. *Frontiers and Wars*. – Moscow: Eksmo, 2004.

³⁶ Churchill W.S. *The World Crisis. Autobiography. Speeches*. – Moscow: Eksmo, 2003.

³⁷ Churchill W.S. *Quotes, Witticisms and Aphorisms*. – Dnepropetrovsk: Balance Business Books, 2005. Same: Dnepropetrovsk: Libri, 2008

³⁸ Bedarida F. *Churchill*. – Moscow: Molodaya Gvardiya, 2003; Rose N. *Churchill: An Unruly Life*. – Moscow: AST, 2003; Robbins K. *Churchill*. – Rostov-on-Don: Phoenix, 1997; Trukhanovskiy V.G. *Winston Churchill*. 5 ed. – Moscow: RIPOL KLASSIK, 2003; Fais H. *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin: The War They Waged and the Peace They Sought*. – Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2003; Utkin A.I. *Cherchill. Pobediel dvux voyn* [Churchill. The Man who Won Two Wars]. – Smolensk: Rusich, 1999; Rzheshhevskiy O.A. *Stalin i Cherchill - vstrechi, besedy, diskussii: Dokumenty, kommentarii* [Stalin and Churchill: Meetings, Conversations, Discussions. Documents, Comments] 1941-1945. – Moscow: Nauka, 2004.

³⁹ *England: the Autobiography by John Lewis-Stempel*; Translated into Russian by M. Bashkatov, I. Letberg; Edited by K.M. Korolev. – St. Petersburg: Eksmo, Midgard, 2008; Afanasyev G.E. *Istoriya Irlandii* [The History of Ireland]. 3rd ed. – Moscow: LKI, 2007; Ayzenshtat M.P. *Britaniya novogo vremeni. Politicheskaya istoriya*

History of Britain was translated into Russian. Moscow historians, M. Ayzenshtat, E. Sergeev and G. Ostapenko, edited the Russian edition⁴⁰.

Russian diplomats who had worked in England came up with multiple memoirs, diaries and documents. One of the most significant among these was the publication of documents on the work of Ivan Mayski⁴¹. Books by V. Popov are also interesting. His last book, published posthumously in 2008, included a new manuscript, several chapters from his previously published books and memoirs⁴². His memories of Trukhanovsky were published in one of the issues of *Russia and Britain*⁴³.

The popularity of British culture in Russia is also on the rise. More books about Shakespeare have been published than ever before⁴⁴. Nearly every British author, from Swift to Tolkien, has merited either a Russian biography, or a translation of an English one⁴⁵.

Russian translations of books by philosopher, Isaiah Berlin⁴⁶, historian, Arnold Toynbee⁴⁷, politician, Oonagh McDonald⁴⁸ and other British scholars, public figures and politicians help Russians understand Britain and the British better.

[Britain in Modern Age. A Political History]. Study Guide. – Moscow: KDU, 2007; Britanskaya imperiya: sovremennye podkhody i otsenki [British Empire: Modern Approaches and Views] / Edited by M.P. Ayzenshtat. – Moscow: IWH RAS, 2007; *Green J.R.* History of the English People / Translated into Russian. 2nd ed. – Moscow: Kuchkovo pole; Hyperborea, 2007; *Daniell C.* A Traveller's History of England / Translated into Russian. – Moscow: Eksmo; St. Petersburg: Midgard, 2007; *Eagles R, Dickson E.* The Rough Guides Chronicle: England / Translated into Russian by Gorevtsov G.V. – Moscow: AST, Astrel, 2008; *Ostapenko, G.S.* Obshestvenno-politicheskaya zhizn Velikobritanii vo vtoroy polovine XX veka [Socio-Political Life of Great Britain in the Second Half of the 20th Century]. Study Guide. – Moscow: IWH RAS, Saratov State University, 2002. *Ostapenko G.S.* Britanskaya monarkhiya ot korolevy Viktorii do Yelizavety II: kontseptsii upravleniya i lichnosti suverena [British Monarchy from Queen Victoria to Elizabeth II: Concept and Identity of the Sovereign]. – Moscow: Nauka, 2006; *Filippova M.M.* Angliyskiy natsionalnyi kharakter [English National Character]. Study Guide. – Moscow: AST Astrel, 2007.

⁴⁰ History of Britain / Compiled by Morgan K.O. – Moscow: Ves mir, 2008.

⁴¹ Prezhde vsego: Ivan Mikhaylovich Mayskiy. Dnevnik Diplomata. [First of All: Ivan Mayskiy. A Diary of a Diplomat]. – London, 1934-1943. In two volumes. – Moscow: Nauka, 2006.

⁴² A Bright Life Worth Living. Dedicated to the Memory of a Wonderful Diplomat, Scholar and Man. – Moscow: Nauchnaya kniga, 2008.

⁴³ *Popov V.I.* Kakim ya yego znayu // V mire angliyskoy istorii [How I Know Him // In the world of English History]. "Russia and Britain". Issue 3. – Moscow: Nauka, 2002.

⁴⁴ *Azimov A.* Putevoditel po Shekspiru. Angliyskiye pyesy. [A Guide to Shakespeare: English Plays]. – Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2007; *Gililov I.M.* Igra ob Uilyame Shekspire, ili Tayna Velikogo Feniksa [A Miracle of William Shakespeare, or The Mystery of the Great Phoenix]. – Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 2007; *James B., Rubinstein W.D.* The Truth Will Out: Unmasking the Real Shakespeare. – Moscow: Ves mir, 2008; *Litvinova M.* Opravdaniye Shekspira [Justification of Shakespeare]. – Moscow: Vagrius, 2008; *Makurenkova S.* Razgovor o Shekspire [A Word on Shakespeare]. – Moscow: Reka vremen, 2007.

⁴⁵ *Caldecott S.* Secret Fire: The Spiritual Vision of J.R.R. Tolkien. – Moscow: St. Andrew Biblical Theological Institute, 2008; *Kruzhkov G.M.* Yeats W.B. Issledovaniya i perevody [Studies and Translations]. – Moscow: RSUH Publishing Center, 2008; *Levidov M.* Jonathan Swift. – M: Vagrius, 2008; *Tolkien J.R.R.* The Monsters and the Critics. – Moscow: AST, 2007.

⁴⁶ *Berlin I.* Filosofiya svobody. Evropa [The Philosophy of Liberty. Europe] / Preface by A. Etkind. – Moscow: NLO, 2001.

⁴⁷ *Toynbee, A.J.* Experiences. Acquaintances / Russian translation. – Moscow: Iris Press, 2003.

⁴⁸ *McDonald O.* Parliament at Work. – Moscow: Molodaya gvardiya, 2008.

Among the latest Russian publications on Britain is a book by a renowned writer, Georgi Gachev (1929-2007), *England. An Intellectual Journey*⁴⁹. Published shortly before the author's death, it is written in the form of a diary and is full of interesting thoughts and quotations from great Englishmen, as well as opinions of the British from other nationalities. The book is not an easy read, as it is closely connected to Gachev's huge seventeen-volume work, *National Images of the World*. But the effort is well worth it.

The stream of publications has not slowed. In 2013, an academic study, *The British in Russia in the 18th Century* appeared⁵⁰, and in 2012, a textbook, *A Contemporary History of Great Britain*⁵¹. 2014 saw the publication of an enormously detailed account of British studies in Imperial Russia. The book is so thorough that it deserves to become a handbook for any historian specialising in British history⁵².

The publications mentioned here constitute only a small proportion of what was published in Russia about Britain in the recent years. But this list gives an idea of how interest in British Studies has increased in Russia after the end of the Cold War.

How they View It

Of course, Russia's bookstores sell different books on Britain. Some of the latest ones accuse Churchill of unleashing the Second World War⁵³ and assert that Britain made Hitler attack the USSR⁵⁴ and that generally it always betrayed Russia⁵⁵. Such books have enormous print-rolls of 3,500-4.000 copies. But their authors have not been noticed at academic conferences.

Academic studies of Britain in Russia are balanced and objective. Their authors strive to identify and strengthen the grounds for mutual understanding between the two nations. They maintain ties with British specialists in Russia and edit and publish translations of the works of their British colleagues in Russian.

⁴⁹ Gachev G. *Miry Evropy. Vzgl'yad iz Rossii. Angliya. Intellectualnoye puteshestviye*. [The Worlds of Europe. A View from Russia. England. An Intellectual Journey]. – Moscow: Voskresenye, 2007.

⁵⁰ Labutina T.P. *Britantsy v Rossii v XVIII veke* [The British in Russia in the 18th century]. – Moscow: Aletheia, 2013.

⁵¹ Ostapenko G.S., Prokov A.Y. *Noveyshaya istoriya Velikobritanii. XX – nachalo XXI veka* [Contemporary History of the UK. 20th – beginning of the 21 century]. – Moscow: Infra-M, 2012.

⁵² Chikalova I.R. *Anglovedeniye v imperatorskoy Rossii v imenax i publikatsiyax*. [British Studies in Imperial Russia in Names and Documents]. 1801-1917. – St. Petersburg: Aletheia, 2014.

⁵³ Usovsky A. *Kak Cherchil razvqzal vtoruiu mirovuiu voinu* [How Churchill started the Second World War]. – Moscow: Yauza Press, 2012; Usovsky A. *Voiennyye prestupniki Chechil i Ruzvelt* [War Criminals Churchill and Roosevelt]. – Moscow: Yauza Press, 2012

⁵⁴ Starikov N. *Kto zastavil Gitlera napast na Stalina* [Who Made Hitler Attack Stalin]. – St. Petersburg: Piter, 2014. .

⁵⁵ Starikov N. *Kak predaivali Rossiiu* [How Russia Was Betrayed]. – St. Petersburg: Piter, 2012.

But even among non-academic writers interested in Britain, the prevailing attitude to this country, its people and its culture is deep sympathy.

Ksenia Atarova published a book *England, my England*⁵⁶. The title reflects its contents: the book reflects the author's infatuation with this country.

A. Zyryanov from Yekaterinburg sent me a big book (624 pages, large format): *United Kingdom: A View from Russia*. This beautifully illustrated volume provides detailed background information on Britain: its nature, administrative division, history, economy, education, arts and culture, science, sports, political parties, the Queen and the Royal family, everyday life, and the relations between the UK and Russia. The author created this encyclopaedia alone. Amazingly, he does not even specialise in Britain. An economist by profession, he simply fell in love with Britain, and the book is the result of his hobby. In the preface, he wrote: "The author, who has the kindest and warmest feelings for Britain and its people, and acquired many good friends there over 20 years of contacts, would like to hope that this modest work will help ordinary Russians understand the English better, the Irish, the Scots and the Welsh, and to contribute to the strengthening of friendship between our nations"⁵⁷.

Authors of such books continue the tradition that Tchukovsky started in literature, and Yerofeyev and Alekseyev, in academic studies, i.e. the tradition of contributing to better understanding between our nations. Reading Atarova's and Zyryanov's books, the thought occurs that it was just a few decades ago that confessing a sympathy with Britain was simply dangerous. Together with them I hope that we shall not live in such times again.

I remember the campaign against "kowtowing to the West" in the late Stalin era. And even after Stalin's death, anti-Western and anti-British sentiment remained strong in Russia's political and social life. But for now we can openly express such sympathy, as well as the desire to understand the other and to abandon stereotypes.

The will to know more about each other is evident today both in Russia and in Britain. It is the will to remove mountains of prejudice, which had accumulated over generations. This is not an easy task – prejudices remain. Yet, the amount of information, as opposed to propaganda, is increasing.

⁵⁶ Atarova K. *Angliya, moya Angliya* [England, my England]. – Moscow: Raduga, 2008.

⁵⁷ Zyryanov A.V. *Velikobritaniya: vzglyad iz Rossii* [Great Britain: A View from Russia]. – Yekaterinburg: Uralskiy Rabochiy, 2005. – P. 9.

Translations of British Authors into Russian

An unprecedented number of translations of English literature of all genres, academic, journalistic, and fiction, has appeared in Russia in recent years. Of course, this can be attributed to the efforts of Russian academics, publishers and magazine editors, but the sheer number is testimony to the astonishing increase in Russians' interest in Britain. These translations cover Britain's history, culture, traditions, and modern-day problems – literally, every aspect of its modern day life and its historical legacy.

Numerous translations of modern British fiction and English classics have appeared in the last two decades. To mention just one example, in 2007 E. Vitkovskiy, a renowned Russian poet and translator, published a three-volume work, *Seven Centuries of English Poetry*⁵⁸.

There are many books aimed at a wider audience. Collections of English aphorisms are particularly popular with the Russian public. A compilation under the title, *English Aphorisms*, was published in the “Golden Fund of World Classics” series.⁵⁹ Tsentrpoligraf Publishers published another two volumes and compilation, *Aphorisms of Britain*⁶⁰. A huge (1127 pages) anthology of essays, diaries, letters, memoirs and aphorisms of English writers was published in 2008. It presented the writings of Francis Bacon, Samuel Pepys, Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, Lord Chesterfield, Samuel Johnson, John Priestley, Aldous Huxley, Evelyn Waugh, George Orwell, Wystan Auden, Lawrence Durrell, and many others⁶¹. Another impressive publication was an anthology of English humour⁶².

British Russian Studies in Russia

In the USSR, the work of contemporary British historians was treated with suspicion and distrust. They were seen, first of all, as anti-Soviet. Such perceptions do not change overnight, but the situation is very different now. Public interest in the

⁵⁸ Sem vekov angliyskoy poezii. Angliya. Shotlandiya. Irlandiya. Uels. [Seven Centuries of English Poetry. England. Scotland. Ireland. Wales]. In three volumes / Comp. by E. Vitkovsky. – Moscow: Vodoley Publishers, 2007.

⁵⁹ Angliyskiy aforizm [English Aphorisms]: Collection / Compiled and translated by A. Livergant. – Moscow: AST, 2003.

⁶⁰ Aforizmy Britanii [Aphorisms of Britain]: Collection of aphorisms. In 2 v. / Comp. by S. Barsov. – Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2006.

⁶¹ Fakt ili vymysel? [Fact or Fiction?] Anthology: Essays, Diaries, Letters, Memoirs, Aphorisms of English Writers / Compiled by A. Livergant, Russian translation. – Moscow: BSG PRESS, 2008.

⁶² V Anglii vsyo naoborot [In England, Everything is Topsy-Turvy]: An Anthology of English Humour / Compiled by A. Livergant. – Moscow: BSG PRESS, 2006.

work of British historians who study Russia is testimony to this. Those who devoted their writing to Russian history of the 18th century, the era of Peter the Great and Catherine II, have received a particularly wide recognition.

The history of relations between Russia and Britain in that era is the focus of Antony Cross's decades-long research. No aspect of this topic escaped his attention, e.g. Anglo-Russian contacts in painting and engraving art, and the English parks in Russian estates (article, "Russian Gardens, British Gardeners"⁶³).

Cross started his research back in the 1950s and 1960s with the study of such Russian writers as Cantemir, Sumarokov, Fonvizin, Radishchev, Turgenev, Chekhov and Tolstoy. He then turned to a scrupulous study of the huge legacy of the Russian 18th and 19th century historian, Nikolay Karamzin. Cross's first article on this topic, "Karamzin and England", was published in 1964. He concluded that: "Karamzin's worldview evolved considerably, from militant cosmopolitanism during his travels in Europe to conservative patriotism of the early 19th century, but he always believed in the common cultural heritage of Russia and Europe"⁶⁴.

Cross's books on Russians in Britain in the 18th century, on Catherine II and on the Russian themes in British literature⁶⁵, attracted a lot of attention in Russia. From 1967 to 1972, Cross published twelve volumes of travel notes by English travellers in Russia, eight of which cover the 17th and 18th centuries. While working on this series, he published his own book, *Russia Under Western Eyes*⁶⁶.

Russian readers also know Cross from Russian translations of his books, *By the Banks of the Thames: Russians in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (St. Petersburg, 1996) and *By the Banks of the Neva: Chapters from the Lives and Careers of the British in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (St. Petersburg, 2005).

In 2010, Cross was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the Institute of the Pushkin House under the Russian Academy of Sciences. He presented many papers in the Pushkin House and the Moscow House of Russian's Abroad (Russian émigré culture). In 2013, he spoke on the historical transformation of Russia's image in Britain at the

⁶³ Printed in the collection: S beregov Temzy – na berega Nevy. Shedevry iz sobraniya britanskogo iskusstva v Ermitazhe [From the Banks of the Thames to the Banks of the Neva. Masterpieces of British Art in the Hermitage Collection]. – St. Petersburg, 1997.

⁶⁴ Cross A. Confessions of an 18th Century Admirer // The Story Continues. Study of the Eighteenth Century at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century. – Moscow-St.Petersburg: Universitetskaya Kniga; Ferney-Voltaire: **IntI** Center for 18th Century Studies, 2001. – P. 362.

⁶⁵ Cross A.G. The Russian Theme in English Literature from the Sixteenth Century to 1980: An Introductory Survey and a Bibliography. – Oxford: Willem A. Meeuws, 1985.

⁶⁶ *Russia under Western Eyes, 1517-1825* / Ed. by Anthony Cross. – London: Elek Books, 1971.

round table “Russia and the Russian World: the experience and prospects of people’s diplomacy” in St. Petersburg. In 2014, he presented a paper at the international congress, “Russia – Great Britain: five centuries of cultural ties”, again in St. Petersburg.

During his numerous trips to Russia, Cross worked in archives and libraries and met such renowned Russian academics as Mikhail Alekseev, Aleksander Sokolov, Pavel Berkov, Nikolay Erofeev. He became close friends with Yuri Levin and met one of Russia’s greatest poets, Anna Akhmatova.

In 1968, Cross helped create the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia in Britain. Among its members were Paul Dukes, Lindsey Hughes and some other historians who later gained considerable recognition. This group still exists and publishes its own newsletter.

Antony Cross is not the only British historian whose work is highly regarded by Russian colleagues and the wider reading public. Russian academics greatly appreciate Janet Harley’s contribution to the study of Russian history: her significant works on Russia in the 18th and early-19th centuries, her research of British-Russian relations during the era of Peter the Great, and her contributions to *The Cambridge History of Russia*. Almost three decades ago, Harley published two studies of documents relating to Russia in British archives⁶⁷. These publications proved enormously useful for Russian historians, who later, after the end of the Cold War, had the opportunity to work in the British archives. They retain their importance even today.

The works of Simon Dixon on the Russian Orthodox Church from 1800–1917 are important already because of the fact that no such broad studies on this topic were allowed in the USSR. Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was not easy to start from zero.

Dixon’s book, *Catherine the Great*, published in 2009 and 2010, summed up the debate about the legacy of this controversial Russian empress. Dixon has participated in many academic conferences in Russia at the National Research University Higher School of Economics, at Yekaterinburg University and at other academic institutions.

⁶⁷ Guide to documents and manuscripts in the United Kingdom relating to Russia and the Soviet Union. – London, Mansell Pub., 1987; The Study of Russian History from British Archival Sources / ed. by Janet M. Hartley. – London: Mansell, 1986.

Russian studies in Britain and Russia suffered a great loss with the death of Lindsey Hughes (1949–2007). Her books, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great* (New Haven, Conn. Yale University Press, 1998) and *Peter the Great: A Biography* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002) were a serious contribution to the study of one of the most important periods of Russian history. Her last book *The Romanovs: ruling Russia, 1613-1917* (London, New York: Hambledon Continuum, 2008), published posthumously, was the result of many years of research. It was noted with gratitude in Russia.

Dominic Lieven, one of best-known British specialists in Russian history and a member of the British Academy, contributed mostly to the history of the 19th and early-20th centuries. His research was deemed so significant in Russia that both his books and articles have been translated⁶⁸.

Lieven's works on the history of Russia's war with Napoleon drew particular attention. His book on this topic has been translated into Russian, and in 2013 he was awarded the Order of Friendship by decree of the Russian president.

A number of books on the contemporary history of Russia have been translated into Russian. Among these are two books by Sir Roderick Braithwaite, British Ambassador to Russia from 1988–1992. The first one, *Across the Moscow River: The World Turned Upside Down*⁶⁹, covers the turning point in the history of the Soviet Union and of its collapse, as seen from the British Embassy. The author quotes his notes, made in those days.

Braithwaite's second book is completely different. It is a work of a historian. The author dedicated it to "the men and women who lived and worked and stood their ground in Moscow in the autumn and winter of 1941." The book is dedicated "to the survivors who gave up so much of their time to tell me what it was like, and to their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, who live in a very different city today"⁷⁰. The book has been written with great respect to the survivors and with love for their country.

⁶⁸ The most popular among Lieven's books has been *Lieven D. Rossiiskaia imperiia i yego vrugi s XVI v. do nashikh dnei* [The Russian Empire and its Rivals from the Sixteenth Century to the Present]. – Moscow: Yevropa, 2007.

⁶⁹ *Braithwaite R. Za Moskvoi-rekoi. Perevernuvshiisia mir.* [Across the Moscow River: The World Turned Upside Down]. – Moscow: Moscow School of Political Studies, 2004.

⁷⁰ *Braithwaite R. Moskva 1941. Gorod i yego liudi na voine.* [Moscow 1941: A City and Its People at War]. – Moscow: Golden Bee Publishers, 2006. – P. VII).

Hosking and Kliuchevsky

Jeffery Hosking has been the British historian who gained the greatest recognition in Russia in terms of the number of his publications. One of his most important works was published in two volumes⁷¹. More important is the print-run: 2500 copies. Few academic publications in Russia merit such confidence on the part of their publishers. This book did.

It presented the history of Russia from its early days to the present, as well as an analysis of how this history was seen in Western Europe. In Russia, the book was published soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when Russians were particularly keen to find out more about their own past as seen from the West.

Hosking lamented the views of those Western historians who, in the late 20th century, decided that “Russia should not be taken seriously any longer and that, as either an enemy or as a political ally, it is not worth attention”⁷². He thought that “both today’s and a decade’s old attitude to Russia was an illusion and was based on the lack of knowledge of the essence of Russia, of its nature... Russia will not disappear, and will not leave the world arena – it continues to play the main formative role of the world in the 21st century”⁷³. It may be worthwhile stressing that this was said in 2003, long before the present difficulties with the West emerged. The publishers thought Hosking’s books so interesting and important that they did not argue against his assessment of Russia’s future role.

Hosking’s book about the Russians in the USSR, published in 2012, attracted no less attention. “It is difficult to write about the Russians in the Soviet Union”, he opined.

I hope that this book shows that Russian national consciousness and identity is quite vague: it contains several aspects which are not easily compatible, when one considers the problem from the ethnic, imperial, civil and cultural points of view... In the period when the destiny of post-Soviet Russia is still uncertain it is important to understand what the Soviet Union means for the Russians, what impact it had on their ethnic character

⁷¹ *Hosking J. Rossiia i Russkii* [Russia and the Russian], books 1-2. – Moscow: OOO Izdatelstvo AST/OOO Izdatelstvo Tranzitkniga, 2003. This was the continuation and development of his books published in Russia earlier: *Rossia: narod i imperiia* [Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917]. – Smolensk: Rusich, 2001 and *Istoriia Sovetskogo Soiuz. 1917-1991* [History of the USSR 1917-1991]. – Moscow: Vagrius, 1995.

⁷² *Hosking J. Rossiia i Russkii*... Book 1. – P. 5.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

and how its legacy, its image impacted the formation of the Russian Federation after 1991⁷⁴.

Hosking is deeply perceptive and convincing on his topic. “Like the British”, he writes, “they [the Russians] have lost their empire and have not yet found their role outside it. A lot more time needs to pass before the Russians will be sure about the kind of the society Russia has become”. In this connection he quotes Putin, who once said: “Those who are not sorry about the collapse of the Soviet Union do not have the heart. Those who want to revive it in its former shape do not have the head”⁷⁵.

Nearly everything that Hosking writes is published in Russia, books or articles. His latest publications are devoted to the problem of trust. He thinks that trust is very important for the understanding of our past and still more for our understanding of humanity path into the future. Among other examples, he discusses this problem on the material of the Soviet Union⁷⁶.

The Russian intelligentsia have been so attracted to Hosking’s ideas that his interviews have been published not only in the academic journals⁷⁷, but also in newspapers⁷⁸. They provoked a lot of debate.

One of the most interesting views in this debate compared Hosking’s vision of Russian history with that of Kliuchevsky. “The works of two researchers of different generations, different countries and different methodological directions”, wrote one Russian author, “contain many common ideas”. This, in his opinion, is the essence of the common concept:

The essence of Hosking’s concept is that the formation and functioning of the Russian Empire, which he dates back to the 16th century (the incorporation of the Kazan Khanate by Ivan the Terrible), negatively impacted the process of the creation of the Russian nation and the political, socio-economic and cultural life of the Russian people. The effort that went into the maintenance of the administrative–bureaucratic

⁷⁴ *Hosking J.* Praviteli i zhertvy Russkii v Sovetskom Soiuzie [Rulers and Victims: The Russians in the Soviet Union]. – Moscow: Novoie literaturnoie obozreniie. – The quotation is translated back from Russian.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* – P. 468-469. Back translation from Russian.

⁷⁶ *Hosking J.* Doveriie i nedoveriie v SSSR [Trust and Distrust in the USSR] // *Neprikosnovennyi zapas. Debaty o politike i culture.* – No. 6 (92). – Moscow, 2013; *Doveriie i nedoveriie: sotsialnaia i politicheskaia znachimost* [Trust and Distrust: social and political meaning] // *Protestant.* – Moscow, 29.03.2014; *Lozung “Rossiia dlia Russkikh” voobshche nevozmozhno voplotit v zhizn* [It Is Impossible to Implement the Slogan “Russia for Russians” / interview with A. Zakharov // *Neprikosnovennyi zapas. Debaty o politike i culture.* – No. 4 (84). – 2012. – P. 172-177.

⁷⁷ *Interviu s professorom DzhEFFri Khoskinsom* [Interview with Professor Jeffery Hosking] // *Otechestvennaia istoriia.* – No. 5. – Moscow, 1997. – P. 121-127.

⁷⁸ *Hosking J.* Ia – russkii natsionalist [I Am a Russian Nationalist] // *Izvestiia.* – No. 137. – **Moscow**; – P. 1, 8; *Russkoi natsii poka ieshcho net* [The Russian Nation des not yet Exist] // *Literturnaia Gazeta, prilozheniie “Knizhnyi razval”.* – No. 36. – Moscow, 2000. – P. 6.

apparatus, the army and other state institutions required a constant subordination of the interests of the people to the interests of the state. As a result, having created the empire, formally bearing its name, the Russian people have never formed their own nation. In the introduction to his book, *Russia: the people and the empire*, Hosking made his vision of Russian history from the mid-16th century to the collapse of the USSR even clearer. He wrote that “state building in Russia prevented nation building... According to the Russian historians of the 19th century, “the state got fatter, the people decayed...” Hosking himself clearly pointed to Kliuchevsky’s influence on his vision of Russia’s history. “Of course, I was greatly influenced by V.O. Kliuchevsky”, he wrote, “and I think that my concept is a lot like his”. Hosking noted that “almost all Russian historians supposed that there was no contradiction between the nation and the empire. That if the nation flourishes, so does the empire, and vice versa... Kliuchevky looked into this topic closer than anybody else, and he... attempted to show that colonisation was an enormous impediment for the development of the Russian national consciousness”⁷⁹.

There is no doubt that whether correct or not, Hosking’s vision of Russia’s history has been so popular because it went to the very root of the present-day debate on Russian identity and legacy.

“Intellectuals of the Two Nations, Unite!”

What are the reasons for the upsurge in interest of the Russian reading public in Britain and everything British, and, as a result, of British studies? Why are there so many really good academic studies, devoid of any propaganda? Why is it that conferences of Russian academics that specialise in British studies attract up to a hundred participants? Why are the works of British historians on Russia so popular among Russian academics and the general readership?

There is, in fact, no puzzle about it. Tchukovsky clearly expressed the feelings of at least a part of the Russian intelligentsia in 1962, but his words went into print only a quarter of a century later, in 1987. And it was impossible to publish a book titled, *England, my England*, until the late 1980s.

⁷⁹ *Kamozin E.* Nekotoryie obshchiie voprosy istorii Rossii v kontseptsiiakh V.O. Kliuchevskogo i Dzh. Hoskinga [Some General Questions about Russia’s History in the Concepts of V.O. Kliuchevsky and J. Hosking]. – *Gumanitarnaia mysl Yuga Rossii*. – No. 2, 2006.

The end of the Cold War made it possible to write about Britain, for decades an archenemy, freely and openly. Many academics looked back at the topics that had been “unpublishable”. Research took some time. The results, in the form of articles and books, began to appear only in the last decade. But every year they come in increasing numbers.

Of course, the same applies to every subject in the humanities, not just British Studies. The end of the Cold War and the changes this event brought about removed the barriers for proper studies of many regions and countries. But as far as Britain is concerned, there are additional factors.

Britain was alluring to Russians for centuries, and this interest has never been satisfied. Now streams of tourists are flowing in both directions, stimulating mutual interest even further. New realities have added a new factor: hundreds of thousands of Russians living in Britain. Russia has yet to come to terms with this new phenomenon, and neither have the British.

Since the beginning of this century, Britain became a number one destination for Russians going abroad. “The recent years saw the end of the Russian emigration”, wrote a Russian journalist. “Just as other people, those from the ‘normal’ countries, Russians now go to study, work or draw a pension wherever fate takes them, sometimes for good, sometimes for a while. It is no longer emigration, but a free choice made by free people. The United Kingdom has become their destination number one”⁸⁰.

England has always attracted foreign students. Russians are no exception. As far back as 2005, an estimated 5,000–15,000 Russians studied in the UK. Today, Russians can be found in all prestigious British universities. The most popular fields of study include economics, computer science, fashion and design, and engineering. The list started with the grandson of the first Russia’s president⁸¹, Boris Yeltsyn. Now it includes sons and daughters of many Russian politicians, even those, who publicly denounce the “West” and Britain in particular.

⁸⁰ T. Shcherbina, *Napravleniye No. 1: Net takoy kategorii lyudey, kotorym London byl by protivopokazan* [Destination No. 1: There are no counter indications for London] // *Novoye Vremya*. – Moscow: 2003. Issue 17. – P. 34.

⁸¹ *Rotkevich E. Pochemu russkiye uchatsya v Britanii* [Why do Russians Study in Britain] // *Izvestia*. – Moscow, 21.04.2006. See also: *Berlin E. Rossiyane kuchkuyutsia v luchshikh universitetakh Velikobritaniyi* [Russians abound in the Best UK Universities] // *Izvestia*. – Moscow, 25.09.2004.

British academics appreciated the new opportunities, too. Anthony Cross began his book with the dedication “To my Russian Friends...”⁸². John Roberts opened his book with the words, “Intellectuals of the Two Nations, Unite!” Roberts is one of the few people who can expertly compare the situation before the end of the Cold War and now: the publication of his book in Moscow marked the 50th anniversary of the beginning of his work on Russian history.

For nearly twenty years after 1973 Roberts was Director the Great Britain-USSR Association (now The Britain-Russia Centre). His book is a lively description of Soviet cultural life in Moscow through the eyes of an Englishman. Of his work in Moscow he wrote:

It was to be expected that I would come into confrontation with the natural hostility of the Soviet apparatus towards the association’s efforts to identify and earn the trust of opinion-formers in the USSR, people who might be on our wavelength intellectually, or brought onto it. Before long I became aware of a paradox. The organisation had been set up in 1959 on the initiative of the government of the day, under all-party parliamentary auspices and with financial backing from the Foreign Office, but I would more than once find myself up against our own apparatus.

Yet this must be mainly an account of years of regular visits to the “bear’s cage”, armed only with a genuine interest in Russia and a profound respect for its long-suffering people and their rich culture. It is impossible to be neutral about Russia. One is either a Russophile or a Russophobe, or both simultaneously. ...

My mind's eye pictures the five decades I have spent in and out of Russia as a great mountain. Mysterious forests, punctuated by occasional clearings, cover its lower slopes in which one might perceive some feature or movement. Higher up, as the cover becomes thinner, one begins to appreciate the shape of things more certainly. Then, finally, there are the brighter uplands of freedom, hope and understanding. On the other hand,

⁸² *Cross A. U Tezskikh bererov. Rossiiane v Britanii v XVIII veke [By the Banks of the Thames: Russians in Eighteenth-Century Britain]. – St. Petersburg: Gumanitarnoie agentstvo Academicheskij Prospekt, 1996.*

the top of this mountain, as with most real ones, is periodically shrouded in mist”⁸³.

"Mystery"?

“I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma”⁸⁴. Churchill’s words reflect a common view of Russia. It can be found in many books of British aphorisms, which must mean that it reflects the view of many Britons.

Russia too has plenty of stereotypical opinions about Britain and the British. Sometimes they reflect a reality to a certain degree. More often they are unfair, and at times insulting.

At the beginning of this article, I quoted the words of Alekseev, who said that “a full, detailed, and well documented” history of Russian-British relations “is yet to be written”.

This was written more than three decades ago. Since then, especially over the recent years, a lot has been done. But, obviously, still not enough. There is a lot more to conceptualize, to understand, and to explain.

There is no guarantee that even now, two decades after the end of the Cold War, new “mysteries” will not occur in the relations between these two countries. But there are fewer of them, and these two nations have a better chance of understanding one another. Academics’ task is to help them to do so. 2014, the year of British culture in Russia and Russian culture in Britain, gave us a great opportunity to do so.

Apollon Davidson

Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), Professor of the National Research University - Higher School of Economics and President of the Association of British Studies in Russia, e-mail: adavidson@yandex.ru

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⁸³ *Roberts J.* Govorite priqmo v kandelibr. Kulturnye sviazi mezhdru Britaniiiej i Rossiiei v 1973-2000 gg. [Speak Clearly into the Chandelier: Cultural Politics between Britain and Russia, 1973-2000]. – Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2001. – P. 14-16. The quotation is translated back from Russian.

⁸⁴ *See: Edmonds R.* The Big Three – Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin in Peace and War. – London: Hamish Hamilton, 1991. – P. 160.