



Emrys Hughes M.P. visits Moscow schoolchildren.



Scottish guests at Friendship House, Moscow.



Mr. S. Ferguson, member of a delegation of railwaymen, visiting a Moscow school.



Mr. Ian Simpson, Teacher of English, Edinburgh. Mrs. Anne Simpson, Treasurer, Edinburgh Savings Society. Prof. T.F. Rodger, Prof. of Phychological Medicine, Glasgow. Mr. Edwin Morgan, Lecturer English Literature, University of Glasgow. Miss Meg Munro, Journalist.



Moscow schoolchildren entertain Scottish guests.



John L. Kinloch meets Soviet Ambassador J. Malik and Madame Malik.

Marshak in Scotland - An Unforgettable Visit

In pre-revolutionary days there were many poets and writers in Russia who knew and translated the works of Robert Burns. But the first translator who opened up the world of Burns to millions of ordinary Soviet men and women was Samuel Marshak. It was therefore a great honour when he accepted the Society's invitation to attend the International Burns Festival organised by the Burns Federation and the Scottish Tourist Board during the period 17th to 26th January 1958. For Burns lovers throughout Scotland his visit was a triumph. For Mr Marshak it was a dream fulfilled. His first translations of Burns had been penned in 1913 when he and his wife Sofia had been studying at London University. That year they had started out on an unsuccessful attempt to walk from London to their mecca, the Poet's birthplace.

In 1955 Mr Marshak and his son Emmanuel - his wife had died a year before - flew into Renfrew Airport, accompanied by Mr Boris Polevoi and Madame Elistratova. They were met by members of the Society, the latter two being transferred to their hotel in Ayr and the Marshaks travelling with Mr Emrys Hughes M.P. to his home in Cumnock. It had previously been agreed, in order that Mr Samuel Marshak should not be overstrained, that he and his son should stay with the Hughes whenever possible. Mr Marshak renewed his acquaintance with the Scottish poet, Hugh McDiarmid, whom he had already met in Moscow. He heard infants at a local school reciting Humpty Dumpty and replied with a translation into Russian. He listened with tears in his eyes to the Ayr Academy choir singing 'Scots Wha Ha'e' at the snow-covered statue of Robert Burns in Ayr. He met Thomas McMynn, the 84-year old curator of Burns cottage, and they recited to each other 'A Man's A Man For A That' in their own languages.

Wherever Samuel Marshak went he was the focus of media attention. At one function he explained how closely the Soviet people identify with the sentiments of Robert Burns:

"The poetry of Robert Burns is part of our daily life," he said. "Our young people quote him in their love letters. Our best composers - Shostakovich, Kabalevsky, Sviridov, - have set his lyrics to music and these songs come over the radio intermingling with the hum of our work-days and the merry-making of our holidays. Volumes of his poetry are to be found in the studies of intellectuals, the cottages of collective farmers, in the apartments of workers, on the tables of students. Burns creates links between people in defiance of all who would keep nation apart. And it must not be forgotten that it is human hearts, not museums or monuments that his poems will be preserved."

In the opinion of the Society the visit constituted a landmark in the history of Scottish-Soviet relations and had an impact locally and nationally much greater than anyone could have imagined.

Mr Marshak had travelled to Scotland against medical advice. His health did not improve and it was impossible for him to respond to the Society's invitation to visit Scotland for the year of the Burns bicentenary in 1959. Another disappointment for Burns enthusiasts in Scotland was the refusal of the British postal authorities to issue a stamp

commemorating Burns, although campaigners had pointed out that the Soviet Union already had a Burns stamp - Mr Marshak had sent a first-day cover to Friendship House in Glasgow in January 1956.

In the Soviet Union the Burns Bicentenary was celebrated by readings on radio of a poem on the life of Burns written for the occasion by Marshak. Mr Marshak sent a copy to Scotland. In the same year the Society undertook the task of forwarding a message from the Union of Soviet Writers to 215 Burns clubs in Scotland.



A Moscow schoolboy reciting Burns poetry.

To Russia With Rabbie

In Scotland as a result of Mr Marshak's visit, the devotion of Soviet people to Burns became widely known for the first time. His visit also led to exchanges of knowledge between Soviet and Scottish Burns enthusiasts which continue to this day. In the 1950's the Society made contacts for Dr Gabriel Feldman who set up the first Pushkin-Burns Club in a Soviet school - School number 112 in Moscow. Members of the club later published *THE IMMORTAL MEMORY* a book of tributes to the poet in Russian and English.



The 1955 International Burns Festival Madame Elistratova, Hugh McDiarmid, Boris Polevoi, Samuel Marshak, William McLellan.

In 1975 over 100 Scots left for the first ever Burns celebration visit to the Soviet Union and these visits have continued right up to the present year when a total of 230 people joined with 200 Soviet people at Burns dinners in Leningrad and Moscow. 'The Famous Grouse' supplied the whisky for the first few flights and then 'Glen Catrine' took over. William Keith of Kirkcaldy has supplied the haggis on our visits and Jimmie McCallum has been the piper at all events.

How did it all begin? Here is the story.

Gordon Hepburn, Marketing Director of Nairn Travel, Kirkcaldy, first approached the Society in 1974 requesting help in organising a visit of Scots to Moscow to celebrate the birth of Robert Burns. The co-operation of the USSR-GB Society was requested and enthusiastically given. Thomson Holidays flights from Manchester and Gatwick were booked and in January 1975 the first ever Scottish-Soviet Burns Dinner was held in Moscow. Gordon subsequently took up a position with the Thomas Cook organisation in England, but maintained his connection with the Burns Celebration Tours to Russia until 1979. From 1980 on to the present the Society and its associate travel company Sovscot Tours have handled all the arrangements from the Scottish side.

Included in the Burns Tours are visits to schools and the Scots are always amazed at the high standard of the children's presentations of Burns songs, poems and costumed scenes from his life and times.

In 1985 the Burns Tour had some extra participants - STV cameramen who filmed a half-hour documentary of the 10th Scottish-Soviet tribute to the Bard. They named it 'To Russia with Rabbie' and it was shown on Scottish TV on 25th January of the same year.

We wish to express our sincere thanks to the USSR-GB Society, to Intourist and to other organisations and individuals in Moscow and Leningrad without whose invaluable help these visits would not have been possible.



The 'Mikhail Kalinin' leaving Leith for Leningrad in 1968 with Scottish tourists. In 1967 Sovscot chartered the 'Baltika' and took 410 tourists to the USSR.



Mr. W.L. Taylor, Chairman of Sovscot and Vice-President of the Society, receives a gift from a group of Soviet Cruise Tourists.

Tourism - Passport to Peace

In the early 1960's we added a qualitatively new dimension to our work. While the literature of a country can evoke something of its reality there is no substitute for physically going there and directly experiencing the life of its people.

In an effort to encourage more people to visit the Soviet Union, the Society decided to set up a travel company in 1961. The name of Sovscot Tours Limited was registered and the company started to operate with six Directors, each of whom had contributed his or her own money to get the company started. As a result of this development many thousands of Scottish people have been able to travel direct from Scotland to the Soviet Union for holidays lasting anything from one week to two weeks. In addition, the company is able to prepare programmes for incoming groups from the Soviet Union, both in London and in Scotland, and now each year it handles over 2,300 Soviet tourists, and sends to the Soviet Union an equivalent number of tourists from Scotland.

Right from the start of the company letters of appreciation have been received from tourists who found their Soviet visit so interesting. Many of them said that by seeing for themselves how Soviet people lived, allowed them to make a better judgement of life in that country. The image of the company has been much enhanced by satisfied clients recommending the tours to their friends and acquaintances.

The impressions so created may not lead to an unanimity of views on the superiority of one or other social system, but certainly counteract the worst causes of antagonism. It becomes clear that people on both sides of the East-West divide have the same every day experiences, hopes and dreams.



Pipe-sergeant Jimmie McCallum piping in a group of Soviet cruise tourists to dinner in the Central Hotel.



Scottish cruise tourists at Friendship House, Moscow. July 1967.



'For Auld Lang Syne' at Govan Town Hall.

As the weaponry of the world grew to horrifying proportions, the friendship Society was increasingly approached by members of the public involved with the peace movement in Scotland. The Society knew that hopes for world peace also dominated the thoughts of Soviet people and felt it was time to look for more ways of bringing together influential Scots concerned with East-West relations and their Scots counterparts.

In September 1980 when relations between Britain and the Soviet Union were still tense after the Olympic Games, the Scotland-USSR Society sponsored a visit to the Soviet Union of ten Scottish public figures, (see caption) led by the Society's Honorary President, Lord Ritchie-Calder.

Out of this courageous initiative has grown the exchange of talks between strategic and defence experts which following the endorsement of Edinburgh University have become known as the "Edinburgh Conversations."

"There is a cold wind blowing across the English Channel," the Soviet poet Alexei Surkov remarked, introducing the first of these conversations. In reply, Lord Ritchie-Calder assured him that 'a fresh wind was blowing from Scotland.' His prophetic words came true before he died in October 1981. The conversations, with their theme of "Survival in a Nuclear Age" became an annual event, with the participation of military strategists and defence and nuclear experts at the highest level. Six months after the members of the Society mourned the death of the world-renowned scientist who had been their Honorary President since 1967, the meetings were resumed. In 1983 and 1984 further exchanges took place and more are being planned for 1986 and 1987.



The 1980 delegation consisted of the following people; some of whom are featured in the photograph, Lord Ritchie-Calder, Lord MacLeod of Fuinary, Mr. John Langan, Mr. Neil McKechnie, Roderick McFarquhar, Mr. Marshall Harris, Mrs. Margo MacDonald, Ms Ruth Wishart, Mr. Tom Baistow.

Peace Forum - Peace Delegation

As the Edinburgh Conversations became more specialised, the Society perceived a need for discussions on peace involving a wider public, especially at a time when there was great concern over the proposed deployment of a new generation of nuclear weapons at Faslane. The answer was the first Scottish-Soviet Peace Forum which attracted representatives from Scottish local authorities, churches, trade unions, political parties and peace groups.

The Soviet experience of war and the deep longing of the Soviet people for a peaceful world was movingly described at the first forum by the Soviet delegates, the leading television and newspaper commentator, Mr. Alexander Yemelyanov from Riga and Mrs. Ina Shtop, a teacher and peace worker from Minsk.

The Forum led directly to a number of bridge-building initiatives, town-twinning, academic links and contacts between local peace groups in Scotland and the USSR. It also greatly strengthened the Society's links with supporters of the Scottish peace movement.

It was therefore the Society which organised the first-ever Scottish peace delegation to the Soviet Union, in 1985. This delegation comprised Dr. Ian Allan, a member of the Medical Campaign against Nuclear Weapons; Kay Caldwell, Parents for Survival; Hervey Gibson, Society of Friends; Cllr. Ian Leitch, Nuclear-Free Councils; Lesley Orr, Iona Community; and was led by Keith Bovey, Chairman of Scottish CND.

"I felt ashamed" he wrote when he returned "to come from a country harbouring nuclear weapons targetted on Leningrad, one of Europe's finest cities, where the Nazi siege starved half a million people to death. As we laid our wreath on their memorial I felt keenly the crime of nominating these heroic allies our next enemy."



Professor John Erickson and journalist Brian Wilson at the Peace Forum of 1984.



Edinburgh Conversations 1981. The Soviet Delegation with Dr. Burnett, Principal of Edinburgh University, Lord Ritchie-Calder and Professor John Erickson.

As the 40th Anniversary of the end of World War II approached, the British Government's reluctance to recognise the scale of the Soviet Union's contribution to the defeat of fascism was a disappointment to many fair-minded people all over Britain.

But nowhere more than in Scotland where there had been the greatest of admiration for the Soviet war effort in the 1940s. The Scots had generously supported fund-raising for the brave Soviet people and the Red Army. The town of Largs contributed more per head of the population than any other town in Britain to the Aid to Russia funds co-ordinated by Mrs. Churchill. Soviet and Scottish sailors lost their lives together serving in the convoys from Scottish ports to Murmansk. When the siege of Leningrad was at its worst, messages from 5,000 starving women were collected and sent to Scotland, made up into an album (now in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow) and illustrated by Anna Petrovna Ostroumova-Lebedeva, one of the Soviet Union's foremost painters. The album was a heroic response to messages of encouragement from a similar number of women living in the Scottish towns of Airdrie and Coatbridge. Their messages, handwritten on squared paper torn from old exercise books, are preserved in the Mitchell Library in Glasgow.

One is addressed to the women of the church guild of Albert Street Congregational Church, Coatbridge.

"We received your greetings with great joy. Dear Sisters, please believe that we too firmly believe the day is not far off when our dear ones will return home, when our children will sleep peacefully in their beds and when airplanes with swastikas will no longer circle our cities.

We Soviet women and you, our dear friends, must do everything we can to make 1942 the year of our joint victory over the enemy. We are sure that you will help us with all your strength."

Another was sent "to the girls of Airdrie from the girls of Leningrad":

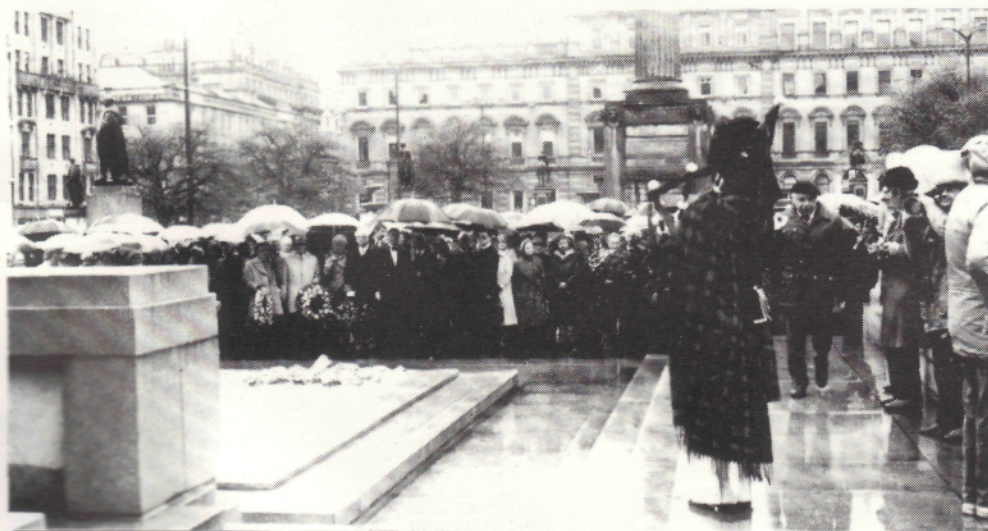
"Dear friends, Your undertaking to help us found a warm echo in our hearts. Fascism hangs like a black cloud over our young lives. We do not spare our strength in the name of a splendid future and of life itself to ensure victory over the hated and inexorable enemy. Hand and hand with you in this struggle, relying on the ever-strengthening unity of our countries. We will fight for and achieve the right to freedom and happiness."



Album sent to Leningrad in 1942 by women of Airdrie and Coatbridge.

The Leningrad Album was the showpiece at the only event in Glasgow organised specially to commemorate the Soviet sacrifice. The work of art was displayed at a reception and concert in the City Halls, Glasgow attended by more than 1,000 people. After the reception wreaths were laid at the Cenotaph by Mr. Viktor Popov, Soviet Ambassador in London, by Lady Ritchie-Calder who has succeeded her husband as Honorary President of the Society, and by representatives of the guests of honour, fifty Scottish veterans of the Murmansk convoys.

Later in the year the Society arranged a presentation in Glasgow by the Soviet Ambassador of medals to six Murmansk veterans whose wartime efforts had a special link with the Soviet Union, and two veterans' tours to the Soviet hero cities in association with Sovscot.



Wreath laying Ceremony, April 1985.

Veterans

Early in 1985 the Scotland-USSR Society took upon itself the task of finding veterans of the Second World War who had served on missions with our Soviet allies.

More than 80 veterans wrote some of them recalling their service on the "Murmansk Run", the convoys which sailed from Scotland with supplies for the Soviet war effort. Others had met the Soviet liberators in the final weeks of the war in Germany.

The veterans were invited to a reception at the Soviet Embassy in London in May. In Glasgow, six of them were decorated by the Soviet Ambassador with medals.

In September, the Society arranged the first visit ever to be made by an all-Scottish group of veterans to Murmansk. They sailed 20 miles down the Kola Inlet where the convoys had once anchored, laid flowers at the Memorial to the Men of All Nations and mountain ash leaves on the graves of comrades left behind, including a 16 year old steward's boy, James Anderson.

One Scottish veteran who was widely featured on Soviet television and in the national press was Mr. William Short of Dunfermline. He had been rescued, badly frostbitten, after four days alone on a raft. Mr. Short had been taken to a hospital in Murmansk where he had to have both legs amputated.

Waiting to welcome him on his return visit were Captain Sergei Antonovich and Commissar Ivan Antonovich Boganenko of the trawler "General Radzievsky" which had picked him up from the Barents Sea. And with them were the doctor who treated him; the nurse who admitted him to the hospital and recalled thinking that he could never survive; and other staff who remembered saying goodbye as he left after six months' care.

"I don't remember much about the rescue" Mr. Short said, "But I do remember the tearful farewell when I left for home. Forty years later it was the same again."



Medal presentation to Murmansk War Veterans. In the picture Mr. & Mrs. G. Smith and Mr. J. Sharkey.



The Leningrad Album. Provost & Mrs. Cairns of Monklands District Council, H.E. The Soviet Ambassador, the Rt. Hon. John Smith M.P. for Monklands East and Mrs. Smith.

George McAlister - General Secretary

George McAlister was appointed General Secretary in 1951 and in 1952 the post became a full-time job. At that time the Society had a small rented office in Edinburgh from which George, with his natural energy and dedication to the aims of the Society, gave a new impetus to its work. With the increase in activity, it became evident that the small office was inadequate and the search for larger premises began. In 1954 suitable premises were found and purchased in Glasgow at 8 Belmont Crescent and in the following year a formal opening of the new Friendship House took place, attended by many leading figures in Scottish life. The Society grew in stature and various delegations visited the Soviet Union and Soviet delegations and artistes came to Scotland. By 1961 it was decided to form a travel company to encourage tourism and closer ties between Scotland and the Soviet Union. George became Managing Director of the new company - Sovscot Tours Limited, which greatly added to his workload, but he had the capacity to inspire others around him and in the ensuing years great things were achieved by the Society in co-operation with Soviet friends in the USSR-GB Society.

By his efforts our General Secretary has gained respect within our Society and in many areas of Scottish life. The Soviet Government recognised his work for Peace and Friendship when in 1978 the "Order of the Friendship of the Peoples" was awarded to him. A further honour came in 1983 when the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations awarded to him its Medal of Friendship.

Both awards, he modestly claims, were really for our Society. However, it must be said - and his colleagues in committees would agree, that without George McAlister's contribution and dedication, our successes would have been substantially less.



Award of the Order of Friendship of the Peoples to George McAlister. Lord Ritchie-Calder, G. McAlister, Soviet Ambassador, V. Lunkov.

The Society's Relationship With Voks and the USSR-Great Britain Society

Since its early days until the present time the Society has enjoyed a friendly and fruitful exchange of delegations, information and material, first with VOKS and then in 1958 with the USSR-Great Britain Society, which is part of the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relationships with Foreign Countries (CCODS).

Without the excellent support of these organisations it would have been impossible for us to have carried on our work over these forty years. We pay tribute to the officials and staff of these Societies for the co-operation and friendly help we have received from them.

Our records show that there has been regular exchanges between our organisations from the early days of our birth until today. As a result of this co-operation a strong bond of friendship has been developed between the Scottish and Soviet peoples.

Ships - Honorary Members

In the early years of our Society many ships carrying timber and other cargoes were unloaded at Grangemouth and some of our members in the area went aboard those ships and entertained the crews with Scottish music and films. W. Mundie, T. Kettles and Alex Beck were among those who gave generously of their time and art.

In more recent times, Soviet ships called at Glasgow, particularly to load machinery manufactured by John Brown, and one of our members, Mr. Jim Gourlay, took it upon himself to visit the ships to welcome the crews and to practice his Russian.

When the Society introduced an "Honorary Member" diploma, he suggested that the ships should be made "Honorary Members." This was agreed to, and as we go to Press, one hundred Soviet ships are Honorary members of the Scotland-USSR Society.

Scottish-Soviet Book Society

In March 1958 the Scottish-Soviet Book Society was set up as a department of the Friendship Society. For some time there had been concern about the extreme difficulty of obtaining Soviet books and periodicals in Scotland-even the Russian classics were hard to find in public libraries in those days.

By the end of its first year the Book Society had attracted 436 members who had bought a total of 4,000 books at 2/6p a copy. The book parcels were despatched to members' addresses by the Moscow based international distribution agency, Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga.

In May 1959 the Friendship Society organised an Exhibition of Soviet Books at the MacLellan Galleries in Glasgow which attracted 1,500 visitors. An inaugural literary luncheon gave committee members the chance to discuss the shortage of Soviet books in Scotland with influential figures in Scottish education and publishing.

By 1960 the number of books purchased by members of the Book Club had doubled, but the following year brought problems. World-wide demand had led to more technical books being published in the Soviet Union and fewer contemporary works were being translated into English. There was a corresponding drop in the membership of the Scottish Book Club and by the end of 1961 it had ceased to function.



Ambassador Soldatov addressing the Society's Biennial Conference.

Acknowledgements

The National Council acknowledges its indebtedness for the valuable assistance given by those who have served the Society either as full-time officials or in a voluntary capacity during these 40 years. It would be extremely difficult to single out any particular person for special mention, but those who were associated with the Society during its formative years from 1945 to 1950 deserve full praise for laying a solid foundation upon which we have been able to build a strong and influential organisation working for understanding and friendship with the Soviet Union.