5 'Russian literature will fix everything'

The *Read Russia* project and cultural statecraft

Angelos Theocharis

Introduction

Literature has been the bulwark of Russian culture since the late 19th century, mainly represented by famous authors, such as Aleksandr Pushkin, Lev Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Anton Chekhov. The 19th-century writers with their major contributions to world literature, philosophy and theatre have been an essential part of the Russian and Soviet brand ever since (Senelick, 1997; Scanlan, 2002; Sandler, 2004; Frank, 2012; Foster, 2013; Holquist, 2016; Fusso, 2017). Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (published in 1869) and *Anna Karenina* (1878) are constantly listed among the most influential novels of all time, Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866), *The Idiot* (1869) and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880) paved the way for philosophical and psychological fiction,[1] while Chekhov is considered one of the greatest short story writers and a seminal figure of modern theatre.[2] In contrast to other major literary figures of the 20th and 21st centuries who have received less attention outside Russia, the Russian classics are globally exported not only in the form of books in new or old translations but also through their adaptations into theatre plays and films. Nevertheless, literature was of peripheral importance for Soviet cultural diplomacy, as it was in the early post-Soviet times (Barghoorn, 1960; Gould-Davies, 2003; Raeva and Nagornai͡a, 2018). Yet, in the last decade, literature has been consistently employed as part of Russia's cultural statecraft strategies. Established in 2012, the *Read Russia* project is a Russian organisation responsible for the promotion of Russian literature in translation to global audiences, incorporating elements of the Soviet diplomatic practice, as well as looking for innovative ways to achieve its scope. Read Russia has been mainly oriented towards the publication of translations of classic and contemporary Russian literature, and the participation in international book fairs, where it presents new editions and planned literary activities.

The present chapter delves into the little researched topic of literature's role in the Russian cultural statecraft today focussing on the Read Russia project and its cultural activities in Britain and the US. More specifically, I first look at the resurfacing of literature as a soft power tool in Putin's era

DOI: 10.4324/9781003141785-5

after a long break since the Perestroika, as well as the promotion of Russian culture abroad through the *Russkiy Mir Foundation* and *Rossotrudnichestvo*. Furthermore, I explore the Read Russia project and its activities to date drawing material from my ethnographic fieldwork at the London Book Fairs 2018 and 2019 and from interviews with the directors of the organisations contributing to the project. In the end, I argue that Read Russia aims to improve Russia's world image and reputation through translations of Russian literature and literary events, as well as to mobilise the members of the Russophone diasporic communities around the world.

Russian literature as an instrument of cultural statecraft

Soviet cultural diplomacy showed interest in employing Russian literature as an instrument of soft power early in the post-World War II era, principally utilising the symbolic capital of acclaimed writers. Hence, previous studies have disregarded the field of literature in their analysis with two exceptions being Barghoorn's monograph *The Soviet cultural offensive* (1960) and the collective monograph *Soviet cultural diplomacy during the Cold War, 1945–1989* (Nagornai͡a, 2018a). Barghoorn observed the Soviet cultural exchanges with foreign countries and showed that the 'culture-conscious Soviet regime' made considerable efforts to promote its culture abroad. Literature had a significant place in these efforts and 'the international political struggle' in general that was expected to be enhanced as the '"international contacts of Soviet literature" were expanding, and would expand still farther' (1960, p. 22).[3] According to Raeva and Nagornai͡a (2018, p. 349), the Soviet Union invested in cultural diplomats who could help attract sympathisers to its political mission expanding its influence beyond the marginalised left-wing intellectuals. The public figures that were chosen to act as cultural diplomats included theatre and dancing ensembles, professional athletes, cosmonauts and writers. The two scholars focus on the example of the Soviet writer Konstantin Fedin (1892–1975), who joined the unofficial cultural diplomatic mission in 1949. Fedin had demonstrated his loyalty to the communist party and possessed the necessary 'symbolic capital – authority, fame, wide network of contacts abroad' that would 'ensure the successful performance of a "diplomatic performance"' (Raeva and Nagornai͡a, 2018, p. 350). Fedin's main diplomatic activity constituted frequent trips to participate in conferences and meetings with international organisations and foreign political actors, partake in cultural events and celebrations, and make presentations about world politics. The writer was regularly assigned exhausting, multi-day trips to both socialist and Western countries without the option to refuse. Returning from the diplomatic expeditions, Fedin had to report on the events that he attended and to publish articles informing his audience about his travel experience abroad. Overall, each delegate writer bore the responsibility to strengthen the relations between USSR and the visited

countries. As a result, in many cases, the authors personally symbolised liaisons with particular countries (Raeva and Nagornai͡a, 2018, p. 352).

Another project of the Soviet cultural statecraft that gave prominence to writers and literature was the 'International Lenin Prize for Strengthening Peace Among Peoples', which was founded in 1949 as the International Stalin Prize but was renamed seven years later under the de-Stalinisation reforms. The international prize was awarded annually to multiple recipients that promoted world peace. Breaking with the general rules of Soviet cultural diplomacy, the award was also given to a number of activists and public figures with significant contributions to peace-making regardless of their political loyalties (Nagornai͡a, 2018b, p. 363). Offering an alternative to the Nobel Prize in Literature, among the recipients of the prize almost every year were writers and poets from various countries. Famous laureates included Pablo Neruda, Miguel Ángel Asturias, James Aldridge and Hervé Bazin.[4] Nagornai͡a argues that the Soviet state instrumentalised the international reputation of the recipients to support its 'foreign policy positions in a particular region of the world and to confirm the peaceful nature of socialist initiatives or the position of a particular leader' (Nagornai͡a, 2018b, p. 366). The USSR's image-making efforts through the awards were also visible within the country in the form of publications and photographs that proclaimed the existence of prominent supporters around the world.

On the other side of the Iron curtain, some Western countries also approached Russian literature on a cultural statecraft level by offering support to exiled writers and dissidents and assisting the publication of banned literary works. One famous example was the publication of *Doctor Zhivago* by Boris Pasternak in Italy in 1957, for which he received the Nobel Prize in Literature the following year. Dissident literature offered an opportunity to damage USSR's world reputation since it revealed a different side to the promoted image regarding the living and political conditions within the country. If cultural statecraft is defined as a state's efforts 'to develop and exercise power based […] on persuasion and attraction and […] backed by means of information, values, framing, and image-building' (Forsberg and Smith, 2016, pp. 129–130), the promotion of dissident literature and the employment in later years of famous exiled writers can be utilised to counteract a country's cultural diplomacy strategies. Pasternak's novel wasn't the only case when the Swedish Academy awarded oppositional literature to criticise the Soviet regime. In fact, among the five Russian/Soviet Nobel laureates, only Mikhail Sholokhov (1965) was aligned with the communist party: Ivan Bunin (1933) was a renowned representative of Russian émigré culture; Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1970) was forced to exile in 1974 and Joseph Brodsky (1987) had been expelled from the Soviet Union in 1972. Even Svetlana Alexievich (2015), the most recent Russophone Nobel Laureate, has been critical of the USSR and post-communist Russia (Walker, 2017).

Coming into power in 2000, Putin aimed for the restoration of Russia's place in world affairs, highlighting the role of diplomacy and cultural

statecraft as responses to the remains of the Cold War Western rhetoric (Rutland and Kazantsev, 2016, p. 398; Jonson, 2019, p. 15). In 2012 during a meeting of Russian ambassadors, Putin stressed, 'Russia's image abroad is not formed by us, because it is often distorted and does not represent the real situation in our country. […] And we are guilty of having failed to explain our position' (President of Russia, 2012). Having identified that foreign leaders and audiences are well disposed to Russian culture,[5] Putin has been willingly instrumentalising it for image-making purposes. In the Foreign Policy Review of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Russian culture is described as 'an effective instrument to ensure Russia's economic and foreign policy interests and positive image in the world' following the example of the 'Great powers' who have long invested in this field (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007, p. 30). Even scholars who are highly critical of Russian imperialism regard positively the classic Russian cultural production. Grigas (2016, p. 30) recognises the potential of Russian high culture, which 'with its classic authors, composers, and choreographers, remains well regarded in most parts of the world and could be a legitimate and effective component of the country's soft power'. At the same time, Sherr (2013, p. 90) argues that even though 'Russian high culture is […] Russia's purest soft power asset,' its actual efficiency as a political tool can be challenged.

Putin addressed the issue of Russia's reputation to the West by looking for ways to challenge the anti-Russian discourses. As early as in 2000, Putin successfully approached Solzhenitsyn and sought his support, 'firstly, to assure the West that Russia had broken with its communist past for good; and secondly, to assure the Russian citizenry that post-Soviet Russia possessed moral and cultural legitimacy' (Rollberg, 2018, p. 7). Even after Solzhenitsyn's death in 2008, the Russian government still regards the anti-communist writer as one of its patron saints and treats him as such. Nonetheless, Solzhenitsyn's political significance was reduced in the West already from the 1980s and gradually in Russia at the time of his return in 1994, significantly limiting the success of Putin's strategy.

A similar endeavour has been the instrumentalisation of Tolstoy's legacy and global reputation in various ways. First of all, Putin recruited as his adviser on cultural affairs Vladimir Tolstoy, a great-grandson of the famous writer and director of the State Tolstoy Museum-Estate at Yasnaya Polyana. Vladimir Tolstoy, who presents himself as a liaison between the government and the cultural sphere, 'guided […] a committee of leading cultural figures and state officials' (Donadio, 2015) in producing the 2014 Foundations of State Cultural Policy (FSCP). This document[6] summarises the conservative turn in the cultural policy of the country underlining its cultural distinctiveness. Russian culture is regarded as the bedrock for economic prosperity, state sovereignty and distinctive cultural identity (President of Russia, 2014, p. 1). The key elements of the state's binding force, i.e. the Russian culture, have been the geographical position of the country, the Russian language, Orthodox Christianity, and the arts with literature holding the primary

position. The policy instrumentalises culture for the formation of a national identity that will support the unification of the nation against the challenges of the modern world. In this way, the state assumes an active role in the cultural field and proclaims its involvement in the dissemination of the desired national discourses, as well as in the shaping of Russia's cultural memory (ibid., p. 3).

The recruitment of Solzhenitsyn and a Tolstoy's descendant[7] showcases Putin's effort to legitimise his nationalistic worldview and political choices. For example, in the case of Crimea's annexation in 2014, Solzhenitsyn was cited in support of Russia's position (Rollberg, 2018, p. 7). At the same time, Vladimir Tolstoy, in an interview to the New York Times, drew on his forebear's involvement in the Crimean War (1854–1855) and stated, 'Of course, as a descendant of the Russian officer Leo Tolstoy, I cannot have any other attitude toward that [than being supportive]' (Donadio, 2015).

Furthermore, Tolstoy's work was chosen as the representative of the 19th-century Russian culture for the global mega-event, the opening ceremony of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games. A scene from the world-famous novel 'War and Peace' was the subject of a ballet that was performed at the opening ceremony. According to Sarah Hudspith (2018, p. 51), 'the ceremony, following a typical paradigm for Olympic opening ceremonies, represents a showcase of how Russia selects and packages its cultural, historical and technological achievements, in order to create a certain image of Russia for international consumption.' In this account, *War and Peace*, one of the most famous Russian novels selectively retold through a ballet performance, was served as one of Russia's monumental contributions to the European and world cultures, as a proof of the country's longstanding greatness. Hudspith further argues that the choice and the presentation of the novel contributed to 'a geopolitical statement' about Russia's 'invincibility' (ibid., p. 61) given that the Sochi Olympics were quickly followed by the annexation of Crimea. In the closing ceremony, Tolstoy appeared working on his desk alongside other renowned writers and poets, such as Dostoyevsky, Akhmatova, Pushkin and Turgenev, all played by actors. The writers' desks were placed in a circle and surrounded by a changing photo montage with eleven more authors,[8] while in the centre an ensemble of 96 librarians danced. Both Olympic ceremonies endeavoured to remind international audiences of the Russian contributions to world culture, as well as to establish literature as part of the Russian brand.

Russian cultural diplomacy in the field of literature relies heavily on the appeal of its most famous writers and their connections to different historical eras creating a narrative of historical continuity and capitalising on their symbolic capital and their place in world culture. Next to Tolstoy and Solzhenitsyn who represent the connections of the present regime with the pre-revolutionary and Soviet periods respectively, other renowned writers appear Aleksandr Pushkin as the symbol of Russian literature, Ivan Turgenev and Fyodor Dostoyevsky as Putin's favourites.[9] In the following

section, I discuss the Russian institutions who act as cultural statecraft agents abroad aiming for the expansion of Russian influence.

Promoting Russian culture abroad: Foreign audiences and the compatriots

For the successful promotion of the Russian culture, Putin founded in 2007 the *Russkiy Mir* (Russian World) Foundation and a year later the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, and Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation, known as *Rossotrudnichestvo* (Sherr, 2013; Gorham, 2019). The *Russkiy Mir Foundation*, on the one hand, focusses on the promotion of Russian as both a native and a foreign language providing language classes (Gorham, 2011), as well as organising lectures about Russian literature and cultural events with invited Russophone writers and other prominent speakers. A network of *Russkiy Mir* cultural centres[10] was developed to support the local Russophone communities abroad, but in recent years a number of these centres have closed suggesting the possible decline of the foundation.

Rossotrudnichestvo, on the other hand, aims 'to form a large circle of friends and a friendly attitude towards Russia' (Khimshiashvili, 2018),[11] which includes the expansion of the 'Russian influence amongst the 25 million or so ethnic Russians and 100 million Russian speakers in the post-soviet space' (Rutland and Kazantsev, 2016, p. 405). The Agency can be considered a successor to the Russian Center for international scientific and cultural cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2002–2008) and the Russian Center for international scientific and cultural cooperation under the government of Russia (Roszarubezhtsentr, 1994–2002). According to Eleonora Mitrofanova, the ex-director of *Rossotrudnichestvo*, the soft power institution continues the legacy of the Soviet system for humanitarian cooperation with foreign states established in 1925[12]: 'Our «soft power Institute» is older than both the Confucius Institute and the *British Council*, only the *Alliance Francaise* was created at the end of the nineteenth century' (Khimshiashvili, 2018). The 97 local representative offices of *Rossotrudnichestvo* promote the Russian culture through exhibitions, concerts and other events,[13] organise the celebrations of national holidays with the 'compatriots,' and since 2016, also hold languages classes (*Rossotrudnichestvo*, 2019; 2020).[14]

The focus of both *Russkiy Mir Foundation* and *Rossotrudnichestvo* on the diasporic Russophone communities represents Putin's effort to expand Russia's sphere of influence abroad by turning to the compatriots, '*sootechestvenniki*.' The 'Russian World' (*Russkyi mir)* concept was employed to capture 'a naturally existing civilisational community' (Feklyunina, 2016, p. 783) with identification markers the Russian language, the Soviet heritage and the Russian culture. The intentionally vague and abstract idea of *sootechestvenniki* covers ethnic Russians and Russian speakers who live in the 'near' and 'far abroad,' those born in the Soviet Union or their descendants.

Although there is no clear distinction in the policies towards the compatriots, the Russophone diaspora has been targeted differently based on its location, that is, between those residing in the neighbouring post-Soviet states and those dispersed around the world. The first group has been part of what Grigas calls 'the reimperialisation of the former Soviet space' (2016, p. 26), while the second has been approached in a softer yet clearly politicised way. In both cases, the diaspora is being instrumentalised for the implementation of the Russian political interests abroad (Sherr, 2013, pp. 109–110).

The strategies for the mobilisation of the compatriots have changed considerably over time. According to Suslov, 'there has been neither a consistent policy towards the Russian-speaking diaspora nor a consistent ideology legitimising Russia's special relationship with its "compatriots" abroad' (2018, p. 346). In the past 20-plus years, 'Russian world' has been conceptualised as a cultural archipelago (1996–2001) regarding the diasporic communities as 'islands,' or as 'a sovereign "great power" with its natural "tentacles" abroad' (2001–2009) (Suslov, 2018, pp. 346–347). More recently, in the period from 2009 to 2015, the doctrine of the 'Russian world' 'has been reterritorialised as an irredentist and isolationist project, aligned with the logic of representing Russia as an alternative, non-Western model of modernity' (ibid., p. 330). At the same time, there is a clear provision at the FSCP about the necessity to support the Russophone communities, along with the general promotion of the Russian language and culture to the world (President of Russia, 2014, p. 12).

The *Russkiy Mir* Foundation and *Rossotrudnichestvo* implement the Russian cultural statecraft policies that try to increase the number of the country's sympathisers and seek to attract the diasporic Russophone populations by giving prominence to the shared culture and heritage. In this way, Russian culture appears as a means to preserve the long-distance relationship of compatriots with Russia, as well as to consolidate the diasporic communities on the basis of a shared cultural identity. The present chapter discusses Read Russia, a cultural project that can be distinguished from the above foundations but often cooperates with them in the implementation of its programme.

The Read Russia project: An introduction

The analysis of the Read Russia project is based on my ethnographic fieldwork at the London Book Fair in 2018 and 2019, one of the main platforms for showcasing Russian literature and book culture abroad. Pink defines ethnography 'as a process of creating and representing knowledge or ways of knowing that are based on ethnographers' own experiences and the ways these intersect with the persons, places and things encountered during that process' (2013, p. 35). During my fieldwork, I observed the majority of the events organised by Read Russia taking notes, recording the discussions, and, where possible, taking photographs of the events. In

addition, I interviewed Peter B. Kaufman, the director of the American branch of the project, and Yevgeny Reznichenko, the Executive Director of the Institute of Translation.[15] In this section, I present Read Russia drawing from observations and interviews and in the following, I examine how the project approaches its two audiences, the English-speaking and the Russian-speaking.

The project 'Read Russia' was established in 2011 to promote contemporary and classic Russian literature and Russian book culture to foreign audiences. It is based in New York, London and Moscow and it is supported by the Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communications and coordinated jointly by the Institute for Literary Translation (Moscow) and the Presidential Center of Boris Yeltsin. The project's operations in New York are organised by Read Russia Inc., which is an American nongovernmental organisation established in 2012 (Read Russia, 2019) and represented by Peter Kaufman. According to Kaufman, Read Russia is 'a very virtual organisation' and does not have offices in any of the three cities allowing the project to be more flexible and adaptable. In an interview, Kaufman admitted that the project is an 'effort to make up for lost time,' an opportunity for international audiences 'to learn a little about Russia and to think about some of the things Russians think about when they think about literature' (Schillinger, 2015).[16] When I asked Kaufman and Reznichenko about the project's mission, both supported literature's special place in Russian culture and, therefore, its ability to represent what Russia stands for. Reznichenko cited the contemporary Russian writer Eugene Vodolazkin to explain his position: 'If you want to learn more about Russia, read its literature. A literary work is created by a writer primarily for their people, and this is the guarantee of the sincerity of this text. Literature is not written for export. […] True literature quietly indicates the spiritual state of a particular society. But at their best, these testimonies take on a universal meaning.' In other words, literary works can act as mediators between different cultures improving understanding and establishing communication channels, as well as offering opportunities to influence how readers think and feel about a certain country.

For Vladimir Tolstoy, Putin's adviser on cultural affairs, the Read Russia project can increase Russia's attractiveness to possible sympathisers: 'Literature is the best bridge to understanding peoples, what they've lived through and what sort of values they have' (Roth, 2015). Hence, the Read Russia organisers denied the project's contribution to the instrumentalisation of Russian literature for political reasons. Reznichenko, on the one hand, initially admitted that 'Our politicians, like politicians in any other country in the world, try to use successful writers for their own purposes, but it does not work very well – unfortunately, literature doesn't have the influence it used to have on Russian/Soviet life, for example, in the 60s or in the '80s–'90s.' Kaufman, on the other, stressed that the 'American' Read Russia does not have a political agenda and plans its activities independently:

'There is no political fear or favour in anything that Read Russia does and there is no influence from Russia on whatever we put on.' His claim that the 'American' Read Russia is independent of its Russian partners contradicts the project's collaborative nature.[17] Kaufman maintained that people involved in the project cherish Russian literature and serve it in the same way as Bolshoi's ballet dancers, when they perform abroad, regardless of its possible positive effect on Russia's world image. In his opinion, a 'soulless, unemotional, instrumental view of literature' is highly unlikely 'because of the importance of literature to anyone who has ever grown up in Russia.'

Read Russia implements an annual program of events and actions that, for Yevgeny Reznichenko, aims at developing international humanitarian cooperation and establishing business and personal contacts between translators, publishers, and literary agents outside Russia. The project also builds and sustains a network with scholars in the fields of Russian literature and promotes Russian as a foreign language. In this framework, Read Russia focuses on publications, translation workshops and awards, book fairs, meet-the-author events, roundtables, and film productions that celebrate Russian literature and encourage readers to engage with it. Even though its scope is close to that of national cultural centres, such as Germany's 'Goethe-Institut,' France's 'Institut Français' and Spain's 'Instituto Cervantes,' the project is not associated with or supported financially by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Institute of Translation funds the project's initiatives by participating in competitions for state grants or seeking financial support from public and private various foundations, both domestic and international. For Reznichenko, the fact that the Institute is not funded directly from the state budget helps secure independence for itself and its projects.

Read Russia's international activities focus on book fairs, prizes and publications. The project participates in most major international book fairs[18] (London, Paris Frankfurt, Madrid, Tehran, New Delhi) as the official representation of the Russian Federation. Furthermore, a 'Read Russia Prize' is awarded every two years for the best new translation in a foreign language.[19] The winners receive a financial award of up to $10,000, which is divided between the winner and the publisher (Read Russia, 2018). The publisher receives their share of the financial award as a grant for the translation and publication of another work of Russian literature. There are also 'cluster' translation awards along with the main Read Russia Prize about the publication of a literary work in a particular language. Such prizes exist in France, in the United States and the UK, in Italy, Spain, and since 2019, in China. According to Reznichenko, there are plans to establish translations prizes for more countries and linguistic regions such as Germany and the Arab world. All shortlisted translators for these awards are automatically included on the long list of the Read Russia Prize. Finally, Read Russia with the support of the Institute of Translation offers two types of grants: the annual translation grants to foreign publishers covering the translation costs[20] and the grants related to the mega-project 'The 100-volume Russian

Library.' The Russian Library grants cover the full publication cost of a collection of pre-modern, modern and contemporary Russian literary works in the major world languages.

The project has been largely oriented towards the Western reading audiences, and particularly the US, the UK, France and Germany. Read Russia's investment in the English-speaking book market is underlined by the founding of the American NGO. The American branch coordinates the project's activities in the United States, which include the Russian Literature Week in New York, and the publication of the Anglophone 'The Russian Library' by Columbia University Press. The Russian Library followed the publication of *Read Russia!*: *An Anthology of New Voices* in 2012 with 30 short-stories/novellas of contemporary Russian writers. The 'American' Read Russia has produced a film called 'Russia's Open Book: Writing in the Age of Putin' (2013), directed by Paul Mitchell and Sarah Wallis. Hosted by the famous actor, Stephen Fry, the film addresses the question of who are the 'contemporary Russian authors carrying on one of the world's greatest literary traditions.'[21] The film aims not only to inform admirers of Russian literature but also to attract and intrigue new readers. The most recent addition to the project's activities in the US has been 'The Chatham Translation Symposium,' a three-day workshop in Chatham, Massachusetts, for translators of Russian literature in English. For Kaufman, in the post-COVID-19 era, the engagement with literature will take place mainly online, which will turn the internet into 'a very crowded place,' with national literatures competing for international audiences. As he puts it, 'So what we need to do is to figure out ways of marketing Russian literature and culture in an online public square that's going to be the opposite of social distancing.'

Read Russia is an adaptable and versatile project that invites global audiences to reacquaint themselves with Russian culture through translations of classic and contemporary Russian literature. The organisers invest in the project's digital presence, in expanding to new platforms and appealing to both online and offline audiences. The political side of the project has been denied by both Kaufman and Reznichenko who declare their full independence from the Russian authorities.

The London Book Fairs 2018 and 2019

The events that I attended during the London Book Fairs 2018 and 2019 will be divided into two different categories for analytical reasons – those arguably targeting the general English-speaking public and those reaching out to the Russophone community in London. An indication of the target group can be easily found in the official program from the mention of the language of each event. The strategies that the project follows vary for each audience, and for that reason, I will present them separately.

I start my analysis with a description of the Read Russia stand at the Olympia, Exhibition Centre London, where most events take place. The

design of the Russian national stand was simple: the overarching colour was white, the letters on the walls red and the carpet blue – the colours of the Russian flag. The main logo of the stand reads, 'Read Deep. Read Smart. Read Russia' making wordplay with the title of the project and suggesting that the reader of Russian literature is a profound, highly intelligent, and educated person. On the screen below the logo, scenes from Russian landscapes were discreetly displayed reminding one of touristic stands at international expos. The stand had been carefully built to play with connotations and symbols of Russian culture, yet to avoid any clear national emblems or flags, as it happens in other stands.

Another logo is found at the stand's free bookmarker-size stickers and it reads, 'Russian literature will fix everything.' This phrase catches one's attention particularly for its powerful statement, even ending unusually with a period. It arguably acts on two different levels: first, the phrase reads like reassuring, comforting advice from an elder or a sage, clearly referring to the 'Keep Calm and Carry On' catchphrase and memes. Russian literature will help you solve your problems; get you through a tough time. In this account, Russian literature appears as a font of knowledge and wisdom to draw from, a great companion for life's adversities. On a second level, it reminds one of the Russian revolution posters and their commands aimed at recruitment of soldiers.

The stand's careful design aims at attracting the varying audience of the book fair to stop by and attend its events. At the same time, the branding and especially the second logo of the project allows one to speculate what Russia is trying to fix through the promotion of its literature. I argue that Read Russia constitutes an inherently image-making project that endeavours to fix Russia's world reputation by presenting the country as democratic, diverse and respecting of gender equality.

The English-speaking events of Read Russia

The Read Russia events at the LBF targeting the English-speaking audience includes roundtables, seminars or panels, presentations of the awards (all of them taking place at the Olympia), as well as a few events in English or with English translation located at various places in London, usually connected to the Russian state or Russian culture. The Official Opening of the Stand was held in Russian with an English translation and was joined by the representatives of all the Russian organisations.

The parameters limiting the impact and the success of the Russian events were evident from the very beginning of the LBF. The first issue was language. The vast majority of all LBF events are held in English, which guarantees their accessibility to the audience of the fair. Nevertheless, a number of the invited Russian authors are not fluent in English and they can only participate in a panel or roundtable if an interpreter is present. For example, in 2018, Shamil Idiatullin, Yulia Yakovleva, and Galina Yuzefovich

represented Russia to the LBF, but only Yakovleva and Yuzefovich managed to participate in the English-speaking events. Instead of hiring one or more interpreters for the duration of the fair, the organisers choose to organise events in Russian for the non-fluent writers outside the Olympia, thus depriving the English-speaking audience of the opportunity to listen to their presentations and meet them. The sustained language barrier, in addition to the fact that LBF requires an expensive entrance fee, leads to the shrinkage of the possible audience for the Read Russia events. Most attendees are exhibitors, editors, literary agents, and translators representing a rather specialised audience, which explains why the organisers also plan events to take place outside the Olympia during the fair. Reznichenko, the director of the Institute of Translation, admitted that in order to guarantee that their events will be well-attended, they are often obliged to tailor them to every single foreign audience. In some cases, Read Russia's audience in a specific country or city consists largely of literary specialists, while sometimes it comprises the general reading audience, which translates to more reader-focussed events.[22]

Zooming onto the themes of the events, in both years, the panels and the roundtables dealt with the importance and difficulties of a good translation and the search for a Russian novel that could become an international best-seller. These recurring themes point out that the project organisers are particularly concerned about the attractiveness of contemporary Russian literature and that they recognise the significance of the translators' contribution to this effort. The main participants in the discussion were publishers, agents, critics, and translators, active in the English-speaking book market and therefore able to offer insight and propose strategies on how to improve Russia's position in it. In most cases, the audience actively participated in the discussion. My interviews with the organisers showed that they regard the book fairs as fora for new ideas and platforms to receive feedback on their current operations.

Furthermore, the Read Russia program for 2019 included a panel titled 'Women in Literature & Translation: Realities & Stereotypes' returning to an older topic from 2012. The all-female panel –excepting the moderator – explored the very current issue of female representation in literature in general and particularly in Russian literature. The panel took place in the Literary Translation Centre, one of the most spacious event areas at the Olympia. The room was full and the discussion between the participants followed a round with questions from the audience. The well-attended event showed that Read Russia joins the global discourse on gender equality discourse and actively supports Russian female writers and their equal representation. Even though the project appears to be ready to fight stereotypes in and about Russian literature and give prominence to under-represented writers, any reference to LGBT literature has been absent from the Read Russia programs. On the same note, the genre of ecofiction that discusses climate change and human intervention in the natural habitat has not

received any attention. In other words, although the organisers are making efforts to promote the project as being progressive, its LBF programs remain rather conservative and less appealing to the English-speaking audience at which it aims for.[23]

On the same note, the London Book Fair constitutes an incubator for new discourses and narratives that promote Read Russia's work. The main narrative that Read Russia tested during the London Book Fair in 2018 and 2019 and is now officially incorporated in its program is the promotion of Russophone literature from under-represented regions of Russia. The first region is Tatarstan with a significant Muslim population. Idiatullin, and Yakhina had been invited to the LBF in different years, but they were grouped together and branded for the first time as Tatars for the Moscow International Book Fair 2019. During the fair, they participated in the panel 'The city as a text. Literary reflections' about Kazan. The second region is the Urals, represented by the writers Aleksey Ivanov and Aleksey Salnikov, who participated in the LBF 2019. In contrast to Salnikov, for whom a typical meet-the-author event was organised, Ivanov's event at the Pushkin House did not focus on his books. Instead, the writer showed an excerpt from his famous film project 'The Ridge of Russia/Khrebet Rossii' (2010), which dealt with the Russianness of the region. After the LBF, the two writers attended the Frankfurt International Book Fair 2019 and were asked to give a talk in the 'The city as a text' panel, which was dedicated at that time to Yekaterinburg. The new narrative of the regional contribution to contemporary Russian literature and Russian identity supports an image of Russia as being inclusive by giving opportunities and prominence to writers of the periphery.

The Read Russia program for the London Book Fair is largely writer-centric and that applies for all Russian representations in the major international book fairs. The project selects a small number of writers (usually between two and five) that have already been translated to the official language of the country where the book fair takes place, or writers who have already appealed to an international audience. This selection process, which connects certain authors to specific countries and draws from their reputation to attract new audiences, resonates with the Soviet diplomatic tradition of the writers' tours described by Raeva and Nagornai͡a (2018). In Britain, the invited writers usually depart on a tour after the end of the LBF to visit the Russian departments of renowned universities around the country and give lectures. The tours attract readers, students, scholars and members of the local Russophone communities who are interested in meeting with the authors or staying in touch with the contemporary Russian literary production.

The London Book Fair 2019 offers a noteworthy case of Read Russia's approach to writer events. That year, Guzel Yakhina, one of the most commercially successful contemporary Russian writers, attended the fair for the second time. Her award-winning debut novel *Zuleikha opens her eyes*

(2015) has been translated in more than 30 languages, constituting an international publishing phenomenon for contemporary Russian literature. Yakhina was first invited to the London Book Fair in 2016 to participate in the Russophone events after receiving the prestigious Big Book award. Her return to the LBF three years later coincided with the publication of her famous novel in English and responded to Read Russia's call for a possible best-seller that could draw the attention of the British readers.

Yakhina participated in the opening ceremony of the stand and the 'Women in Literature and Translation' panel. However, the writer's main event was her book presentation in the Russian section of the Waterstones Piccadilly bookstore. The event was ticketed in support of a fundraising campaign and it was to take place in English. As expected and despite the pricy tickets, the book presentation was sold out, but only two attendees were English. For that reason, the organisers decided on the spot to hold the event in Russian, even though they hadn't previously arranged for an interpreter. One of the organisers approached me and asked me to sit next to the British and interpret for them, although we had never discussed it before. In my opinion, the book presentation was unsuccessful in terms of attendance by the target group (the British audience), and the pragmatic choice of switching to Russian endangered its accessibility by the only English-speaking attendees. The organisers experimented with organising an event in English that would take place outside the Olympia, but they did not prepare appropriately for the possibility of a mixed audience.

The present study has shown that despite the efforts of the organisers to invite writers and choose topics of discussion that could attract the general public in Britain, the limited provisions regarding language accessibility (i.e. interpreters, subtitles, etc.) have resulted in lower engagement with non-Russian speaking and non-specialist audiences.

Read Russia's events for the Russophone diaspora

The Russian-speaking events that Read Russia organises for the LBF take place outside the Olympia and most of the time in collaboration with the project's partners in London. Taking into consideration that Read Russia's mission is to promote Russian literature in translation, the following question quickly arises: What is the scope of the project's events targeting the local Russophone community?

The Read Russia organisers clarified in their interviews that Russian speakers don't constitute their target audience. For Kaufman, director of the 'American' Read Russia, their presence is a positive phenomenon, especially for the writers: 'It is unmediated love that takes place, when a Russian speaker who has read the work in the original comes up at the end of the event and talks to an author about it, as the author is signing the book. And it also provides some comfort because many times these authors are not fluent English speakers, so it is often a friendly face.' He further stated that

Russian speakers who have read the author's works in Russian guarantee that there is a part of the audience who has properly understood them and their message. In this account, the Russophone audience unwittingly supports Read Russia's mission and the success of its events contributes to the book discussions and encourages the writers in their work. Reznichenko confirmed my observations that even the Anglophone events are mainly attended by Russians speakers: 'The writers sometimes complain that only former Muscovites and Petersburgers come to meet them in the United States, France, Great Britain, not to mention Israel – "so we didn't need to travel that far."' According to Kaufman, the Read Russia events are not planned according to a certain political strategy that, for example, intentionally tries to target and mobilise the Russophone audience: 'Wherever you see a sense of strategy, I would say chalk it up and ask questions instead about how much time people have to organise something, how important it is to have a photograph of a room that's full, how much money people have, who the partners are, who the speakers are and with what language they are comfortable.' By emphasising on the practical difficulties, Kaufman aims to devalue any observations coming from Read Russia's events that could reveal a contradiction between the project's proclaimed mission and its actual practice.

The Russophone literary events that I attended during the LBF 2018 and 2019 focused on the invited authors and their work. The different formats of the events (panels, book presentations, and meet-the-author events) offered variety to Read Russia's program and gave the opportunity to the audience to see their favourite writers on multiple occasions. The attendance numbers varied significantly, from low to high depending on the popularity of the presenting writers.[24] I argue that Read Russia is concerned about the attendance of its Russophone events and constantly adapts its strategy in order to attract the local community and guarantee their success.

In 2018, Read Russia organised a meet-the-author event in Russian with the writers Shamil Idiatullin and Yulia Yakovleva in the Russian section of the Waterstones Piccadilly. The event was not well-attended even though Idiatullin's most recent novel had won the Big Book Award and Yakovleva is a successful children's writer. I noticed that at least 6 of the 27 attendees were members of the Waterstones Russian Book Club (WRBC).[25] At the end of the event, the book club members accompanied by WRBC moderator met with Idiatullin, whose book they had already read and discussed, as well as with one of the Read Russia organisers. A book club member was holding Idiatullin's award-winning novel and asked him to sign it for her. Idiatullin had gifted the previous day two copies of his book to the WRBC as awards to the winners of the book club's quiz as a promotion of his book presentation. The WRBC members also took a picture with the writer, which was later posted on Read Russia's social media. The opportunity of a possible new audience in this Russophone diasporic community book club hardly went unnoticed by the Read Russia organisers.

The following year, the Russian program for the London Book Fair was reorganised and it incorporated more events that targeted the Russian speakers in London. Read Russia cooperated with the moderator of the Waterstones Russian Book Club in the organisation of two literary events specifically for the members of the club. The first one was a book club meeting with the writer Aleksey Salnikov. Salnikov's invitation to the LBF was a direct request by the book club members,[26] an unusual practice for Read Russia, that is, consulting a community initiative on the selection of the year's writers. In my opinion, the organisers decided to reach out to the WRBC as part of their strategy to not only improve the attendance of their events but also to increase their impact. By integrating a bottom-up request in the official program, the project shows its readiness to plan activities for the Russophone readers representing their actual interest, as well as its intention to build ties with the local diasporic community.

The second event organised in collaboration with the WRBC was the 'Breakfast with Guzel Yakhina.' In contrast to Yakhina's book presentation, which had taken place the previous evening, the 'Breakfast' was a free, informal, strictly female and invitation-only event. The 15 participants were core members of the WRBC, or community leaders who organised their own book clubs in London. The event lasted an hour and the participants discussed literature and the writing process over tea. Private events don't constitute the usual practice of a country's official representation abroad. In addition to that event, Yakhina had presented only the previous evening at Waterstones Piccadilly to an audience consisting almost exclusively of Russian speakers. Based on the interviews I conducted, I found out that the event was intended as a privilege for the members of the Russophone reading community. Nevertheless, the organisers deliberately included the event in the official program, disregarding its private and intimate character. This contradictory behaviour on behalf of the Read Russia organisers gives prominence to their willingness to instrumentalise the diasporic underpinnings of an event for publicity reasons and for declaring the impactfulness of their activities in the country. At the same time, the organisers recorded this meeting as they do with all their events, which allows them to revisit the discussions at a later point.

Read Russia also introduced in 2019 a thematic panel at *Rossotrudnichestvo* with the participation of all the invited authors. The writers' panel was called 'History and Individuality in Contemporary Writing: How to Talk about Our Past'[27] and it was held in Russian. The last event of the Russian program for the London Book Fair 2019 was its epitome, inviting writers and audiences to recall the Soviet experience and explore its influence on contemporary literature. In 2016, Read Russia had organised a roundtable on the same subject, but it was in English and at the Olympia with the participation of two authors. Although Reznichenko had stated in his interview that 'the task of uniting the Russian-speaking population abroad is rather a priority of the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation or

Rossotrudnichestvo,' the collaboration with the latter asserts the opposite. The presence of the famous writers attracted to *Rossotrudnichestvo* community members, who do not necessarily identify as compatriots and might not visit its premises otherwise. The event was sold out, and the discussion about the Soviet past and its ongoing influence lasted almost two hours. The panel moderator and literary critic Aleksandr Chantchev opened the discussion by mentioning that the event responded to the Russian readers' deep interest in novels engaging with the Soviet past. Each writer represented a different approach to the subject, which created a much-desired polyphony. The democratic atmosphere contributed to *Rossotrudnichestvo*'s image-building efforts to appear ready to deal with trauma and disputed cultural memory, and thereby unite the divided Russophone diasporic community.

The Russian-speaking events organised by Read Russia during the LBF 2018 and 2019 confirm the collaboration of the project with *Rossotrudnichestvo*, the primary Russian soft power organisation, and the Waterstones Russian Book Club, a London-based diasporic cultural initiative. Even though the Read Russia organisers claim that the participation of Russian speakers is welcomed but not intended, the practice suggests that they are investing in bringing together the Russophone diaspora and engaging it in a cultural dialogue with Russia.

Conclusion

The Read Russia project, as part of Russia's cultural statecraft agenda, promotes classic and contemporary Russian literature in translation. Representing the centrepiece of Russian high culture, the project awards literary prizes, supports the publication of new translations, and participates in international book festivals. During my fieldwork at the London Book Fairs 2018 and 2019, I observed that Read Russia endeavours to reach out not only to the local English-speaking public but also to the Russophone diasporic community in London, thus straying from its official mission. Distinguished by the language in which they were held, the events targeting the English-speaking audience present an image of Russia as continuing in its strong literary tradition, supporting diversity and gender equality, being inclusive and acknowledging the contribution of ethnic minorities and the Russian periphery to its culture. At the same time, this polished version of Russianness is carefully disassociated with taboo topics, such as the LGBT experience in the country. Even though the Anglophone events taking place at the Olympia are well-attended, those happening in bookshops or other locations have failed to attract the general public.

The connection of Read Russia with the Russian soft power apparatus is apparent in the project's Russophone events during the London Book Fair. These events are often organised in collaboration with Russian organisations in Britain, as well as with diasporic initiatives such as the Waterstones

Russian Book Club. The combination of top-down and bottom-up elements in the formation of Read Russia's official program represents a strategy aimed at the diasporic mobilisation of the Russian speakers in London. During the events, the members of the Russophone community get together to listen to visiting Russian writers and participate in literary discussions framed by Read Russia. By mobilising the diaspora, the project aspires to enhance the Russian presence abroad and thereby increase its political influence. Nonetheless, the Read Russia organisers defended the non-political character of the project and its ideological independence from the Russian authorities. In their words, the focus remains on (re)introducing Russian literature to foreign audiences, both offline and online.

To sum up, Read Russia employs Russian literature's symbolic value for world culture and promotes with its activities a new, more democratic image of the country as supporting pluralism in literature and society, an image intended to attract new sympathisers among global audiences. Nevertheless, the project appears to be more relevant at present for the Russophone diaspora than Western audiences, which are its main focus.

Notes

1. All works by Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky mentioned here are included among the 5,000 facts and concepts of the cultural literacy: What every American needs to know (Hirsch et al., 1988).
2. Although Pushkin is widely respected in Russia and is considered the founder of modern Russian literature, he is not particularly well known in the West.
3. Barghoorn cites here an article titled 'The International Horizon of the Writer' by the Soviet literary critic Motyleva published in *Literaternaya Gazeta* in April 28, 1959.
4. It is worth mentioning that only six recipients of the International Lenin Prize were Soviet citizens, of whom half were writers. The three recipients were: Ilya Ehrenburg (1952), Nikolai Tikhonov (1957) and Oleksandr Korniychuk (1960).
5. Various political leaders have listed classic Russian novels among their favourites including German Chancellor Angela Merkel (Kornelius, 2014, p. 18; Smale and Higgins, 2017), Hillary Clinton (Schennikov, 2020a), and Pope Francis (Druzhinin, 2019; Schennikov, 2020b). There are articles published in Foreign Policy and the Financial Times, who suggest that Russian literature is a way to understand contemporary Russia (Groskop, 2014; Stavridis, 2015).
6. An early draft of the document was heavily criticised by Russian academics and was modified accordingly. In his interview with Donadio, V. Tolstoy claimed that his moderate views had an essential role on the policy's changes. For more details, see, Jonson, (2019).
7. In May 2019 V. Tolstoy was also elected the President of the International Association of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature (MAPRYAL), which underlines his increasing influence on the cultural diplomacy of the country.
8. The appearing writers were: Lev Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Ivan Turgenev, Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol, Anna Akhmatova, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Anton Chekhov, Nikolai Gumilev, Marina Tsvetaeva, Osip Mandelstam, Mikhail Bulgakov, Sergey Yesenin, Alexander Blok and Joseph Brodsky.

9. Putin has mentioned in interviews that Turgenev's Sketches from a Hunter's Album and Dostoevsky's Brothers Karamazov and Crime and Punishment are among his favourite books.
10. Some Russkiy Mir centres were established in cooperation with renowned universities such as the Durham University and the University of Edinburgh.
11. The foundation's budget in 2017 was 3.8 million rubles, in 2018 – 3.6 million rubles and for the years 2020 to 2022 the financial support from the Russian state has been raised up to 5 million rubles annually (Khimshiashvili, 2018; Kuz′min, 2019).
12. *Rossotrudnichestvo*'s Soviet predecessors were: 'the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Contacts (SSOD, 1958–1992), the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries' (VOKS, 1925–1958) (Khimshiashvili, 2018).
13. The offices are equipped with Russophone libraries and *Rossotrudnichesto* supports the collection development (*Rossotrudnichestvo*, 2019, p. 9).
14. In many cases, *Rossotrudnichestvo*'s offices act in lieu of cultural centres of the Russian embassy (i.e. Greece, Malta, Spain).
15. Both respondents received my questions beforehand as well as the necessary consent forms. Reznichenko chose to write his answers to my questions, while Kaufman preferred an oral interview.
16. To the present day, 12 translations have been published as part of the series and with many more planned to come in the following years. The publisher and a committee of both Russian and American academics assumed the duty to select the literary works for translation.
17. At the same time, the American NGO is funded by the Institute of Translation and the Boris Yeltsin Foundation, which also choose the Russian writers who will participate in the project's events.
18. For Kaufman, the Russian focus on book fairs has been inherited from the Soviet Union and it represents an 'atavistic' approach to the promotion of literature.
19. The 'Read Russia Prize' has four different categories: 'Classical Russian literature of the 19th century,' 'Russian literature of the 20th century (works created before 1990),' 'Contemporary Russian literature (works created after 1990)' and 'Poetry' (Institute of Translation, 2019).
20. The Institute of Translation allocates 120–150 grants to foreign publishers in 40–45 countries (30–35 languages) annually.
21. The presented authors are Dmitry Bykov, Zakhar Prilepin, Mariam Petrosyan, Vladimir Sorokin, Anna Starobinets, Ludmila Ulitskaya.
22. In Reznichenko's opinion, particularly successful are the events that attract both specialist and non-specialist audiences, as it happened in 2018 during the Paris Book Fair. With Russia being the guest country of honour, Read Russia had built a particularly large stand that after all could not accommodate the numerous French readers and specialists interested in Russian literature.
23. At the same time, Kaufman supports the fact that Read Russia's activities have been received positively because they give prominence to new writers and new genres. The contemporary reading audience is interested in the Russian perspective on current issues, such as inequality, environmental disasters and war.
24. The 'Meet-the-Author Session with Shamil Idiatullin and Yulia Yakovleva' at the Waterstones Piccadilly was attended by 27 people even though it was free, when Yakhina's presentation the following year was sold out having over 120 attendees.

25. The Waterstones Russian Book Club (WRBC), the largest Russophone book club in the UK with over 1,000 members, meets at the Waterstones Piccadilly the first Monday of every month and discusses contemporary Russian literature in Russian.
26. Having discussed his award-winning novel at a previous meeting, the moderator proposed his name when was asked by the Read Russia organisers whom they would like to meet. Despite having received a literary award for one of his novels, Salnikov was relatively unknown at the time and was not one of the writers that Read Russia usually promotes.
27. Yakhina and Salnikov joined by writers Alexei Ivanov and Ekaterina Rozhdestvenskaya who answered questions about their approach to the Soviet past and its role in their writing.

References

Barghoorn, Frederick Charles (1960) *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press.

Donadio, Rachel (2015) 'In Putin's nationalist Russia, a Tolstoy as cultural diplomat', *The New York Times*, 20 March. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/21/books/in-putins-nationalist-russia-a-tolstoy-as-cultural-diplomat.html (Accessed: 3 December 2020).

Druzhinin, Alexei (2019) 'Putin delves into Tolstoy's, Dostoyevsky's literary impact on Vatican with Pope Francis', *TASS*, 7 July. Available at: https://tass.com/world/1067222 (Accessed: 7 May 2019).

Feklyunina, Valentina (2016) 'Soft power and identity: Russia, Ukraine and the "Russian World(s)"', *European Journal of International Relations*, 22(4), pp. 773–796. doi: 10.1177/1354066115601200.

Forsberg, Tuomas and Smith, Hanna (2016) 'Russian cultural statecraft in the Eurasian Space', *Problems of Post-Communism*, 63(3), pp. 129–134.

Foster, John B. (2013) *Transnational Tolstoy: Between the West and the World*. New York: Bloomsbury.

Frank, Joseph (2012) *Dostoevsky: A Writer in His Time*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Fusso, Susanne (2017) *Editing Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy: Mikhail Katkov and the Great Russian Novel*. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press.

Gorham, Michael (2011) 'Virtual Rusophonia: Language policy as "soft power" in the new media age', *Digital Icons: Studies in Russian, Eurasian and Central European New Media*, (2), pp. 23–48.

Gorham, Michael (2019) 'When Soft Power Hardens'. In Platt, K. M. F. (ed), *Global Russian Cultures*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Gould-Davies, Nigel (2003) 'The logic of Soviet cultural diplomacy', *Diplomatic History*, 27(2), pp. 193–214. doi: 10.1111/1467-7709.00347.

Grigas, Agnia (2016) *Beyond Crimea: The New Russian Empire*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Groskop, Viv (2014) 'Reasserting Russia's literary status', *Financial Times*, 30 April. Available at: https://www.ft.com/content/f76ed990-cfac-11e3-bec6-00144feabdc0 (Accessed: 3 December 2020).

Hirsch, E. D., Kett, Joseph F. and Trefil, James (1988) *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*. New York: Vintage Books.

Holquist, Michael (2016) *Dostoevsky and the Novel*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Hudspith, Sarah (2018) 'Lev Tolstoy and Contemporary Russian Cultural Policy: Negotiating the Canon'. In Strukov, V. and Hudspith, S. (eds), *Russian Culture in the Age of Globalization*. New York: Routledge, pp. 42–67.

Jonson, Lena (2019) 'Russia: Culture, Cultural Policy, and the Swinging Pendulum of Politics'. In Bernsand, N. and Törnquist-Plewa, B. (eds), *Cultural and Political Imaginaries in Putin's Russia*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 13–36.

Khimshiashvili, Polina (2018) 'Glava Rossotrudnichestva – RBK: "My na latinit͡se pisat′ ne budem"' [Rossotrudnichestvo's Head – RBC: "We will not write in Latin"]. *RBK*, 12 September. Available at: https://www.rbc.ru/interview/politics/12/09/2018/5b90ee6f9a7947682967bd0a (Accessed: 4 December 2020).

Kornelius, Stefan (2014) *Angela Merkel: The Chancellor and Her World*. Translated by A. Bell. Richmond: Alma Books.

Kuz′min, Vladimir (2019) 'Rossotrudnichestvo poluchit sredstva na znachimye zakhoroneni͡ia za rubezhom' [Rossotrudnichestvo will receive funds for significant burials abroad], *Rossiĭskai͡a gazeta*, 14 June. Available at: https://rg.ru/2019/06/14/rossotrudnichestvo-poluchit-sredstva-na-znachimye-zahoroneniia-za-rubezhom.html (Accessed: 4 December 2020).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (2007) 'Obzor Vneshney Politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii' [A Survey of Russian Federation Foreign policy]. Available at: http://www.intelros.ru/strategy/gos_rf/316-obzor_vneshnejj_politiki__podgotovlennyjj_ministerstvom_inostrannykh_del_rossii.html (Accessed: 21 July 2021).

Nagornai͡a, Oksana S. (ed.) (2018a) '*Sovetskai͡a kul′turnai͡a diplomatii͡a v uslovii͡akh Xolodnoĭ voĭny. 1945-1989 : kollektivnai͡a monografii͡a* [Soviet Cultural Diplomacy during the Cold War, 1945–1989: A Collective Monograph]. Moskva: ROSSPĖN.

Nagornai͡a, Oksana S. (2018b) 'Laureaty mezhdunarodnykh Leninskikh premiĭ mira v orbite interesov sovetskoĭ kul′turnoĭ diplomatii' [Laureates of the International Lenin Peace Prizes in the Orbit of Interests of Soviet Cultural Diplomacy]. In Nagornai͡a, Oksana S. (ed), *Sovetskai͡a kul′turnai͡a diplomatii͡a v uslovii͡akh Xolodnoĭ voĭny. 1945-1989: kollektivnai͡a monografii͡a* [Soviet Cultural Diplomacy During the Cold War, 1945–1989: A Collective Monograph]. Moscow: ROSSPĖN, pp. 363–367.

Pink, Sarah (2013) *Doing Visual Ethnography* (3rd edition). London: SAGE.

President of Russia (2012) 'Soveshchanie poslov i postoi͡annykh predstaviteleĭ Rossii' [Meeting of Russian Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives]. Available at: http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/15902 (Accessed: 3 December 2020).

President of Russia (2014) 'Foundations of state cultural policy' [Osnovy gosudarstvennoi kul'turnoi politiki]. Available at: http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/39208 (Accessed: 18 March 2021).

Raeva, Tati͡ana V. and Nagornai͡a, Oksana S. (2018) 'Stalinskie pisateli v kogorte poslov sovetskoĭ kul′tury: keĭs Konstantina Fedina'. In Nagornai͡a, O. S. (ed), *Sovetskai͡a kul′turnai͡a diplomatii͡a v uslovii͡akh Xolodnoĭ voĭny 1945-1989: kollektivnai͡a monografii͡a*. Moskva: ROSSPĖN.

Read Russia (2018) *Read Russia Journal*. Available at: https://readrussia.org/journal/2018-read-russia-prize-for-the-best-translation (Accessed: 4 December 2020).

Read Russia (2019). Available at: https://readrussia.org/about/about-read-russia (Accessed: 18 October 2019).

Rollberg, Peter (2018) 'Solzhenitsyn's embattled legacy', *Russian Analytical Digest (RAD)* no. 228, pp. 6–9. doi: 10.3929/ethz-b-000309181.

Roth, Andrew (2015) 'Columbia University Press to publish new translations of Russian literature', *The New York Times*, 28 June. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/29/books/columbia-university-press-to-publish-new-translations-of-russian-literature.html (Accessed: 4 December 2020).

Rutland, Peter and Kazantsev, Andrei (2016) 'The limits of Russia's "soft power"', *Journal of Political Power*, 9(3), pp. 395–413. doi: 10.1080/2158379X.2016.1232287.

Sandler, Stephanie (2004) *Commemorating Pushkin: Russia's Myth of a National Poet*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Scanlan, James P. (2002) *Dostoevsky the Thinker*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Schennikov, Grisha (2020a) 'Hillary Clinton on books that shaped her mind', *Favobooks*. Available at: http://favobooks.com/politicians/116-Hillary-Clinton-books-she-has-learned-a-lot-from.html (Accessed: 3 December 2020).

Schennikov, Grisha (2020b) 'Pope Francis on books that influenced him', *Favobooks*. Available at: http://favobooks.com/politicians/129-Pope-Francis-books-spiritually-enriching.html (Accessed: 3 December 2020).

Schillinger, Liesl (2015) 'The rise of Bulgakov diplomacy', *Foreign Policy* [Online], 31 August. Available at: https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/08/31/the-rise-of-bulgakov-diplomacy-russian-literature-vladimir-putin-read-russia/ (Accessed: 4 December 2020).

Senelick, Laurence (1997) *The Chekhov Theatre: A Century of the Plays in Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sherr, James (2013) *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad*. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs.

Smale, Alison and Higgins, Andrew (2017) 'Putin and Merkel: A rivalry of history, distrust and power (Published 2017)', *The New York Times*, 12 March. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/12/world/europe/vladimir-putin-angela-merkel-russia-germany.html (Accessed: 3 December 2020).

Stavridis, James (2015) 'What Russian literature tells us about Vladimir Putin's world', *Foreign Policy* [Online], 2 June. Available at: https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/06/02/what-russian-literature-tells-us-about-vladimir-putins-world/ (Accessed: 3 December 2020).

Suslov, Mikhail (2018) '"Russian world" concept: post-Soviet geopolitical ideology and the logic of "spheres of influence"', *Geopolitics*, 23(2), pp. 330–353. doi: 10.1080/14650045.2017.1407921.

Walker, Shaun (2017) 'Svetlana Alexievich: "After communism we thought everything would be fine. But people don't understand freedom"', *The Guardian*, 21 July. Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/jul/21/svetlana-alexievich-interview (Accessed: 3 December 2020).